Title: *The Witness*, January to December, 1998

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Sports as a principality: power, race and beauty

The Witness

Volume 81 • Numbers 1 & 2 • January/February, 1998

Northern Ireland

NOVEMBER ISSUE — BRAVO! We hear so little about the Irish Peacemakers.

Barbara Newcomb
Sewanee, TN

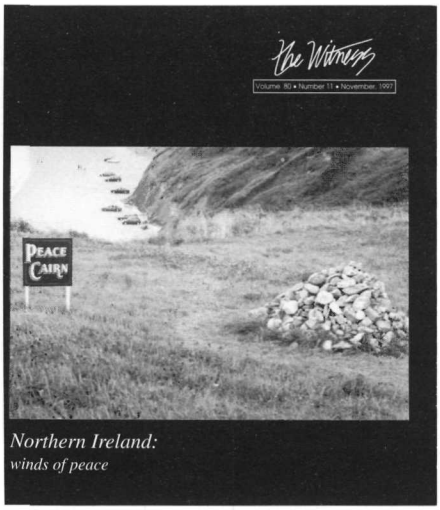
Combatting trade liberalisation

PLEASE HELP US LET PEOPLE KNOW that from the 23 to the 25 of February, 1998, 600 representatives of peoples' movements will meet in Geneva to establish a platform for worldwide action against trade liberalisation: the Peoples' Global Action against "Free" Trade and the WTO (PGA).

The PGA will work as a tool for coordination, exchange of information and mutual support for the struggles of all those hit by neoliberal globalisation. It calls for non-violent civil disobedience and the construction of local alternatives by local people, as answers to the action of multilateral institutions, governments and corporations.

The first big-scale action in the calendar of the PGA will be a wave of decentralised mobilisations and protests all over the world parallel to the Second Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which shall take place on 18-20 May 1998.

The meeting in February will be the founding conference of the PGA, since it will lay down the basis of the alliance in the form of a manifesto. It is being convened by a committee formed by some of the most representative peoples' movements of all continents, including peasant movements (like the Brazilian Movimento Sem Terra, the Indian KRRS and the Peasant Movement of the Philippines), indigenous peoples (like the Mexican Zapatistas, the Women's Network of North America and the Pacific and FIA, a Maori organisation from Aoteraroa), unions (like the Central Sandinista de Trabajadores from



Northern Ireland:
winds of peace

Nicaragua) and women's organisations (like Mama 86, an organisation of Ukranian women affected by the Chernobyl disaster, and the above mentioned Indigenous Women's Network). Other events will take place around the first PGA conference.

From the 18 to the 21 of February, there will be several information and discussion roundtables on topics such as gender, food production, culture, economics, etc., prepared by organisations participating in the conference. On February 22 there will be a one-day intensive seminar on the WTO, the MAI and trade liberalisation. On February 26 there will be a number of coordination and planning sessions in small groups, divided according to the topics treated in the roundtables. Finally, on February 27 there will be a European meeting to launch a Europe-wide movement of civil disobedience against "free" trade.

Witness readers wanting more information about the PGA and its first conference, please visit the web page <http://www.agp.org> or send a message to <playfair@asta.rwth-aachen.de>.

Play Fair Europe!
Aachen, Germany

Fundraising appeal

ALL SAINTS GREETINGS TO THE saints at *The Witness* — and grateful thanks for your presence!

Sarah B. Hanke
Amherst, MA

BEING NEWLY RETIRED PUTS A CRIMP in my ability to respond as generously as I would like! Still —- every little bit helps — right?

Jody Schwartz
Bethesda, MD

Ed. note: Right!

I HAVE RECEIVED *THE WITNESS* as a gift subscription for quite a few years. It is a wonderful journal. May you reach your goal! (The gift subscription was from Daniel and Elizabeth Corrigan, to whom I am deeply grateful!)

Sylvia R. Corrigan
Westport, CT

FOR SOME REASON, I CAN'T FIND any record in my checkbook that I responded to the first letter. How could I not? Even as those of us on fixed incomes have more trouble doing everything we want to do, *The Witness* is always at the top of the list!

Keep up your efforts — We need you!!!

Carman St. J. Hunter
Moorestown, NJ

Witness praise

I REALLY DO ADMIRE *The Witness*, especially since the change to Detroit — Jeanie - Julie. Keep up the good work. Bless you.

Sallie Shippen
Ashland OR

I FIND YOUR ISSUE-FOCUSED FORMAT very helpful, and appreciate the stands you take. As a Quaker — and a person — its exciting to realize the network of like-minded, like-struggling other faith groups and persons whom you regularly cover. Thanks!

Nancy Nagler
Mt. Pleasant, MI

I USUALLY READ *THE WITNESS* cover-to-cover. It's a vital part of my staying informed and greatly balances the generally conservative views of other church magazines. Thank you all for this important contribution to peace and justice.

Andrew Minko
Belmont, CA

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Macho maneuvers: FOR reflects on Iraq crisis

The Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) deplores and opposes any U.S. military strikes against Iraq. The current impasse has developed over the inspection of Iraq's weapons installations by the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM). The FOR urges every effort at genuine dialogue and negotiation rather than ultimatums and threats to resolve this issue. As a major step towards both reconciliation and more effectively inspecting Iraq's weapons installations, we propose that this inspection proceed without Americans participating. One can imagine the U.S. response if there were Iraqi specialists on a team that sought to inspect the weapons installations of the U.S. U.S. military threats and actions against Iraq over the past seven years have not brought a more democratic society there. They have not only hardened Saddam Hussein's resistance to foreign intervention; they have also served to strengthen Saddam's government both internally and in relation to the Arab world. U.S. policies toward Iraq demonstrate the age-old lessons that violence begets more violence and that military action complicates and intensifies problems. It is important to note that UNSCOM has already destroyed more Iraqi weapons than the Gulf War did. The Iraqi government has complied with many of the requirements to dismantle its weapons of mass destruction. While further compliance is called for, the task of UNSCOM should be separated from the onerous sanctions that the Iraqi people have endured. It has not been Saddam Hussein that has suffered from the sanctions but the most vunerable and weak of Iraq — infants, children, the sick, the elderly and the destitute. UNSCOM's task should be separated from the issue of sanctions which have brought an incalculable human tragedy upon the Iraqi people. For seven years the embargo on food,medicine and other necessities of life has devastated the Iraqi people but not their despotic regime. The United Nations International Children's Fund estimates that 4,500 Iraqi children are dying every month: more than six every hour of the day and night. What can be the excuse for this or for the prohibition of sewing machines, pencils, pesticides and chlorine to purify drinking water? Basra, Iraq's second largest city, has no potable water supply and little electricity. Epidemics and malnutrition mount throughout Iraq. Is this not a violation of the Genocide Convention which defines genocide, in part, as "deliberately inflicting on a (national, ethnic, racial or religious) group conditions of life calculated to bring its physical destruction, in whole or in part (Article 2, Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the crime of Genocide)." Is this now to be followed by bombing attacks which kill people who are essentially as innocent as the Americans believed to have been slain by Pakistani terrorists? There is no reason to consider nationality-based slaughter from the air less ethically outrageous than such slaughter at the hands of desperate individuals. The Fellowship of Reconciliation calls upon the Clinton Administration and the United Nations Security Council to turn from military threats, to end the embargo and to pursue vigorously a long term peaceful resolution of the current crisis. We also call upon the American people to resist attempts to demonize the people of Iraq. Derogatory depictions of Arab and Muslim peoples in our popular media reflect deep racism and xenophobia in our society. Such hatred and bigotry can blind us to human suffering and foster callous acceptance of violence and war. The politics of war must give way to the diplomacy of peace.

The Fellowship of Reconciliation seeks to replace violence, war, racism,and economic injustice with nonviolence, peace, and justice. We are an interfaith organization committed to active nonviolence as a transforming way of life and as a means of radical change. We educate, train, build coalitions, and engage in nonviolent and compassionate actions locally, nationally and globally.

— FOR, Nyack, NY

Classifieds

Faith and homosexuality

New educational programs from The Oasis: "All Love is of God" encourages congregational dialogue to examine faith issues surrounding homosexuality. "Claiming the Promise," an ecumenical program, focuses specifically on biblical references concerning homosexuality. Both come with separate Leader's Guide and Participant's Manual. Call The Oasis at 973-430-9909.

Episcopal Urban Intern Program

Work in social service, live in Christian community in Los Angeles. For adults 21-30. Apply now for the 1998-99 year. Contact: The Rev. Gary Commins, 260 N. Locust St., Inglewood, CA 90301; 310-674-7700.

Vocations

Contemplating religious life? Members of the Brotherhood and the Companion Sisterhood of Saint Gregory are Episcopalians, clergy and lay, married and single. To explore a contemporary Rule of Life, contact: The Director of Vocations, Brotherhood of St. Gregory, Dept. W, Saint Bartholomew's Church, 82 Prospect Street, White Plains, NY 10606-3499.

Nuclear Resister

Subscribe to the *Nuclear Resister*, the newsletter that networks nonviolent direct action and encourages support for imprisoned anti-nuclear and anti-war activists. Each quarterly issue includes action reports, future action listings, prisoner support information, writings from jail and international resistance news. Subscriptions are $15/year, $20 (U.S.) in Canada, $25 overseas. Free sample sent upon request. The *Nuclear Resister*, P.O. Box 43383, Tucson, AZ 85733, U.S.A.; 520-323-8697; <nukeresister@igc.org>.

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The Witness

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Co-editors/publishers Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann, Julie A. Wortman
Assistant Editor Marianne Arbogast
Magazine Production Maria Catalfio
Book Review Editor Bill Wylie-Kellermann
Poetry Editor Gloria House Manana
Controller Roger Dage
Promotion Consultant Karen D. Bota
Office Support Patricia Kolon, Martha Dage, Beth O'Hara-Fisher

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The Witness offers a fresh and sometimes irreverent view of our world, illuminated by faith, Scripture and experience. Since 1917, *The Witness* has been advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those people who have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." We push boundaries, err on the side of inclusion and enjoy bringing our views into tension with orthodox Christianity. *The Witness'* roots are Episcopalian, but our readership is ecumenical. For simplicity, we place news specific to Episcopalians in our Vital Signs section. *The Witness* is committed to brevity for the sake of readers who find little time to read, but can enjoy an idea, a poem or a piece.

Manuscripts: We welcome multiple submissions. Given our small staff, writers and artists receive a response only when we are able to publish.

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Office: 7000 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210-2872. To reach Julie Wortman: HC 35 Box 647, Tenants Harbor, ME 04860. Telphone: (313) 841-1967. Fax: (313) 841-1956. E-mail: [first name]@thewitness.org. Our web site: \www.thewitness.org

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Renewing the place of play

by Bill Wylie-Kellermann

Human beings are veritably besieged, on all sides, at every moment simultaneously by these claims and strivings of the various powers, each seeking to dominate, usurp, or take a person's time, attention, abilities, effort; each grasping at life itself; each demanding idolatrous service and loyalty.

Commercial athletics, for example, represent a prominent and aggressive principality and — one might suppose — a more or less innocuous one. Yet the operation of this demonic power has significant political importance. By diverting citizens from politics and preoccupying their concern with sports instead of with politics, by distraction and also by substitution, it provides a vicarious involvement in the place of politics.

— William Stringfellow

This issue of *The Witness,* timed with the annual consumer extravaganza of Superbowl Sunday, proved more trouble than I anticipated. Sports as a Principality had been in the back of my head for a number of years. I knew the elements, even had a clip file of ideas. But when I spread them out to organize, I would become unaccountably deflected from the task.

I grew up in a family devoted to sports. Our backyard mysteriously changed parameters to suit the game of the season (which also meant windows would be broken by different shaped balls). I participated in organized sports from age nine through high school and college. A year ago, when my second knee surgery retired me finally from the basketball court, I found myself with all sorts of emotions. Jeanie suggested a grieving ritual was in order. When I started to write a poem, it poured out epic, more an essay recapitulating a 40-year narrative, my life and times in the game, or vice versa. To complete the rite, some of my closest friends, courtmates all, gathered in smoky TV light to reminisce and hoist one to the game.

Little wonder I was blocked trying to itemize what William Stringfellow baldly calls the "demonic" aspects of sport. And yet there is perhaps nothing in our culture which rivals sports for enthralling and occupying people, especially men. In this issue Tom Henricks details the scope of that fascination with the eye of a sociologist. As Noam Chomsky avers, the captivation has enormous political function, taken into account by social planners, to distract people from real issues affecting their lives and history.

Sports truly represent an industrial sized structure of power, and one entangled with other principalities: religious idolatry, mammon, consumerism, violence, race. Racism could itself be a huge topic, from the separate but unequal (in all respects except talent and skill) Negro Leagues to the heroic efforts of people like Joe Louis and Jackie Robinson. A Baptist pastor here in Detroit recently railed against "plantation basketball" at the Palace arena, where virtually all the Piston players were black, yet (due to social location and ticket price economics) 99 percent of the spectators were suburban whites. An ironic reversal of that, surreal and disturbing, is portrayed on our cover by Dierdre Luzwick. Racism in sport is touched on in the review of a documentary on Mohammed Ali's "Rumble in the Jungle" nearly 25 years ago. Above all it is addressed in the growing resistance to racist names and logos recounted by Juanita Helphrey and Loretta Williams.

Even the most avid fan knows that economics are "corrupting the game." The role of Nike in the global economy (and the growing resistance to it recounted by Pacifica Radio host, Bill Resnick) is representative of the simultaneous assault on Third World workers, American consumers and the integrity of the games. Or again, by way of a particular stadium struggle, Michael Betzold outlines how these peculiar urban mega-projects steal funds from neighborhood development and distort economic priorities in big-league cities.

Betzold's article is striking for the love of the game which shows through. It is, to be sure, a love betrayed. Yet it is this very passion for baseball's tradition, for the storied places which historic stadiums are, that substantially drives his own participation in the social struggle to save and reclaim such great old beauties. A similar love shines through the profile of Cary McGehee, former pro basketball player, now attorney and college referee. Beneath all the twists of gender politics which she has suffered, her affection for the game and its gifts are clear.

I believe that sports principalities have a vocation (perhaps more readily manifest than certain other powers) to praise God and serve life. If this issue pointedly names their demonic distortion, may it also provoke the question of how they might be redeemed, renewing their place before God and within the playful versatilities of the beloved community. TW

editor's note

Bill Wylie-Kellermann is Director of the M.Div. Program for the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education in Chicago.

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CIA role in priest's disappearance

by Joseph E. Mulligan

James Carney, a Catholic priest from Chicago, worked in Honduras for 18 years. His defense of human rights and his support of the peasants' organizing efforts resulted in his deportation in 1979.

After working as a pastor in Nicaragua, he returned to Honduras in 1983 as a chaplain to an armed revolutionary column; the group was captured by the Honduran army and Carney was "disappeared." Although officials presented his chalice and stole to his relatives, they never explained the circumstances of his death, suggesting only that he probably starved to death in the mountains. In 1987 a former officer of the Honduran army stated that he had heard from other soldiers that Carney had been thrown to his death from a helicopter.

His body has not been found, and the Honduran military officers responsible for his death have not been identified.

Whether any U.S. agents or officials were involved in his disappearance remains an open question.

There is an intrinsic necessity to bring this matter to a conclusion, to find Carney's remains, to discover the truth, and to hold guilty persons accountable.

The discovery of the truth and the pursuit of justice has not only a historic importance in Honduras but also is very relevant for the present and future. The development of democracy, with true civilian authority and respect for the rule of law, are still in their nascent stages in Honduras and face bold opposition from powerful military sectors.

President Carlos Roberto Reina told Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit and others in 1996 that he would do everything possible to achieve justice in the case of Carney, "but without provoking a military coup." He deserves credit at least for his honest assessment of his limited power as civilian commander-in-chief.

The most striking aspect of the CIA and Pentagon documents is the extraordinary amount of material which is blacked out.

The Honduran police are in the process of becoming an entity separate from the armed forces, but progress is slow and unsteady.

Seeing justice done in the case of Carney and the other disappeared persons is not the top priority for most Hondurans, whose main concern is daily survival, access to medical care, food, education and housing. Conditions for the poor majority in Honduras, as in most of Latin America, are continually worsening as a result of structural injustice on a national and international level.

But it is precisely in order to enable the poor to struggle democratically and nonviolently that we must bring an end to state corruption and military impunity. A true democracy is a system in which the poor, who are the majority in Latin America, can exercise their power as citizens without fear of repression by official agents in the service of the privileged oligarchy.

The truth about U.S. government involvement in Latin American repression is still not fully known. During the past year, officials admitted to teaching torture at the School of the Americas, in U.S. Army courses in Latin America and in CIA training programs for Latin Americans; and CIA documents show that the Agency trained assassins for operations in Guatemala and Cuba.

On March 4, 1997, the CIA and Defense Department released declassified (and heavily expurgated) documents concerning Carney. The most striking aspect of the CIA and Pentagon documents is the extraordinary amount of material which is blacked out. The most glaring example is a Defense Department page entitled "Honduran Armed Forces — Human Rights and Corruption." After this title, the entire page is black.

This obfuscation of material by the CIA and Defense Department borders on obstruction of justice and shows a complete lack of respect for the Honduran authorities who requested the documents.

The CIA and Defense Department must be more cooperative in the Carney investigation and must still release documents requested by the Honduran government in relation to the other disappeared persons and other victims of human rights violations. TW

Joseph Mulligan, a Jesuit from Detroit, is involved in the investigation of the Carney case. As this issue went to the printer, he was engaged in a fast that has lasted more than a month in protest over the suppression of information about Carney's disappearance.

Heschel/King anniversary

Rabbi Arthur Waskow notes that the 25th anniversary of Abraham Heschel's death coincides with the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday this year. He suggests that this Jan. 16, we celebrate the vision and courage that created common cause between a Hasidic rabbi and a Baptist pastor.

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Hysteria

Dionisio Martinez

It only takes one night with the wind on its knees
to imagine Carl Sandburg unfolding
a map of Chicago, puzzled, then walking the wrong way.

The lines on his face are hard to read. I alternate between the
TV, where a plastic surgeon is claiming that every facial
expression causes wrinkles, and

the newspaper. I picture the surgeon reading the lines
on Sandburg's face, lines that would've made more sense
if the poet had been, say, a tree growing

in a wind orchard. Maybe he simply smiled too much.
I'm reading, about the All-Star game, thinking
that maybe Sandburg saw the White Sox of 1919.

I love American newspapers, the way each section
is folded independently and believes it owns
the world. There's this brief item in the inter-

national pages: the Chinese government has posted
signs in Tiananmen Square, forbidding laughter.
I'm sure the plastic surgeon would approve, he'd say

the Chinese will look young much longer, their faces
unnaturally smooth, but what I see (although
no photograph accompanies the story) is laughter

bursting inside them. I go back to the sports section
and a close-up of a rookie in mid-swing, his face keeping all the
wrong emotions in check.

When I read I bite my lower lip, a habit
the plastic surgeon would probably call
cosmetic heresy because it accelerates the aging

process. I think of Carl Sandburg and the White Sox;
I think of wind in Tiananmen Square, how a country
deprived of laughter ages invisibly; I think

of the Great Walls of North America, each of them
a grip on some outfield like a rookie's hands
around a bat when the wind is against him; I bite

my lower lip again; I want to learn
to think in American, to believe that a headline
is a fact and all stories are suspect.

— from *Witness,* Oakland Community College, 1992.

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Seduction in sports: the Fall in play

by Bill Wylie-Kellermann

When William Stringfellow queried Karl Barth face to face in 1962 concerning the nature and identity of the principalities and powers, Barth named a handful of them: ideology, money, the state, religion, tradition, and fashion. He also named sports. In Barth's view, sport, as a power, could be seen as a human capability which, in the alienation of the Fall, becomes isolated and separated from human beings, experienced thereby as over against human life, virtually dominating it.

It is perhaps only a minor distinction to note that Stringfellow viewed the powers theologically as creatures in their own right, each with a particular vocation to praise God and serve human life. In the Fall, that vocation is distorted and inverted, becoming an idol which usurps the place of God and enslaves human life. A theological analysis of sport within this simple framework is truly intriguing.

For one thing, at the core of sports there is a free realm of play, an activity, in itself as useless as praise, near to pure joy and delight. It is a bodily glory, an incarnational rejoicing before God which can indeed serve human life. For the Ojibwe, the Iroquois, the Creek, and Cherokee — virtually all the tribal nations of Eastern North America — the sport now called lacrosse was understood virtually as praise: *The game of lacrosse was given to our people by the Creator to play for his amusement. Just as a parent will gain much amusement at the sight of watching a child playing joyfully with a new gift, so it was intended that the Creator be similarly amused by viewing his "children" playing lacrosse in a manner which was so defiant of fatigue. This is our belief, and when the Four Great Messengers came, the Creator reiterated to us that this game should be played.*

For virtually all the tribal nations of Eastern North America, lacrosse was understood as praise.

Fifty years ago, Johan Huzinga wrote a study of the play element behind culture entitled *Homo Ludens*. As captured in the name, he argued that play was essential, even definitive of human beings. Next to the designations *homo sapiens* (humanity as wise) and *homo faber* (humanity as builder and maker) belongs *homo ludens* (humanity the player). He summarized the formal characteristics of play in this way:

We might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside "ordinary" life as being "not serious," but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means.

As play, sport draws a boundary in time and space, defining and consecrating a field, setting aside a sacred interval, be it marked by a gameclock or a cyclic rhythm of innings, say. The Kevin Costner film, "Field of Dreams" (which has been the subject of innumerable topical sermons and enjoys an astonishing continued popularity), conveys this virtually sacred sense of time and space. There, a farmer's absurd and obsessive impulse to lay down a baseball diamond in his cornfield becomes a mystical pilgrimage of imagination into history and his own psyche. In fact, there is a key instant in the film which vividly demarks the sense of transcendent time and space. In a moment of crisis a rookie player from the past, getting a second chance to play, must choose to step across the enchanted boundary line back into ordinary time and space for the sake of saving a child's life.

Sports as religion

It is a frequent observation, nearly a commonplace these days, to note that sports function as religion in America. This, of course, is a broad jump from "play as praise" to something more akin to "sport as idolatry." It is pertinent to a theology of the sporting powers.

The big three in America, baseball, football and basketball, comprise a complete liturgical cycle for the year, each culminating in a massive festival, be it a World Series, a Superbowl, or a playoff tournament. The arenas and stadia, with names like Palace or Coliseum or Kingdome, take on a temple-like character, overlaid with an accumulation of legendary history, collectively remembered. Bright liturgical vestments distinguish the teams (and even more so their followers).

There is a palpable spiritual element to

Bill Wylie-Kellermann is Director of the M.Div. Program for the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education in Chicago. Artist **Marek Czarnecki** lives in Bristol, Conn.

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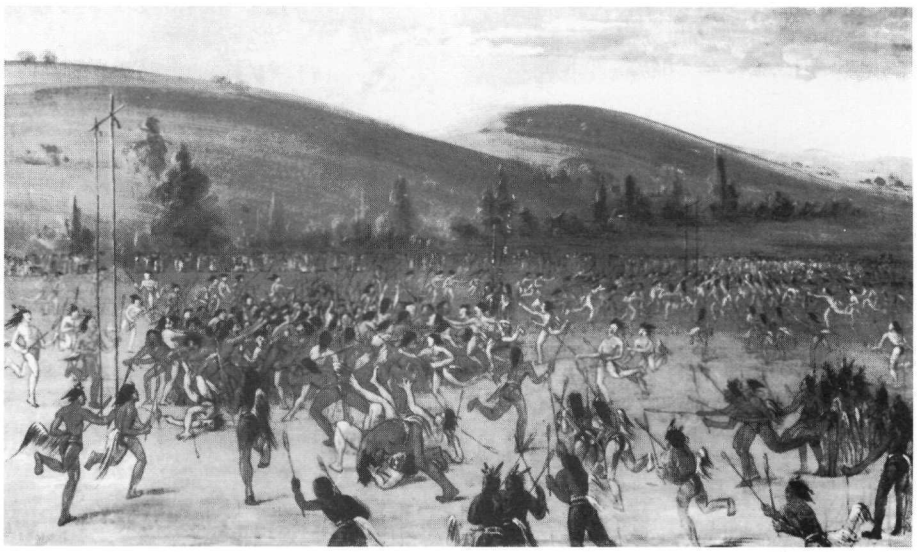
sports — on the one hand regulating the enterprise, a kind of gyroscopic spirit of the game — and on the other the spiritual struggle of the competition. This latter is not underestimated by either player or fan. The combat on the field or the court is predicated on skill and strategic preparation, but above that (and within team and player) there is a battle of spirit at work. A better team can collapse mentally and go down to defeat under this shifting wind. For that reason fans chant and sing hymns (often to organ accompaniment). The home court advantage has less to do with knowing the particulars of the physical space, than with its meaning, with controlling the atmospherics of the contest. Fate and providence, "the breaks of the game," figure into this and may be influenced by the intercessory noise of the crowd. In homage to the fates, elaborate rituals of private superstition also arise.

Players prepare for the game under a rigorous mental and physical discipline, what the Greek athletes called *ascesis.* (The monks, by the way, borrowed the idea of "asceticism" from the athletes, not vice versa). Spiritual values are much touted in sport. An interesting recent example, somewhat New Age, is represented in *Sacred Hoops: Spiritual Lessons of a Hardwood Warrior,* by Phil Jackson, coach of the Chicago Bulls. It proffers a kind of zen mindfulness which takes compassion and oneness to the court within the frame of a Native American wisdom. Or there are the more conventional spiritualities. In the wake of a conversion Mike Ditka took his coaches and football players on a Jesuit retreat. I suppose it is no coincidence that Promisekeepers, the mens' revival movement begun by a football coach, fills stadiums to overflowing. Something overlaps.

The players themselves signify a host of saints, vying for a place not only in the book, but in the national shrine. Their lives become the subject of hagiography in the bookstore sports aisle (which here in Detroit I recently noticed was larger than Political Science and Sociology combined). If the players are an athletic priesthood, then the media commentators (electronic and print) become resident theologians.

Certain sociologists, looking at American culture, pull out their Durkheim (or their Marx), observe all the above along with functions of massive human bonding, social control, integration or legitimation, and draw the logical conclusion. It sure looks and quacks and walks like a religion.



Lacrosse play of the Choctaw — ball up **by George Catlin.**

In the 1960s, the neo-conservative Niebuhrian and well-heeled Catholic theologian, Michael Novak, wrote a book called *The Joy of Sports* which he has since republished. It is a swooning tome, full of good writing and some sharp insight precisely about the religious character of sport, but (apart from some snide remarks here or there — about Muhammad Ali, for example) astonishingly uncritical. Confessing that sports are part of his religion "like Christianity, or 'Western civilization,' or poetry or politics," he acknowledges that the book is also written for "unbelievers" (non-sportsbuffs), "that they may gain a larger, ecumenical understanding of religions not their own." And waxing hyperbolic, he is capable of writing as a chapter punchline, "If you think football is a violent liturgy, reflect upon the Eucharist." A certain confusion is afoot.

In the mouth of the beast

The religious function of sport is not new, of course, with U.S. culture. In ancient Greece, the spread of the gymnasium with philosophy and athletics exercised variously around the altar was part of Greek cultural expansion (resisted, in fact, as idolatry by the Jews in the Maccabean period). In Athens, athletic contests fusing beauty with truth and good in striving for perfection of the ideal were held under the patronage of gods and to their honor. Olympic games were set within the context of sacred festivals.

In Rome the games took on a darker, though still thoroughly religious, tone. Contests originally held in honor of the gods became more regularly dedicated to the emperor. They often celebrated mili-

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tary victories, and became themselves more bloody.

Today, we would say they enacted liturgically and athletically the myth of domination. At the dedication of the Colosseum, 5000 animals died fighting one another or being hunted down. In the great amphitheaters, schooled gladiators re-presented battles to the death. The Circus Maximus, which seated 180,000 fans, hosted chariot races where slaves and animals would often die in spectacular collisions. Criminals condemned to death (including Christians during the persecutions) were sometimes dressed to reenact mythic tales in the arena: One might represent Medea's rival wearing a garment that would burst into flame, another might fall from on high like Icarus into a sea of beasts, and yet another as Pasiphae bear the embrace of a bull. And not in the imperial city alone.

Bread and circuses were propagated programmatically in the provinces as part of *Pax Romana* — with all attendant worship.

If Christians warmed slowly to sport, it is because in the first centuries they experienced it from the sand of the arena, as victims. They knew the games as imperial liturgies, one with the power of death. They saw them exposed straightforwardly in the cross. Here we might rightly reprise: If you don't think being thrown to the beasts a violent liturgy, reflect again upon the Eucharist.

Theologically, the movement from "play as praise" to "sport as imperial liturgy of death" is known as the Fall. It is not so much a temporal trajectory as one inherent in history. It is a movement we may recognize in our own history and culture. Sports retain their vocation to delight and praise God and also to serve human community, and yet in the inversion which is the Fall, in the distortion of "religious" idolatry, they usurp God and enslave human life.

Of idols and images

The extent to which vast numbers of people find their meaning, what the New Testament calls their "justification," in the realm of sports is remarkable. The burgeoning market in uniforms, jerseys, and paraphernalia is literally emblematic of this. This widespread projection of identity and self worth is idolatry straight up from the standpoint of the Gospel. It is in this regard that the religious character of American sport is so disturbing.

The ordinary mechanisms of addiction, so endemic to our culture, are linked to a mood-altering substance produced by our own bodies.

The notion of "sports idols" of course, is popular parlance within the U.S. Within the pantheon of sports, they function as demigods. Images of the stars hang like shrines on the bedroom walls of aspiring talents. (For urban youth these are saving images, not only of pride, but of exodus from the ghetto.) Because of the deep hunger for justification, players' names on consumer items inflate the market value. Stars share in the wider cult of celebrity common to the age.

Michael Jordan is arguably the best ever to play the game of basketball. His hangtime moves punctuated with a one-hand dunk (from which the nickname "Air") replayed in slow motion are truly stunning. Chicago jazz ballet. His uncanny consistency to deliver with seconds on the clock has brought the Bulls a string of back-to-back championships. He has, as they say, "changed the game."

For what he can do with a basketball, Jordan is among the most recognized figures on the planet. It is, at present, possible to market a new cologne with nothing more than the silhouette of his shaved head. His quick smile hawks everything from Wheaties to Coke, McDonalds to Haines jockey underwear. People yearn to "be like Mike." His signature on a variety of Nike shoes is worth tens of million of dollars. Indeed it was calculated several years ago that his contract with Nike was greater than the entire payroll of the Indonesian factories which make the shoes. Of course, the Indonesian women stitching them were making $.82 a day (see p. 23).

Within the dominion of global media, Jordan's image is itself a principality distinct from his person. Incorporated as a commercial entity, I suppose theoretically it would be possible for Michael Jordan the human being to sue Michael Jordan the incorporated image. (As a corporation the latter has legal standing as a separate "person" before the law.)

I remember reading some years ago Jordan's complaint that his image had taken on a life of its own. "It's like it is controlling its own self now. ... My situation is totally outrageous. People ask me to explain it and I can't ... I'm like this little machine that's got to direct it, so that it acts the way most people perceive it should act." This alienated way of speaking, which in fact raises enormous pastoral questions on his behalf, is actually typical of what the New Testament hints at concerning the spiritual and structural power of "images," "virtues," and "names."

When Jordan retired briefly from the sport in 1993, the entire city was bereft, as if its own image had suffered a blow. "His shocking eclipse leaves Chicago groping through a temporary identity blackout," wrote one columnist. "It was like waking up and finding a vacant lot where the Sears Tower used to be," wrote another.

Big-league cities

To touch on the connection of sports teams to their cities is to consider the

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relationship of one principality to another. (A similar phenomenon abides with respect to university teams and entire states in many instances.)

To hear a sports broadcaster's report, one would think that one city took on another. "New York laid waste L.A. today ... ." In fact, the identification is substantial. This year when Detroit's hockey team won the Stanley Cup, a million people (more than the population of the city proper) flooded into downtown, largely from the suburbs. An enterprising and very committed fan sewed a gigantic Red Wings jersey to adorn the massive sculpture of the "Spirit of Detroit" which it dutifully wore for days, sitting before the City-County building.

Names and emblems often do reflect the city's history or economic base or identity. Bulls in Chicago, Magic in Orlando, Pistons in Detroit. A few years back, when Detroit was reputed murder capital of the world, the basketball team indulged and cultivated their mix-it-up image as "the Bad Boys." Anomalies like the "Utah Jazz" or the "Tennessee Oilers" come about when teams up and move (in these cases, from New Orleans and Houston).

As team offices become thoroughly corporate, attendant only to the bottom line, they often have indifference or contempt for issues of history and identity, and are prepared "as the market dictates" to jump town. Here the symbiotic relationship is exposed as competitive. Cities aspiring to "world-class status" want to be on the map as big-league towns. They need the Goodyear blimp to pan back from the field in a god's-eye-view to show their skyline as if in a set piece commercial. Governments will raid their block-grant budgets to write down land costs and finance absurd new stadiums (see p. 16). They permit themselves to be held hostage to the sports industry.

The Green Bay Packers, last year's Cinderella Superbowl champs, are a refreshing exception. Here is a team virtually owned by the community which bought shares in it years ago. It may sound like Wisconsin socialism, but the fan loyalty of cheeseheads will not be squandered by a franchise jump to a larger market. The Packers may be the true "America's team" precisely because they honestly have a hometown.

on both your houses" was the popular sentiment toward millionaire players and owners alike.

Just to get a sense, Shaquille O'Neal has a multi-year contract worth $120 million. Jordan gets $30 million per year just to play.

Superbowl tickets these days run upwards of $300 and advertising air time goes for a $1 million per minute, in the

Lamentation **by Marek Czarnecki**

The economics of addiction

Insofar as fans themselves are alert to the powers in sport, it is with respect to economics. Salaries and salary caps, ticket prices, owner profits, destruction of legendary stadiums, the disruption of the games by advertising, and the general wreckage of spirit and tradition by the corporate front office are all grist for call-in sports radio and bar talk. People rail against the distortion of the game by big money. They know it in their bones. After the last baseball strike, fans stayed away in droves, dispirited and fed up. "A plague

main to hawk beer, automobiles, shaving cream, and assorted sports paraphernalia (shoes whose price is almost entirely the cost of advertising). I recently heard someone describe TV marketing as a physical process wherein the show (usually by way of violence) hypes the viewer into a state of internal agitation followed by commercials offering an array of solutions soothing to the psyche. Athletic competition is ideally suited, pumping our own adrenalin into us in calculated pulses and cycles.

Put that together with the ritualized

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addictive quality of sports and you have a corporate advertiser's dream. The ordinary mechanisms of addiction, so endemic to our culture, are linked to a mood-altering substance produced by our own bodies. Those with ESPN simply mainline the stuff. I'll bet Marx's take on America would have been that sports are the opium of the people.

Habituated by-standers and violence

William Stringfellow highlights the debilitating impact of sports as a power in the political realm. Americans are controlled by them, he avers, being preoccupied with the distraction and substitution. Above all, viewers are habituated in a spectator posture, which preempts their participation in real events, real decisions.

Just as those in the provinces of Rome were rendered spectators by spectacles in the circus, Americans are pitifully pacified in this regard. Pax Americana. President Nixon epitomized and caricatured this function during the War in Indochina as hundreds of thousands crowded around his house during the November 1969 Moratorium March. He let it be known to the press that he was not much aware of the demonstrators because he was engaged, as most ordinary Americans would be, in watching a football game.

In fact, Stringfellow considered the spectator element of sports-watching to lay the groundwork for public violence: *It is a short transition from such popularized arena events, diversion, and entertainments to the staging of persecutions, punishments, and executions as public spectacles. ... The political inattention and default occasioned by preoccupation with conventional commercial sports is just one way in which people are morally softened to the point where they become ready to be spectators at official persecutions and to applaud the lions when they devour their prey.*

There is a recurring debate about violence in sport. Some argue that it sublimates and controls violence, others that it socializes us to it, making violence legitimate. Novak is more with the former. He argues not so much that football can purge the human heart liturgically of violence as that it exposes the delusion of trying, though he does stress that police officers around the country know that during Monday night football, crime rates fall dramatically. He seems not to know what battered women around the country do, that Superbowl Sunday is regularly the day highest in incidence of spouse abuse. All that testosterone saturated in adrenalin and alcohol. Then half the men in the world's largest viewing audience come up losers for the day. I suppose they either buy something or beat somebody.

If you spectate, delight in the play, honor the tradition, but don't be a religious fan.

If football is indeed a religion, Mars, I suppose, would be its god. Martial ritual predominates in marching and formation. Famous coaches have also been warfare strategists. Its military lexicon (bomb and blitz, flank and platoon) as well as its turf-taking rules, are long noted.

Perhaps it's no odd coincidence that urban gangs looking for colors to identify their members settle on coats and shoes and team paraphernalia.

Community, play, and redemption

Can sport recover its vocation to praise God and serve human life?

I believe so. The powers may repent, as it were. And though we can hardly escape the Fall, we may slip their grip. All the above suggests certain responses. I won't pretend these are solutions in any sense, just hints and clues.

For play to be praise and delight, sports must actually be played, and for the sake of joy. Spectatorism may be the first alienation, the initial distortion in sport. This implies a participatory remedy, one which decommodifies the games, decommercializes them, deindustrializes. Put sports back in the commonspace: streets and parks and playgrounds (and without the shadow of professional sports distorting even the play of elementary school kids). What if these became again spaces for transcendence, realms of freedom and grace where, as Huzinga says, "no profit can be gained."

The best sports may be those with minimum paraphernalia, least vulnerable to commercialization. (Though it is astonishing how even pursuits like surfing or jogging become "technologized industries.")

Refuse to be a habituated spectator, be it in play or politics or the work of social transformation.

Get wise to the powers. Recognize their wiles and ways. Trust God alone for justification.

I'm not being ingenuous. So much of the powers' grip upon us and our culture stems from the search for meaning and identity they cultivate in themselves. Withdraw that projection and refuse that claim. If you spectate, delight in the play, honor the tradition, but don't be a religious fan.

Where corporate teams occupy your community, hold them accountable as any corporation to the community as its servants in every respect.

For godsake don't mortgage the block grant budget at the expense of the poor, for the sake of the rich.

Boycott corporations that ravage the third-world workers under the cloak of consumer economics. Better yet, don't buy empty consumer sports goods.

Resist violence. Practice freedom.

Play ball and (as in everything) praise the God of all creation. TW

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Ireland has president from the north

Mary McAleese, elected president of the Republic of Ireland October 30, is the first person from Northern Ireland to serve in that post. McAleese grew up in a Belfast Catholic family that was forced to flee their home because of sectarian attacks. She denied an opposing candidate's charge that she is "a closet supporter of the IRA," and said that Northern Irish Catholics who voted for Sinn Fein "did not give their vote to violence but gave it out of a sense of frustration of the small person against the big system by which he is oppressed, a way of telling people 'I am fed up; do something for me.'"

One *Irish Times* journalist described McAleese as "a liberal feminist conservative," reflecting some difficulty in classifying the outspoken 46-year-old law professor and university administrator with a deep commitment to Roman Catholicism and a surprising set of convictions.

McAleese supports the ordination of women, calling the introduction of altar girls "a small first victory for Christian feminists within the Catholic Church, among whom are a highly educated generation of young men and women who will not suffer sexist fools gladly," and expressing skepticism about "a God who for reasons which look suspiciously like dressed-up misogyny has confined priesthood to men."

She has championed prisoners' rights, disability rights and the decriminalization of homosexual acts.

She has also opposed abortion, divorce and the integration of Catholic and Protestant children in schools in the North, claiming that "until the adults in this community are capable of relating to each other, it is actually quite mischievous, if not quite dangerous, to insist that children should integrate."

McAleese is the author of a book on the trial and execution of 17 Irish martyrs in the 17th and 18th centuries and has contributed to many other publications. This year, she gave a presentation on "Reconciled Being" at the annual John Main seminar, which commemorates the Irish Benedictine monk who worked to reintroduce meditation into the lives of lay Christians. The lecture was previously given by the Dalai Lama.

Womb as obstacle?

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is "the most eminent priest of the New Testament," Tissa Balasuriya, a prominent Sri Lankan theologian excommunicated by the Roman Catholic Church last year, said at the November Call to Action conference in Detroit. "She could say as none of us can, 'This is my body, this is my blood offered for the redemption of the world.' If a womb was a requirement for the Incarnation, the presence of God among us, how can a womb be an obstacle for the sacrament of presence?"

Workfare workers want union

New York City's 35,000 workfare participants were recently given the choice to determine whether they desired to have union representation.

Since the passage of the draconian 1996 welfare bill, hundreds of thousands of AFDC recipients have been forced into various "workfare" schemes. These women usually work in jobs normally associated with the lowest wages: cleaning public toilets and streets, mopping hospital floors, picking up litter in subway stations. Few receive proper equipment for their jobs. Health and safety safeguards are virtually nonexistent.

In its latest initiative, ACORN began a campaign in New York City to achieve union representation status for workfare workers. Over a period of four days during October, about 17,300 people cast ballots at 250 polling sites across the city. The election results were clear: Almost 17,000 workfare workers voted in favor of organizing a union, with barely 300 voting against.

Randy Levine, New York's Deputy Mayor for Economic Development, protested that because welfare is supposed to be "temporary," it made no sense for "welfare recipients to become city employees."

ACORN organizers immediately challenged the Giuliani administration to meet with them, with the goal of improving working conditions for workfare workers.

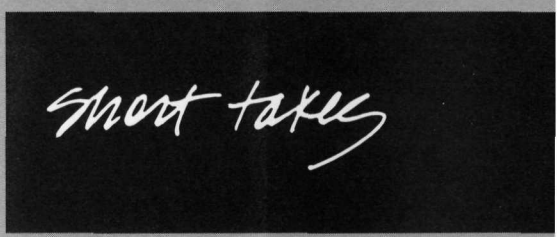
— Manning Marable, *Along the Color Line,* 11/97

White House to assist peace tax talks

The White House has promised to facilitate negotiations with the Treasury Department over the Religious Freedom Tax Fund legislation, an effort to enable conscientious objectors to pay federal taxes without violating their conscience by supporting the military. An attempt to attach the bill as an amendment last June was defeated, largely due to the testimony of treasury officials. Representatives of religious organizations including Baptist, Friends, Mennonite, Evangelical, Presbyterian and Jewish groups met with Maureen Shea, a White House liason for religious affairs, November 12 to discuss the need for such legislation.

Virtual mall

The Center for Concern has opened a "virtual mall" which lists organizations practicing fair trade. The website (www.coc.org/coc/) also includes links to retail stores in the U.S. and Canada, and links to information about human rights issues including sweatshop abuses, child labor and environmental degradation.



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Protesting mascot madness

Juanita Helphrey

A few years ago in Bismarck I was comfortably ensconced as executive director of the North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission, liaison agency for tribal-state relationships. I was well acquainted with the people and the struggles. When I felt a call to ministry with the United Church of Christ, I found myself in Cleveland in 1991.

That was my first encounter with Chief Wahoo, the ugly little red cartoon caricature of us! This logo was challenged years ago but revived in the 1990s. Cleveland fans mimic our imagery and mock what they imagine to be our behavior from the old cowboy and Indian movies.

All that war paint and the use of those feathers which are very sacred to us! What feelings it stirred up — anger, sadness, humiliation, disgust, and utter amazement. Had I not been assigned to the issue of negative stereotyping in my portfolio as minister for racial justice programs (the UCC has a resolution vowing to rid this society of this type of racism), I would eventually have joined this battle of the Native American community in any case.

Well, I went from being secure and comfortable to being agitated to the extreme, and then to jail for protest in Cleveland, October 23, during the World Series (which my Puerto Rican colleague says is not a world but a national series). We had been taunted by fans, ignored by media, and barricaded from the public for too long. Things were becoming worse than ever, so we took risks. Something drastic was needed. An effigy of Chief Wahoo was burned. Indigenous activist Vernon Bellecourt was arrested. When we were told to leave the so-called "private land" of the stadium, Juan Reyna and I refused to depart.

Being in jail wasn't so bad. It took patience, prayer (be still and know that I am God), singing good old hymns and even some "Pow Wow" songs remembered from my younger years. Those first three hours in that tiny hell hole somewhere under the stadium might have been frightening, or claustrophobic, but I wouldn't allow this to happen to me. Instead, I went deep within my spirit to attain peaceful calm.

Being in jail wasn't so bad. It took patience, prayer (be still and know that I am God), singing good old hymns and even some "Pow Wow" songs from my younger years.

I learned a lot about law enforcement from the arrest. I was shown hate, anger, lies, and disrespect. There were one or two kind officers but, in general, there's such a camaraderie amongst the police that, should one stretch the truth, others will support that fabrication (this happened to me).

My biggest discovery was the widespread dislike for people who protest, especially at their stadium, or who do not move when they say move! To us, this is language all too familiar — "Move, you're not allowed here" (or, "We want your land"). In fact, we are a big thorn in their side with our issue. They're weary of trying to hide us from the public, and they're tired of us challenging the team name and logo when, in fact, they seem to think we should be honored!

After we were detained for three hours below the stadium and another two and a half hours at the station, friends were finally told our whereabouts and bailed us out. Next morning at arraignment was the first time I realized I had misdemeanor charges: trespassing on private lands and aggravated disorderly conduct.

The complaint said I was violent and resisted arrest. Actually, I went willingly, was not handcuffed, and during the entire protest I drummed on my sacred hand drum. I did speak out for my colleague, Vern Bellecourt, who was calling for a doctor from his tiny cell and being ignored. Fearful for him, I insisted he needed help. Medics did come eventually, but only after I told them he'd had a triple bypass! I really am non-confrontational and non-violent, so the charge surprised me.

Would I do it again? Yes! Our history shows that change has come on civil and human rights issues only when arrests were made, when there was suffering and even death. How sad.

We know that education and awareness are what is needed — but first we must be heard. Now we must seize the opportunity to be heard publicly! We must get rid of these names and logos and challenge institutional racism, individual racism and even internalized racism. This insidious, invidious form of cultural violence must be obliterated! TW

Juanita Helphrey is Minister for Racial Justice Programs for the United Church of Christ.

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Domination by caricature

by Loretta J. Williams

Why is it that four-wheel drives are named Jeep Cherokees, trailers Winnebago, and helicopters Apache? Why is it that baseball teams are named the Indians or the Braves, but not the Caucasians or the Whites?

What are we being sold when corporations and advertising agencies use the names of sovereign nations to tout their products? In part we are sold: who's in charge, who's dominant and who's deemed subordinate.

In sociological terms, naming and claiming is appropriation.

Stereotypes of fierce warriors, the noble dead, obfuscate the legacy of conquest by European invaders. Denial of the pain caused by the continuing use of such logos is only a further element in appropriation.

The mascot issue is mislabeled an "Indian problem" when, in reality, it is evidence of a problem non-Indians have with Indians. The National Coalition Against Racism in Sports and Media, chaired by Vernon Bellecourt, is mobilizing to end the demeaning caricatures of Chief Wahoo, and the offensive gestures of the "tomahawk chop."

Chief Wahoo, caricature of a red man, is a familiar representation in our culture. As a logo and mascot it has become almost as invisible as background music — at least, to non-indigenous people. Some fans walk by the demonstrators against Wahoo and derisively gesture with so-called "war whoops."

Dan Wasserman ©1997Boston Globe. Distributed by L.A. Times Syndicate.

One fan, a Cleveland State University student, was quoted in the Cleveland *Plain Dealer:* "Personally, I don't think of Native Americans when I see Chief Wahoo. I can see why they might object to the old logo, but now it's more like a cute cartoon character." The team owner, Dick Jacobs, is clearer. He says that the name and the logo are "joined at the hip" in honoring "a brave race, a noble race."

In our society, images and words that to some seem familiar and innocuous are in reality dangerously disrespectful of God's people. What accounts for that? Socialization, for one. The U.S. public education system aids and abets the ignorance of non-Indian Americans about the history, culture and contemporary realities of Native Americans.

Racism, for another. Racism is about who has the capacity to make and enforce decisions, who can create or block access to resources, who decides on the standards for appropriate behavior, and who defines what is "the problem." The "who" is not so much an individual as a sports system and public culture which privileges whiteness and maleness.

Why is it so hard to hear Native American voices calling for the end of the mockery and disrespect to their culture and religion? The long-standing protest by Indian organizations and their allies continues. A national network of Protestant, Catholic and Jewish institutional investors, joined by a number of state pension investors, have taken a stand. They are leveraging their $70 billion-plus combined stock assets to chide Wahoo-affiliated corporations for their aggressive marketing. ICCR (Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility) is advocating the removal of Chief Wahoo from all sorts of paraphernalia: T-shirts, hats, mugs, bedsheets and more. Anheuser-Busch has agreed that the logo is racially insensitive. A & P stores removed racially offensive products from their shelves after meeting with Native American leaders and shareholder allies. Denny's restaurants have removed Chief Wahoo products and instituted an employee policy forbidding any Wahoo-related clothing while at work. These changes came as a result of organized protest.

If racist hierarchies built on conquest and corporate gain are to be dismantled, we have plenty of work to do. But our future depends on it. TW

Loretta Williams is a sociologist, activist, and former chair of the National Interreligious Coalition on Civil Rights.

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Stadium stampede:
the fight against new construction

by Michael Betzold

In 1887, when the Detroit Wolverines won the National League championship, thousands of citizens welcomed their heroes with a parade and banquet. Fans interrupted one game to give team captain Charlie Bennett a wheelbarrow filled with 520 silver dollars and cheered as he pushed it around the bases.

Such a scene would be unimaginable today. Far from being beloved fellow citizens, major league baseball players are rootless mercenaries and endorsement magnets. Club owners are rapacious moguls who practice extortion on their customers, constantly threatening to flee town unless their demands are met. Ordinary fans are priced out of stadiums. Pro baseball today does not build communities, it destroys them.

Detroit's Tiger Stadium, a national landmark, will be bulldozed in the year 2000 just so billionaire club owner Mike Ilitch can be further enriched by a new stadium. The demise of America's premiere proletarian ballpark will be a lethal threat to surrounding businesses and homes. A massive public subsidy will fund the building of an unnecessary, inferior new stadium. This new merchandising mall will be dressed up to look like an old-time ballpark, as is now the rage. The marketers who control what was once the national pastime have no qualms about selling off the game's history as a nostalgia item. Tear down the real thing, and replace it with a fake. Pro baseball no longer stands for anything except the quick buck.

As they have in so many other American cities, opinion leaders are covering up this shakedown of the populace with agreeable-sounding euphemisms. The new stadium is hailed as an impetus for the "revival" of downtown Detroit, though it already has pushed out the Detroit College of Law and the downtown YMCA.

Other enterprises also are getting shoved aside to make way for the sprawling empire of Ilitch, who will control parking, food and merchandising for blocks around the stadium.

Independent economists have proven new stadiums benefit no one except team owners, but such studies are largely ignored. The heralded "revivals" of downtown Cleveland and Baltimore, widely attributed to new baseball stadiums there, are shams. Cleveland's public schools went bankrupt and taxes soared so that Jacobs Field could be built. Baltimore also suffered massive losses through transfer of desperately needed public funds to build Camden Yards. In each city, downtown "comebacks" predated stadium construction.

In another verbal mugging, Tigers President John McHale has announced that the new stadium, with its 40,000 seats, will be more "intimate" than Tiger Stadium, with its 52,000 seats. That is an architectural impossibility, since Tiger Stadium achieves the most astounding marriage of size and intimacy of perhaps any sports facility in America. As in all new parks, the upper-deck seats of this new stadium will be twice as far from the field as those in Tiger Stadium. "Intimacy" is a code word for the creation of the artificial seating scarcity essential to the continuing rise of ticket prices. That's the reason new stadiums have fewer seats than the ones they replace. The vast majority of seats are reserved for season ticket holders. There are few or no outfield seats and bleachers, because cheap seats don't bring in the kind of clientele who buy expensive refreshments and souvenirs.

The design goals of new stadiums are the mirror opposite of those of Walter Briggs, an automotive manufacturer and Tiger owner who used his own profits after the Tigers won the 1935 World Series to expand Navin Field, built in 1912. Briggs sought to maximize the number of affordable seats for his factory workers and their families, and squeezed in more than 20,000 seats in the outfield.

The marketers who control what was once the national pastime have no qualms about selling off the game's history as a nostalgia item.

It was his desire to put as many seats as possible as close to the field as possible that prompted him to bulge out the upper-deck stands in right field, creating the park's famous overhang. For more than 60 years, Briggs' vision of a working-class ballpark has stood the test of time. The Tigers currently hold the major league record for drawing a million or more fans in 33 consecutive seasons.

However they are not, by and large, the right kind of fans for the new era. Some like to park for free on city streets rather than in $10 lots. Many choose to

Michael Betzold is a locked-out *Detroit Free Press* journalist and author of *Queen of Diamonds: The Tiger Stadium Story* (A&M, 1982). Photographer **Jim West** lives in Detroit.

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buy their souvenirs cheaply from street-corner merchants rather than from pricey in-stadium shops. They prefer $1.50 hot dogs to $6.50 chicken salads. And, most importantly, they buy their tickets a game at a time rather than in thousand-dollar-plus multi-game packages.

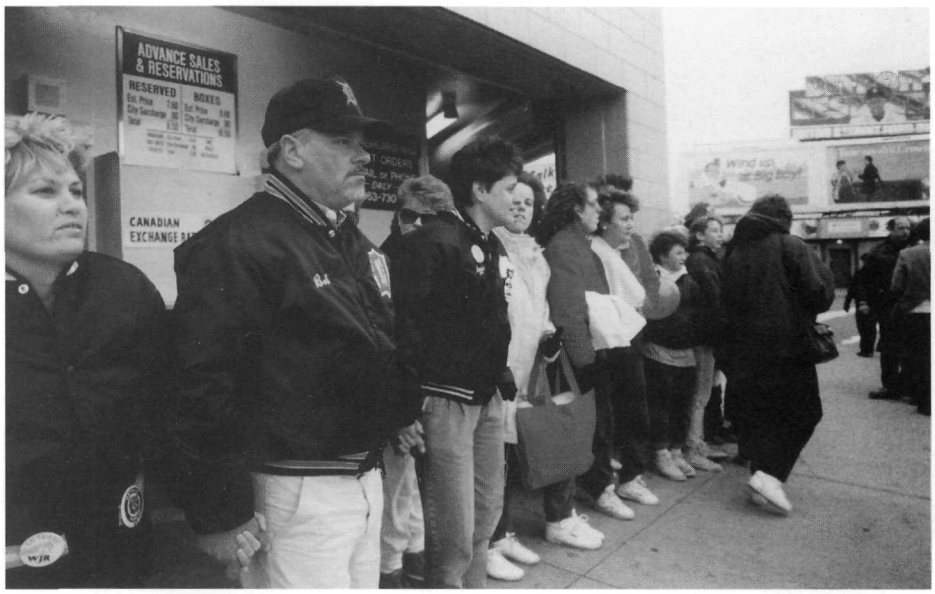
Sports have become our emblem of social class. Suits in suites get the best seats, the better to swing business deals. Many tickets are corporate perks, and the rest of the seats are filled with those privileged folks who can afford to blow $100 or more on a game. Ordinary folks stay home and watch on TV. Professional basketball, football and hockey have long ago made the transition to elite entertainment, and baseball, once the people's game but now just another spectacle, is following suit.

The sporting business has become our national religion, relegating both traditional religious life and the civic life of politics to the minor leagues. Whatever team owners say they need to "compete," they get, because our teams are our icons of competition.

Nowhere is this better illustrated than in Detroit. The very last thing Detroit needs is a new baseball stadium. The present one is more than serviceable. As a place to watch a ball game, Tiger Stadium is at least the equal of Boston's Fenway Park and Chicago's Wrigley Field. Properly promoted, it too could be a tourist magnet like its revered contemporaries. But even if the stadium were a cavernous monstrosity, as was Cleveland's old Municipal Stadium, replacing it ought to be at the bottom of any priority list in a city with plenty of poverty, crime, unemployment, vacant houses, poor schools, underserved neighborhoods and crumbling infrastructure.

Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer has just been resoundingly re-elected after touting among the foremost achievements of his first term his deals for a new stadium and downtown casinos. It's as if the captain of the Titanic got a hearty cheer from his passengers for unveiling blueprints for a new bingo room. To desperate Detroiters who have endured decades of failed downtown showcase projects and neglect of neighborhoods, the stadium project evokes a mixture of resignation and wishful thinking. Exit polls during Archer's landslide showed voters placing stadiums and casinos at the bottom of a list of priority issues for the city. Civic and opinion leaders in Detroit even concede that a new stadium doesn't bring the economic boon they advertise. The new stadium is a feel-good charm that substitutes for real work on tough issues. Sports, after all, is our favorite diversion.

Even in business terms, replacing Tiger Stadium and other old ballparks is short-sighted, a way to maximize profits today while destroying the long-term viability of the franchise. New stadiums attract interest for a few years, while they're fashionable, but loyal fans flee. In Chicago, venerable Wrigley Field continues to attract sellout crowds for the hapless Cubs while the much superior White Sox play in front of empty seats at the sterile New Comiskey Park, already a white elephant less than a decade after it opened. No matter. New stadiums are not about logic, they are about the ways in which sports business moguls wield power in a society obsessed with maintaining the illusion of a winning team.



Detroit Tigers fans circle the current outdoor ball park to protest construction of a new indoor corporate stadium. Jim West

When I and four others founded the Tiger Stadium Fan Club in 1987, we were a group of fans alarmed at the imminent loss of our beloved ballpark. We first attracted other fans, including many ex-Detroiters for whom the stadium was their most vivid memory of experiencing a sense of community, shared celebration or childish awe. In letters to us they recalled that great swath of bright green field that made a kid's mouth drop open at first glimpse; their joy at being among an interracial crowd cheering wildly for the interracial team that won a miraculous World Series championship in 1968, a year after Detroit's devastating civil disturbance; or going gaga for pitcher Mark "The Bird" Fidrych, an overgrown

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kid who connected to innocence and emotion. Memories such as these represented something more than mere spectator sport; they suggested a kinship in struggle and hope and triumph. They — and the remarkable building that made possible these memories — represented something worth saving.

Our initial years of work emphasized the positives of Tiger Stadium. We staged a couple of stadium "hugs" — human chains which attracted media attention and dramatized fan affection for the ball park. Some talented architects in our group donated their services and came up with a cost-effective, elegant renovation plan. Others pursued support from historic preservation nationwide. We hoped that logical arguments and grass-roots pressure would prevail.

Doing economic research confirmed our suspicions that our cause was really a social justice issue. We began to cast our arguments in terms of social priorities, comparing the costs for a new stadium to the unmet needs of the city. We started attracting a few new members who weren't baseball fans, who saw the new stadium project as the epitome of a bankrupt showcase-building approach to urban policy. Our board of directors included two clerics: John Meyer, Episcopal priest of a church that depended on parking revenue from Tigers games to fund a program for teenage girls in crisis, and Thomas Gumbleton, the famous nonviolent activist Catholic bishop. But for the most part, the city's religious leaders did not get involved, nor did most of Detroit's political progressives. Both groups tend to dismiss professional sports as trivial. That's like pretending not to see an elephant trampling your backyard garden.

The issue of spending tax dollars to produce a new asset for a wealthy private businessman did strike a populist chord statewide. Funding a Detroit stadium became so unpopular that state legislators ran and hid from the high-priced lobbyists Ilitch sent their way.

So the dealmakers went behind closed doors and emerged with a workable scam. Republican Governor John Engler agreed to divert $90 million from a fund designed to help small businesses; despite the fact that the legislature never appropriated the money, the scheme survived a legal challenge. Mayor Archer anted up $50 million of precious city funds; when the Tiger Stadium Fan Club forced the issue onto the ballot, Archer simply played the race card, smearing the Fan Club as a bunch of suburbanites trying to dictate city policy, and the battle was over. Ilitch postured that he would pay for the stadium with $145 million of his own money; in fact, banks pledged to loan the money only after the city gave Ilitch options on acres of prime land around the stadium which he could use as collateral. The project went ahead before Ilitch ever put any real money into it. As in every other city where a new stadium is built, Detroiters will be left to pick up the inevitable massive cost overruns and hidden extra charges.

We began to cast our arguments in terms of social priorities, comparing the costs for a new stadium to the unmet needs of the city.

In recent years, many Americans have turned away from the greed factory that is professional sports. Perhaps a crash is coming when the limitless supply of sports commodities finally exceeds the demand. But beyond individual disengagement, the sternest test for a community today is to just say no to pro-sports extortionists. If we really are to regain our independence from addiction to the sports entertainment business, we have to be willing to commit a sacrilege and risk that our teams will flee to new markets. Only then might we be able to face up to the work that really needs to be done in our communities. We might have to play our own games and become our own heroes. TW

Back issues with connections to this month's topic

The following back issues of* The Witness *relate to the spirit of this month's topic:

- *Body wisdom (5/95)*
- *Glamour (11/94)*
- *Fasting in Babylon (12/96)*

Other available back issues:

- *Africa: Come, spirit, come (6/95)*
- *Allies in Judaism (10/97)*
- *Alternative ways of doing church (9/94)*
- *The Christian Right (10/96)*
- *Church structures and leadership (5/97)*
- *Christians and animal rights (10/93)*
- *The communion of saints (11/93)*
- *Death penalty (9/97)*
- *Defying presumptions: gay/lesbian Christians (6/97)*
- *Dialogue (4/94)*
- *Disabilities (6/94)*
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The fascination: spectator sports

by Thomas S. Henricks

The fascination of "modern" industrialized societies like our own with spectator sports is something to be explained. Certainly sport itself — as a celebration of the human body in motion — is found in all societies. What most other societies do not have is our seemingly endless stream of commercialized sporting spectacles, our passion for regarding and digesting these, our exaltation of sporting experts, and the preeminence of such matters in our public mental life. Surely, a group of "scientists" from some celestial realm would be surprised to open almost any American newspaper and find the (growing) amount of space that is devoted to sports reporting. Learning that our magazine displays are commonly segregated by gender, they would be stunned by the degree to which sporting periodicals constitute the fodder of the masculine mind. Making their way to the television, they would learn that local newscasts are divided into a holy triumvirate of news, weather, and sports. And the more assiduous ones would discover not only that sports reporting is placed near the end of the broadcast to hold the attention of wayward viewers but also that the other newscasters are expected to banter knowledgeably with the sportscaster about his chosen subject. Indeed, public commentators who know little or nothing of sports are seen as somehow un-American, like Axis spies who could not name the Brooklyn infield.

As our visitors explored public spaces they would overhear conversations about sport in restaurants, elevators, bars, and hallways. They would discover sporting images and metaphors to be abundant in political speeches, sales presentations, and even sermons. They would learn that sports "superstars" are among the most recognized faces and names on the planet.

Arriving at the campus of almost any high school or college, the traveling scientists would be amazed by the amount of space and facilities devoted to sporting endeavors. Indeed, as the sociologist James Coleman once noted, entering any public high school in the U. S. is rather like entering the confines of an athletic club. Trophies, banners, mascots, letter sweaters, and uniforms of various types predominate. Sports provide the occasion for all-school pep rallies and "excuses" to be absent from school.

Coaches claim the attention and allegiance of students in ways that mere teachers find hard to match. Clearly, something powerful and pervasive, something that differs from Algebra Club, is at work.

The economists in the study team would discover that this public appetite is expressed by the billions that Americans spend on sporting attendance and paraphernalia. The current average expenditure by a family of four at a baseball game (for tickets, transportation, concessions, etc.) is over $100. Professional franchises in the major sports are worth between $100-300 million.

Such matters are part of taken-for-granted existence in America by most men and women. They are thrown into perspective only when someone (mock seriously, I'm sure) proposes that other activities might claim similar levels of

Soccer spectators Jim West

Tom Henricks, professor at Elon College in North Carolina, writes regularly on the sociology of sports. He was a valuable consultant on this issue of *The Witness,* with which he may not entirely agree. Photographer **Jim West** lives in Detroit.

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Chomsky on sports

When I'm driving, I sometimes turn on the radio and I find very often that what I'm listening to is a discussion of sports. These are telephone conversations. People call in and have long and intricate discussions, and it's plain that quite a high degree of thought and analysis is going into that. People know a tremendous amount. They know all sorts of complicated details and enter into far-reaching discussions about whether the coach made the right decision yesterday and so on. These are ordinary people, not professionals, who are applying their intelligence and analytic skills in these areas and accumulating quite a lot of knowledge and, for all I know, understanding. On the other hand, when I hear people talk about, say, international affairs or domestic problems, it's at a level of superficiality which is beyond belief ...

I'm sure they are using their common sense and intellectual skills, but in an area which has no meaning and probably thrives because it has no meaning, as a displacement from the serious problems which one cannot influence and affect because the power lies elsewhere.

Now it seems to me that the same intellectual skill and capacity for understanding and for accumulating evidence and gaining information and thinking through problems could be used — would be used — under different systems of governance which involve popular participation in importatnt decision-making, in areas that really matter to human life.

Noam Chomsky interviewed by James Peck in The Chomsky Reader *(N.Y.: Pantheon, 1987)*

attention. For example, what about a television newscast divided into news, weather, and art? Or an all-school pep rally wishing students luck on their new theatrical production?

Certainly, all of us can understand why people enthusiastically follow the sporting activities of a loved one or friend or schoolmate, but why should we invest ourselves so heavily in the lives of public entertainers?

Sport as a protest against routine

The American historian Daniel Boorstin has claimed that our world is now flooded with "pseudo-events." By this term, he means activities that occur only for the sake of being witnessed by others or reported in the media. Press conferences, anniversary sales by stores, awards banquets, "ribbon cutting" and other public celebrations by businesses and schools are typically exercises in self-congratulation and public relations. Without the prospect of public attention, these events would not exist or at least would exist in radically different forms. Into this category of activity falls spectator sport.

The purpose of such events, according to Boorstin, is to convince the public not only of the importance of the event's sponsor but also of the "newsiness" of our world. When "natural" occurrences fail to fill the news hole, artifice intervenes. Indeed, Boorstin argues that the line between the natural and artificial has been crossed so often that we are losing our ability to tell the difference. By increments, public discourse becomes an Infomercial.

If one's appetite for sport is sufficiently broad, there is a steady stream of great events. Although the customary seasons of many sports have been expanding to dramatic lengths, season-ending games in major sports typically do not interfere with one another. Tournaments in college basketball and football are kept away from their professional rivals. "Grand slam" events in professional tennis are coordinated with the "majors" in golf. Indeed, in a world where television coverage is everything, finding spots in the network schedule for women's professional basketball or major league soccer becomes problematic.

In this context, sporting events are both a protest against routine and a part of it. Spectator sports guarantee eventfulness. We shall see triumph on the faces of winners and anguish in the vanquished.

There will be a series MVP — and a goat. And the whole panorama of struggle takes place before us — in "real time" — as we sprawl godlike in our Barcaloungers. We wish a world that is both exotic and comfortable, a Wild Kingdom subject to remote control. And television gives it to us.

Sport as personal regression

I have argued elsewhere that sporting events speak centrally to many people because they put us in touch with simpler times and places in our lives. Those of us who are adults know that life is both complicated and consequential. Like jugglers, we try to keep the elements of our lives aloft. Serious mistakes bring down your dreams around you. Dropping the baby matters.

By contrast, the sporting world is cut loose from everyday obligations and consequences. Real life is cumulative; sport for the most part is not. Season records may be compiled, but each game represents an opportunity to begin again — without prejudice or disadvantage. In this sense, the sporting world defies past and future. History ends with the opening whistle; players and fans alike plunge into the present.

Sport is made captivating or entrancing by a variety of devices. In addition to being separated physically from other venues, playing fields are exotic in appearance and design. Similarly, playing equipment, now specialized for every

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sport, is discontinuous with utensils in the world beyond. Functioning in a similar way are the costumes distinguishing each category of participant. There is the framework of magnificently wrought — but thoroughly artificial — rules. There is the vast set of gestures and language and knowledge that separate the *cognoscenti* from the pretenders. To enter the sporting ground then is to take seriously a series of contrivances and necessities that have no status in the world beyond. And woe to the "spoilsport" who exposes the whole proceedings as pointless or silly.

This desperate seriousness about artificial rules and circumstances is akin to the "moral realism" described by Jean Piaget in his studies of children. However, sport is reminiscent of childhood in many other ways. After all, play and games are perhaps the business of childhood. Sports put us back in touch with activities we have loved. They reconnect us to the physical history of our bodies and to the development of our identities as persons. In general then, most people have a sporting history that they revisit in their own play and spectatorship. To watch a professional sporting event is to be amazed by what the human body can do.

Furthermore, the relative simplicity of the playworld is both charming and important. Indeed, the very isolation of play activities from worldly consequence — one reason why adults often trivialize children's play — is what causes play to be a useful site for creativity and rebellion and self-reflection. In sport, people explore physical predicament and their own skill levels and the consequences of behavior in relatively harmless ways.

Significantly, some of these challenges — various physical confrontations and public outbursts — are forbidden under usual circumstances. By exploring these sometimes illicit venues play allows us to discover who we are.

Achievement-based societies

Are certain kinds of societies more passionate about sport than others? Certainly, all peoples play and all of them include athletic sports among their play forms. Nevertheless, it seems true that advanced industrialized societies, like our own, have placed spectator sports near the center of their public imagination and discourse.

Why is this? Of course, some of the enthusiasm for spectator sports may be traced to demographic and economic matters. For example, one of the consequences of the Industrial Revolution was the movement of people into more congested urban areas with fewer public spaces for free play. In place of the old commons and fields rose commercial entertainment establishments. Amusement parks, music halls, bars, bowling alleys, sporting arenas, etc. became central elements in a pay-as-you-go world. This shift to money culture was accompanied ultimately by the movement toward a 40-hour work week. Leisure became a new focus for working people.

Jim West

Indeed, many commentators have argued that leisure has now become a "problem." The continued growth and diversification of the job market means that we no longer understand (or perhaps are even interested in) each other's work. What we can communicate — and judge each other by — are leisure pursuits.

If sports participation (or better yet, accomplishment) has become a badge of status in our world, so has the knowledge and identity that comes from following big-time sport. People parade logos of favorite teams; they trade sporting insights at the water cooler; they sport autographs and posters of special players. Many people connect themselves to

We wish a world that is both exotic and comfortable, a Wild Kingdom subject to remote control. And television gives it to us.

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teams by following them on road trips or by wagering considerable amounts of money and pride. In this sense, vicarious participation becomes vested and substantial. Fans as well as players become "battle-scarred veterans."

All of this seems less than absurd because of our nation's dominant value system. Sociologists tend to distinguish between societies that more or less assign people at birth to the jobs and communities they will inhabit (what is called ascription) and those that allow people to find their own places through individual effort or achievement. Although the United States is routinely offered as an example of an achievement-based society, all of us know that family status and other accidents of birth play profound roles in our social class and other personal characteristics.

However, our country does have a publicly articulated value system that emphasizes individual achievement. Combined with this is an emphasis on relative equality of opportunity — again more a cultural ideal than a social fact. Indeed, the United States positioned itself against Europe and the rest of the Old World in precisely these terms.

Seen in this context, spectator sports are ceremonies which display the working out of these two themes within a competitive framework.

Whereas most public rituals have a well-placed official conferring social status on participants ("I now pronounce you husband and wife"), sports allow people to find their own place through public struggle. Whereas rituals tend to follow explicit rules and achieve more or less predetermined ends, sports celebrates surprise and spontaneity and disorder. A wedding or religious ceremony is in some sense "over" before the Fat Lady sings; in sport this is not the case. The writer John Lahr long ago emphasized what he called the "crisis of realism" in sport; sports fans are desperate that the competition be "genuine" or unscripted. "Say it ain't so, Joe," is something one says to a baseball player and not to a priest or movie actor.

In this context, sporting competitions stoke the achievement ethic of societies like our own. Sports fans explore the meaning of personal character under duress. They reflect on the implications of success and failure. They watch personal ambition being balanced by team loyalty. They contemplate the unpredictability of fortune and the shifting of physical capability through the life cycle.

Most profoundly, they reconcile themselves to a world where winning and losing seem to be the natural order of things.

"Say it ain't so, Joe," is something one says to a baseball player and not to a priest or movie actor.

Sport as a basis for community

Huge crowds both humble and empower their members. To sit with 50,000 others in a public stadium applauding tiny actors on a field below is to know insignificance. But the great mass that surges and sighs and exults as one also affirms our personal sentiments and resolves. To become anonymous is to find oneself in a new way. Remarkably then, spectator sports have become the most common way of gathering large groups in our industrialized world.

Are such gatherings a good way to experience the meaning of community? Is the "teamwork" displayed on the field below a useful metaphor for our lives?

Surely, the sporting crowd itself — as an audience of consumers — leaves something to be desired. Arrayed by ticket prices or special connections, the sporting crowd lounges in semi-private splendor.

The audience wanders in and out; vendors hawk junk food and worthless trinkets; beer and rudeness co-mingle. Indeed, the sporting crowd is a point of culmination for our rights-oriented society — where people (having purchased a seat) enter a world of strangers owing each other absolutely nothing. Nor is this obligation reciprocated by those staging the performance. People pay to see public entertainment. Beyond this, patrons have no claims upon the owners of the team or its players. Communities may own stadia but not teams; fans confused about this point should look for their favorites the following year in Raleigh or Jacksonville.

The spectacle of team cooperation — of brotherhood or sisterhood — is surely more appealing. What the audience sees are young adults working together in common cause, tight-faced and ready to fight.

Great victories mean high fives and piles of celebrating bodies; great losses mean consoling embraces and bitter tears. For men at least, such expression is normally forbidden. Sport offers scenes of sweaty, non-sexual familiarity that are, again, reminiscent of childhood. For all its bravado, sport is ultimately child's business; and there is something both sweet and mournful about athletic consolation.

Part of the charm of sport is surely this opportunity for public expression. However, emotion in sport is strangely disconnected from any great and abiding purposes. Just as sport isolates and displays sheer physical skill, so emotion is distilled. Sports performers play at social connection without experiencing all its entanglements and obligations. On such occasions, community lapses into mere familiarity; sentiment becomes sentimentality. Spectator sports draw us into their world with scenes of easy comradeship; but they must not be confused with the more abiding commitments that real community entails. TW

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Nike: running with abuse

by Bill Resnick

Globetrotting for the cheapest workers, Nike exemplifies the new economic order and the world it is making. Nike produces through "subcontractors" forced into the most ruthless labor practices. It cooperates in state repression of popular movements. With other transnationals, it is reshaping the world system towards intensified income polarization and environmental exploitation.

Nike also struts its stuff. It's everywhere, instantly recognizable. A $100 Nike gym shoe represents $6 of materials and production, $70 of marketing/advertising, and $24 of profit. Nike's corporate energies are mostly devoted to shaping culture and consciousness.

Pushing consumerism to the ultimate, Nike offers us not just the good life but meaning and transcendence, thus embodying capitalism's thrust to omnipotence, over the economy and also over personhood, identity, society.

Nowhere is Nike bigger than here in Portland, Ore. Nike's "campus" headquarters in suburban Beaverton is just 10 minutes up the freeway from downtown. Nike has pioneered their overdesigned, showy, graceless and actually ugly new store/shrines here.

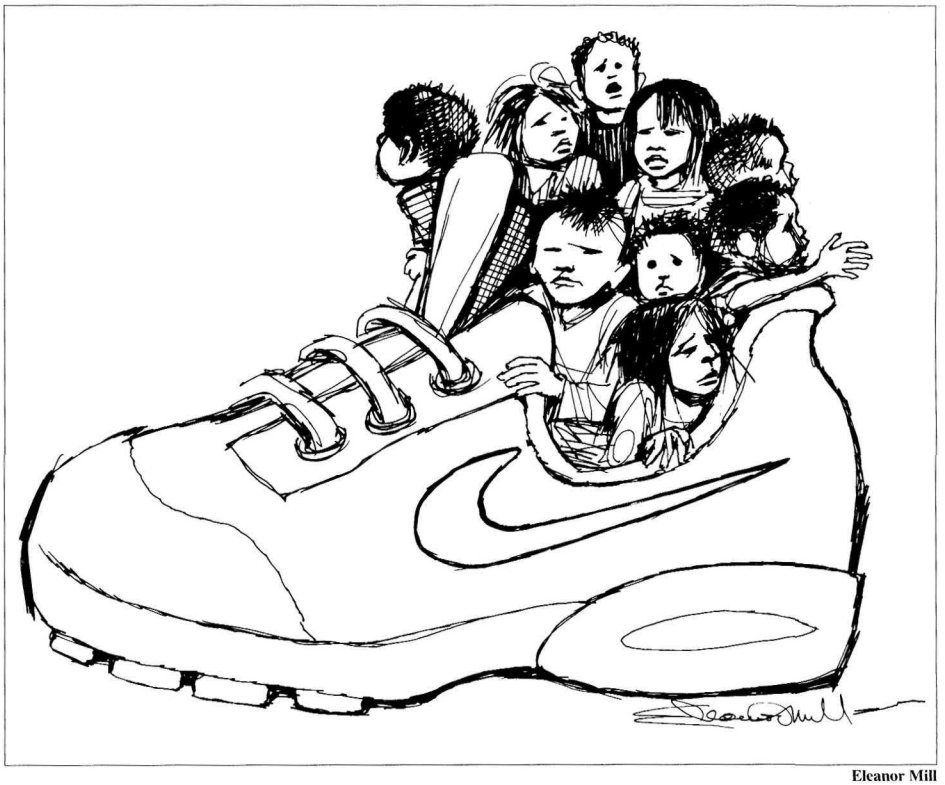
The big daily newspaper, *The Oregonian,* celebrates Nike profit reports with more space and pride than victories by Portland's pro-sports teams. And its owner-founder Philip Knight is a gangly, curly-haired Donald Trump, obsessively acquiring more trophies to proclaim his majesty.

In short, Nike makes a perfect target for organizing. Portland activists' ongoing anti-Nike campaign caught fire when the school system, suffering from a tax revolt mostly benefitting commercial property, went begging for corporate money. Nike's gift was simultaneous with a *Life Magazine* exposé of Pakistani children stitching Nike soccer balls.

A school board member who had worked in sweatshops in Hong Kong in his youth wondered whether the schools should accept money made on child labor. His resolution to reject the gift, unless Nike accepted independent monitoring of its Asian contractors, ultimately failed 6-1—but did generate an intense and instructive series of rallies, demonstrations, hearings and store invasion/occupations.

The Nike campaign coalition—including Jobs with Justice, the East Timor Action Network, some Greens, and Justice Do It! Nike, formed by Amnesty International activists when Nike refused to meet with them — was not ready to take the fight expressly to international capital. The campaign's critique of Nike has gone at child labor, repressive contractors, its failure to pay minimum wages and support for the Indonesian military state.

Campaign demands have concentrated on independent monitoring of Nike factories, with a boycott in the works. Nike has, of course, tried to ignore the campaign. But once the campaign got public attention, the daily



Eleanor Mill

Bill Resnick is an activist and radio producer in Portland, Ore. A longer version of this article appeared in the magazine, *Against the Current.* Artist **Eleanor Mill** is syndicated from Hartford, Conn.

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paper came to Nike's defense, by reciting transnational ideology—how Nike was contributing to the healthy development of foreign countries and how the emerging international division of labor was good for the U.S. economy and its workers.

Nike's power and glory give the opportunity and indeed invite and require a response — both critique and vision of an alternative equally big and encompassing. The campaign has tried to confront Nike, and thus global capital, to build those big alternative understandings.

The local big daily, *The Oregonian,* speaks for Nike:

"Recent publicity should not obscure the value that Nike's investment brings to the developing world."

Of course the editorial writers didn't try to cite one country that developed through foreign corporate investment. In fact, there are none. Mexico, for example, has received enormous foreign corporate investment over the last 20 years, but Mexican workers' wages have fallen 50% and Mexico's environment has been ravaged.

Nike is no more a developer of Indonesia than United Fruit was in Honduras. For the people of any country, it makes no difference if they export bananas, shoes, cars or microchips. When multinational corporations pay low wages, take their profits out of the country and support oppressive, kleptocratic governments, then their investments just mean misery and destruction of natural resources.

Nike's defense through *The Oregonian* reads: "Nike's contracts in developing areas include provisions against child labor and requirements that suppliers follow the applicable laws in their own countries."

We acknowledge Nike can write pious contracts—but point out that Nike invites violations. Nike does virtually nothing to demand contractor compliance with child labor and minimum wage laws.

As to Indonesian state repression of labor, and the deals that local manufacturers make with local military to harass and imprison, sometimes kill, labor organizers and journalists, Nike says and does nothing. And of course Nike is completely silent about Indonesia's seizure and genocide in East Timor.

A $100 Nike gym shoe represents $6 of materials and production, $70 of marketing/ advertising, and $24 of profit.

In contrast, when Nike sees its interests threatened, as in trademark violations or theft from its factories, Nike takes very decisive action. Nike and global capital's claims that it is helpless to stop violations because of respect for national sovereignty is contradicted by its practice.

The Oregonian repeated Nike claims that: "In Indonesia the Nike wage is twice the national minimum. Entry level workers in Indonesia make five times as much as the average farmer. Nike jobs are widely sought after."

As to Nike contractors paying twice the minimum wage, *Business Week* just reported that one Nike contractor asked for a waiver of the minimum wage itself. And the Indonesian government acknowledges the obvious, that in a country where food is sold at world market prices, a $2-a-day minimum wage is barely enough to eat.

In view of decisive and irrefutable evidence of crimes and human rights violations by its manufacturers, Nike should have taken a number of immediate steps: (1) revise its standards upward, (2) create an effective enforcement unit and arrange for independent monitoring of compliance, (3) announce a "no excuses allowed" policy to its contractors, and (4) reopen negotiations, offering contracts that would pay fair wages.

But even had Nike been forced to take these actions, they would be inadequate and no lasting remedy. It is the structure of the world economy that is injuring workers here and there.

Nike/capital's so visible imperialism, geographical and psychological, render it suspect and easy to attack. So, starting with Nike in Indonesian sweatshops, we can examine Nike and global economy, Nike and American workers, and finally Nike and consumer culture and the degradation of consciousness and society.

Taking on Nike can be a way to revive a visionary left, confident in its premises, attacking international capital on all fronts and demonstrating a counter vision. TW

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The Witness

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Next steps for Native ministry

by Mark MacDonald

The 72nd General Convention of the Episcopal Church last summer in Philadelphia took pains to express its appreciation for its American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian members throughout its proceedings and, significantly, in the budget process. South Dakota, North Dakota, Navajoland, and Alaska, for example, four dioceses with very large Indian populations, were specially exempted from the across-the-board cuts in the triennial budget and received an extra $300,000 for new ministries in the next triennium. Likewise, the new and innovative Indigenous Theological Training Institute, designed to assist leadership development among Native people, was given critical financial assistance for the next triennium. Convention also designated 1997-2007, "A Decade of Remembering, Recognition, and Reconciliation." 2007 is the 400th anniversary of the Anglican Communion's "Jamestown Commitment" to the mission to American Indians. The Decade calls upon the whole church to develop "an outreach partnership among Indigenous Peoples."

Though we can express unalloyed hope and joy at these and other positive outcomes, there is still so very much to accomplish. Although the action of Convention is vitally important both in its meaning and impact, it should be noted that it does not overturn the deterioration in funding for Native ministry which began in 1991. Although a decline in funding alone is not fatal, it will be if it is combined with an absurd requirement that Native people support the expensive and crumbling remnants of a ministry infrastructure designed for Victorian England. (An essential and elementary background for the missiological dimensions of this discussion can be found in the 1970 Eerdmans publication, *Understanding Church Growth,* by Donald McGavaran, who insists that a basic dimension of church growth is that congregations be "sustainable and replicable.")

The absence of basic congregational and pastoral resources in Native communities was the theme of virtually all the legislative action taken regarding Native peoples at Convention. But Convention did not directly address some of the deeper dimensions of the problems of the churches in Native country. To approach this level, we must begin asking a complex and difficult question. Why, after 400 years of mission, are some of the most basic church ministries unavailable for long-established congregations and promising new mission fields? This question is complex, because identifying the primary problems involves unraveling a tangle of good and bad intentions, vast cultural differences and the legacy of 500 years of attempted genocide. It calls us all to break through the walls of indifference and hatred that warp individuals and, when institutionalized in an organization, destroy both the oppressor and the oppressed.

Why, after 400 years of mission, are some of the most basic church ministries unavailable for long-established congregations and promising new mission fields?

Beyond crisis

As long ago as the 1961 General Convention, the Episcopal Church officially declared its alarm at the decline in the number of American Indian clergy. Though the numbers have dropped steadily since 1936, it was finally termed a "crisis" in the 1960s. In recent years, the crisis was intensified by the inability to develop other resources to provide basic pastoral care, with or without native clergy. From the 1600s through the 1800s many Native communities opened their doors to an Episcopal Christian presence and ministry. Usually, the welcome was offered with a condition that the churches promise not to abandon their educational and pastoral work in the future. These promises, sometimes made at treaty negotiations between the U.S. government and the tribes, continued the consistently stated policy of the church. The church would work for the well-being of the tribes through evangelism, education, human services and advocacy. In the context of the treaty negotiations, a commitment to speak for the integrity of the treaties in the public square was included. A few bishops even became signatories to the treaties. The meaning of our failure to take these promises seriously can only be appreciated in the context of present day conditions for Native people in North America.

The Native population continues to be near or at the bottom of the scale of every meaningful indicator of health and well being. Unemployment remains, across the board, somewhere between 50 percent and 75 percent. To imagine the social problems this creates, recall that during the "Great Depression" overall unemployment reached a high of 19 percent. The lingering traces of military occupation and a genocidal policy of the destruction of culture, lethally combined with spirit-crushing poverty and unemployment, has produced a rate of death by violence or accident of over 35 percent — the highest rate in the world.

Due to government cutbacks in treaty-

Mark MacDonald was recently consecrated Bishop of Alaska.

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promised support for infrastructure development and human services, a number of tribes have been forced to look to casino income for much needed assistance in responding to this massive need. Though there are a few spectacular examples of profit and success, the majority of the tribally sponsored casinos provide little more than an employment opportunity for tribal members. Though this is significant in itself, there has been a price to pay in terms of public relations outside their communities and social problems within. Amazingly, an already unsympathetic public, including the White House and Congress, has convinced itself that the poorest of the poor in our society are quite well-to-do. This has oftentimes increased the pace of the erosion of treaty-mandated funding for tribal human services.

Native communities are also threatened by the elimination of their land base through environmental destruction and political and economic theft of tribal land and sovereignty. A land base is essential to the subsistence economies of Native life. But, for Native people, like Israel of old, it is also the very basis of cultural existence. The environmental and political challenges to the Native land base are a matter of economic, spiritual, and physical survival.

In light of the challenges facing Native communities, the pastoral absence of the churches in Native country is painfully conspicuous. For many Native communities, the local church was the primary or only organized social and human service resource apart from the already hard-pressed tribal government. For most Episcopalians, a lack of pastoral presence in their community would be painful, but not life-threatening. They would utilize a number of other readily available government and private-sector resources to fill the gap. For most Native people, that option does not exist.

Barriers to effective mission

The next step for the church in its relationship with Native people will be to face what Paul describes as the "strongholds" of evil in human thought and argument. Although these may begin in individual human hearts, when they are institutionalized in human organizations they become a fortress of destructive communal and spiritual evil. It is these spiritual "strongholds" that can turn attention into indifference, empowerment into abandonment, and well-intentioned budgets into instruments of further mayhem and pain. They create the "sociological barriers" which hinder the incarnation of the Gospel in Native culture and, at the same time, prevent the development of indigenous leadership. These hindrances are really at the heart of the crisis of ministry in Native country.

In *Guadalupe: Mother of the New Creation,* Virgil Elizondo has used the phrase "sociological barriers" to describe the invisible walls placed in the leadership development process that keep non-white, non-western people out of positions of leadership, even in their own congregations. I use the term "invisible" in a special sense. They appear to be invisible only to those who erect them. They are starkly visible to those who live on the other side. For many of us in the church who have lived on the comfortable side of the barriers, they are so much a part of the fabric of our life that we are too close to see them. Invited to share in the salvation offered through the church's Gospel, Native people have seen their Nativeness prohibited by the institutions that define the character and shape of the life of their local churches.

Money will not solve the problem. If the churches of Native country are built under the guidance of a colonial mentality, we will, at best, see a few outposts of a crumbling Christendom.

The systematic exclusion of the non-Western "colored" poor from ministry, priesthood, academia and religious life. has been one of the great mortal sins of our church that persists to our own day. No wonder Pentecostalism, which invites the poorest of the poor to minister and proclaim the Word of God without any humanly designed qualifications, is flourishing among the poor of the world.

Present day sociological barriers have taken the colonial legacy and its implicit racism a step further in sophistication. While proclaiming its sympathy for Native people and other minorities, the institutional church has been unable to free itself from a past that saw missionary endeavor entangled with colonial goals.

Even though this may not be close to the stated policy of its mission to minorities, the church as an institution has not been able to rid itself of an approach to congregational development among the so-called minorities that dictated that every ministry must look exactly like the "mother" church's model. In the last half of this century, the Episcopal Church, along with all of the other "mainline" denominations, adopted standards of professionalism borrowed from the business world. While it would be foolish to argue that this has been universally evil, it is unfortunate that this process has acted as a Trojan horse, bringing with its welcome elements many of the worst values of Western materialism. Unavoidably, this has caused even greater cultural conflict between Native people (and other so-called "ethnic minorities") and the institutional church. The church has too often reflected the bias and perspective of the socio- economic class that dominates its leadership.

The programmatic professionalism which became synonymous with leadership development was aided and abetted by the GI bill after World War II. Up until that time, most clergy "read for orders" in their local community and the institutionalized "professionalism" which is taken for granted by modern clergy was largely unknown. Since the late 1940s MDIV, CPE, GOE and COM all became a part of the alphabet soup that spelled T-R-O-U-B-L-E for people outside of the dominant leadership class in society. The

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primary victims of this process have been the poor and outcast of this world. But the church is also a victim. For, when the Gospel is perverted to provide a salve for a well-off few and mission is distorted to cloning an elite, the church has become a club that is in danger of losing its soul. In such a state, no one can be truly comfortable, no one can be truly free.

Even well-intentioned efforts to solve the problem are thwarted by the colonial legacy. The so-called "local priest" option, now Canon 9, was designed to help develop priests for "communities which are small, isolated, remote, or distinct in respect of ethnic composition, language, or culture, and which cannot be provided sufficiently with the sacraments and pastoral ministrations of the church through clergy ordained under the provisions of Canon III.7." (Con. and Canons, Title III, Canon 9, Sec. 1 (a)). (How a catholic priesthood of any kind can be "local" and not universal is yet to be explained — Canon 9, when held in opposition to the normative process, raises some serious theological questions apart from its impact on the question of Native leadership development.)

Please note that the number of Native people ordained under the provisions of this canon has trickled to almost none over the past few decades. Designed to ease access for minorities, a quick perusal of its net effect is that it has made it easier and cheaper for those who already have "sociological" access to the priesthood, while still keeping the barriers up for those who are non-white and non-Western.

A number of other programs, developed by seminaries or dioceses, share in the basic problems outlined above. To date, none have had more than minimal success in addressing the crisis. All have had some share in the inability to escape the colonial legacy. Academic credentialing, the heart of most of the institution's systems of leadership development, is a major problem when it is the primary, if not only, indicator of professional readiness. This is especially true if academic credentialing requires proof that a candidate has abandoned the "primitive" notions of Native religious tradition. The reality is that anything that does not represent a linear, rationalistic, and analytical approach to religious tradition is in danger of being called "fundamentalism" and, therefore, vigorously opposed. This fear refuses to recognize that fundamentalism is a product of the West and that, as a category, it is insulting in its failure to capture the complexity, subtlety, and spiritual sophistication of Native approaches to the Christian tradition. It is heart warming to note that a number of Western theologians, chief among them Harvey Cox, have noted the insufficiency of the categories of modern Western theological rationalism to engage the vibrancy of Native religious thought.

At present, the requirement that the churches and people of Native country follow guidelines for congregational and pastoral development that will produce ministries that are financially unsustainable is, on the face of it, unwise. In the absence of adequate funding, this may be described as the "let them eat cake" approach to mission development.

Money will not solve the problem. If the churches of Native country are built under the guidance of a colonial mentality, we will, at best, see a few outposts of a crumbling Christendom. Even if the money were available to build such churches, they would not be authoritative in Native communities. What resources we now have, and even more, should be directed towards a new model.

In the Anglican Indigenous Network there are a number of churches developing congregations and leadership that suggest that our pattern in the U.S. is far from inevitable. The Maoris in New Zealand and the Native people in the Canadian diocese of Keewatin are forging ahead with a vibrant mission that is not based on colonial models. In the U.S., each diocese and, perhaps, each Native community will develop along different, but in the Holy Spirit, complementary lines. The experience of others not only indicates that something better is attainable; their example is a call to all Native communities to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches and to incarnate its truth in the localities of North America. Before this can happen, there must be a true missiological partnership between Native peoples and the larger church.

Drumming by Eagle Calling Sound, a Native American group from S. Dakota, opened the ceremonies at the signing of the New Jamestown Covenant, Nov. 1, 1997. The document calls the Episcopal Church to repentance and encourages new relationships between the church and Indians during the next decade. ENS/Michael Barwell

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Spong challenges primates' anti-gay prejudices as Lambeth sexuality debate looms

John Spong, Episcopal Bishop of Newark (N.J.), issued a nine-page public "message" to Anglican primates last November intended "to challenge the prejudice and ignorance that I believe has been inflicted upon this Communion" as groundwork for the upcoming Lambeth conference of bishops next summer. The conference is held every ten years to develop consensus on future directions for the Communion.

Spong cited anti-gay statements issued by George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the General Synod of the Church of England, "the incredible and ill-informed diatribe that came this past year from the Archbishop of the Southern Cone (South America)" and the statement issued by a conference of 80 Anglican bishops meeting in Kuala Lumpur.

"All of these negative messages were widely disseminated through the press," Spong said. "My concern is that if those are the only voices raised in the public domain, then a distorted picture of the status of this debate will be seen. The facts are, I believe, that these religious voices are significantly out of touch with the knowledge revolution that marks our generation."

Carey took public umbrage at Spong's accusations, calling the tone of his message "hectoring and intemperate."

"You attack personally those of us who disagree with your opinion and in doing so you distort the theologies and reasons why we are led to conclude that there is no justification for sexual expression outside marriage," Carey said. "I understand that you feel passionately about this and that you have the support of a significant number of bishops. However I would ask you in turn to recognize that a very large number of bishops from all over the world disagree with you with equal passion."

Carey said he hoped that at Lambeth the bishops would call for an International Commission to consider sexuality issues. "The conference will be less inclined to do so, however, if you, or, indeed, others on the opposite side of the argument, intend to split the conference open on this matter."

Spong denied any desire "to impose a solution to this issue upon our Communion." However, he questioned the archbishop's own impartiality.

"You characterized my statement as 'intemperate' and as 'leaving little room for dialogue,'" Spong said. "Yet I do not recall your issuing any criticism, much less similar harsh words, about the Kuala Lumpur Statement, the Dallas Statement, or the Statement by the Archbishop of the Southern Cone [which] made assertions about gay and lesbian people that were not just intemperate, but offensive, rude and hostile."

Those statements, Spong noted, "went so far as to threaten to break off communion with provinces of our Communion who disagreed with them. You do not appear to have suggested that they left 'little room for dialogue.'"

Spong charged that Carey's "silence in the face of these affronts" revealed where the archbishop's convictions lie. "That makes it difficult to have confidence in your willingness to handle this debate in an even-handed way," Spong said.

— Julie A. Wortman

Maine elects Chilton Knudsen

The Episcopal Diocese of Maine elected Chilton Knudsen, canon for pastoral care in the Diocese of Chicago, bishop on November 14. She becomes the fifth woman elected to head an Episcopal Church (U.S.A.) diocese, the eighth woman bishop in this province of the Anglican Communion, and one of eleven women to serve in the episcopate worldwide.

Knudsen, 51, is a nationally respected consultant and counselor in matters of sexual exploitation by church leaders. She succeeds Edward Chalfant, who resigned his post as Bishop of Maine in 1996 after admitting to an adulterous affair with an unmarried woman.

"My priorities regarding the leadership of a diocese which has

Chilton Knudsen

suffered the trauma of a bishop who engaged in sexual misconduct," she said, "are the priorities which are relevant in all circumstances in which some betrayal has happened: the building of trust and accountability — a style of life which reveres privacy yet precludes secrets and knows that God transforms everything for good if we are but willing to see that."

As bishop, she said, she knows some members of her new diocese may reject her ministry because she is female. "God's will in this regard looks to me like open and vulnerable truthfulness, courtesy and good will, and candid acknowledgment that there may be points where agreement is, at this time, simply not possible," she said following the election.

"So I will call us to back off to the point where we can agree and live there together as we await further guidance. What I do embrace, and freely made ordination vows about, is the process of governance which we have determined for our Episcopal Church. Some decisions simply have to be made or clarified. We cannot drift together while we wait for unanimity to happen. It won't."

Knudsen, who is married with one grown son, was ordained a priest in 1981. She has served several parishes and is a trustee of the Church Pension Fund.

— Julie A. Wortman

Fallen kings: old and new

by Jualynne E. Dodson

"When we were kings," Gramercy Pictures/Polygodin Documentary by Leon Gast and Taylor Hastford.

It was 21 years ago, while suffering from "hyper-sensitivity" to human life, that I gave up on boxing. The life-giving process of nursing my son made me extra sensitive to human pain and unable to watch boxing or many other encounters that inflict pain on another. I had almost forgotten about the condition until the 1974 World Heavy Weight Championship boxing match appeared like a flashback on the screen of my VCR. The film is an Academy Award-winning documentary of the famous, or infamous, "Rumble in the Jungle" between Muhammed Ali and George Foreman. It was held in Kinshasa, Zaire, on the African continent, with all the world, or at least the U.S., watching by satellite television.

Before I would remember my aversion to the infliction of human pain, I had been watching an hour of footage wherein a variety of well-known, mostly U.S. personalities commented on select topics about the masterfully publicized sporting event where Muhammed Ali, the challenger, was presented as a successful boxing personality whose status had risen among Africans of Zaire because, as a black Muslim, he protested participation in the Vietnam War.

I watched images and heard commentary about the murderous preparations President Mobutu Seko made to insure that the international spectacle in his country, Zaire, was not marred by criminal activity — and images and commentary about the entrepreneurial agility of Don King as organizer and promoter of the match ("Don King as Messiah"?? give me a break!) There had even been material showing the impressive physical power and low-keyed approach of world champion, George Foreman; not to mention the minor flashes of renown black musicians who would participate in the entertainment extravaganza that coincided with the boxing match.

Eventually the two beautiful black gladiators would be about the business of seeing who could inflict the most bodily damage on the other.

As a matter of fact, I was so caught up in those sequences that captured the human normality of Africans and other black people — black people doing regular things in their regular lives, in their own country; something rarely seen on a U.S. television screen — that I was physically surprised when two beautiful black men actually began beating each other in the ring. Not that I didn't know this large-scale documentary, billed as a "film" and designed to hype the comodification of black prowess in its African origins, was about boxing. On the contrary, boxing and the name Muhammed Ali are synonymous to most African Americans in the U.S.

I knew all right! Eventually the two beautiful black gladiators would be about the business of seeing who could inflict the most bodily damage on the other. Nevertheless, despite the clear message that sports — and boxing in particular —is a major ingredient in the political economy of U.S. international capitalism, I was mesmerized by those prior sequences that overwhelmingly returned images of blackness to me through the television screen.

But the actual boxing brought me back to reality.

I had been watching boxing's fallen "Kings": Foreman lost, but Ali went on to be physically defeated by damage inflicted through boxing. Worst of all, I had also been watching the beginning of new Kings: media glorification of sports and sporting events to the level of popular idolatry. In 1974 it was Muhammed Ali, in 1997 it is Michael Jordan — both African American men with God-given talent that has been touted as though it actually improves the lives of humankind.

The point is not the sportsmen's individual intentions but how commodifying their talent and marketing it has become big, international, multinational BUSINESS. The "Rumble in the Jungle" was another instance wherein black men were useful and necessary to catapult sports into the next principality — with all the glitz and gloss of electronic and other media taken to a world of consumers. Is there no Balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick economics of commercialization? TW

review

Jualynne E. Dodson is Associate Professor of Ethnic and Religious Studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

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Cary McGehee

A team sport "teaches community, how to celebrate together and not to let losses defeat you."

Fighting bias, finding community

by Marianne Arbogast

When Cary McGehee reflects on what basketball means to her, she recalls drinking beer on summer afternoons in the parking lot of a suburban YMCA. During college breaks and after graduation, she showed up at 3 p.m. every Saturday and Sunday to play basketball with a group of men who formed an unusual small community. At 5 o'clock, when the game ended, they would linger outside for refreshment and conversation.

"I remember thinking, here we are, a white woman in her 20s from Birmingham, a black man in his 30s from inner-city Detroit, a man in his 50s who's a millionaire who owns strip malls and another man in his 30s who's an auto worker from Cooksville, Tenn.

"We played basketball, then we talked about basketball, and then we talked about other issues. We had disagreements on political and social issues and we debated and argued and then we came back the next week to play basketball again. The only thing that brought us together was this common love for basketball and there was definitely a sense of community."

Many of her friendships, work contacts and life values were forged on the basketball court, McGehee explains. Now a civil rights attorney and college basketball referee, McGehee played professional women's basketball in 1984, at a time when there was minimal interest in women's sports.

After graduating from Bowling Green with a degree in communications and a distinguished college basketball record, McGehee moved to Dallas to join the Dallas Diamonds, one of six teams in a new professional women's league. Since she worked full-time as a customer service representative for Sprint, McGehee did not travel with her team, but was paid $200 per week for practice and home games.

At the time, men playing in the NBA were earning a minimum of $60,000 – $70,000, McGehee says.

"I didn't care because I loved the game and it was nice to have that opportunity. The league folded immediately after the season—in fact, my last paycheck bounced.

"There was no comparison with the NBA, which had major TV contracts and major attendance at the games. Our franchise was probably the most successful in the league and we averaged 3,000 people who attended the games. Once we had 6,000 because we had a bring-a-can-of-food-and-get-in-free charity thing."

The disparity was not new to McGehee. It was not till her junior year in college that she felt the effects of a 1980 court decision which ordered the enforcement of Title 9, a 1974 law mandating gender equity in college athletics.

"There were a lot of changes in how we were treated as a team," McGehee recalls. "Before, we had two vans for 15 players. We would travel four hours to a game, do the game, then drive four hours back. Meanwhile the men were in a coach bus and they got there the night before and were put up in a nice hotel. In my junior year we got a bus, too, and new uniforms, and our meal budget went up. One of the biggest changes was an increase in the number of scholarships, which offered more women an opportunity to get an education."

While she celebrates the opening up of sports for women, McGehee reflects that the lack of a professional option may have helped women keep their sports

Witnesses, the quick and the dead

Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of *The Witness.*

involvement in perspective.

"Women realized that there wasn't that opportunity to be a professional basketball player, so there was not an unrealistic expectation that kept you away from your other priorities. Most of the women who played basketball when I was playing also tended to their academics and were conscientious about getting a degree."

When the Dallas Diamonds disbanded, McGehee returned to Detroit and enrolled in law school, graduating third in her class from the Detroit College of Law. While looking for work, she found that her basketball experience worked in her favor.

"I found it interesting that people interviewing me were really intrigued about my athletic career," she says, though it was not till she became an employer herself that she understood why. "When I look at who I want to hire, I think that aspect of a person's life can be very important. If the person has competed on a college level, I know that they have been able to dedicate themselves to something enough to excel in it. I know that the person is probably a good time manager, works well with others and probably knows how to take direction."

A partner in a law firm specializing in employment discrimination, McGehee spends much of her spare time refereeing high school and college basketball. In addition to keeping her in a game she loves, she believes in what basketball can offer young people.

"It teaches kids that in a team sport they need to sometimes just play a role, and the importance of doing that," she says. "It teaches them how important it is to put time and dedication into something if you want to get better at it. And I think it also teaches community, how to celebrate together and not to let losses defeat you."

In 1991, McGehee had a second brief professional basketball experience in an exhibition game that was intended to launch a women's league. Although she found it exciting, she was dismayed by the lack of respect accorded the women athletes. In an attempt to add above-the-rim play to womens' games (which characteristically employ other skills more heavily), the rims were lowered to eight-and-a-half feet, which McGehee saw as "distorting the whole game." Worse, the players were issued one-piece spandex uniforms.

"They figured that what you needed to get people to come and watch a women's basketball game was a little sex," McGehee explains. "Well, most women who play basketball don't necessarily have the bodies to fit into these outfits. One woman was about 6'1" and 210 pounds. She was big-hipped and large and she felt like an idiot in her uniform. Another was 6'5" and skinny as a bean and her hipbones were coming out and it looked ridiculous. Some of us looked all right, but the outfits were not conducive to playing basketball because they were tight and restricted movement."

"They figured that what you needed to get people to come and watch a women's basketball game was a little sex."

McGehee was also told she should grow her hair longer — a suggestion which she was spared having to consider, since the league never got started.

Although McGehee is positive about the current prospects for women's basketball, she also acknowledges a potential dark side. "The corporate aspect has distorted the pure sense of the game in terms of who plays and what's called and who gets away with what," she says. "Professional basketball players are getting paid so much money and I think there isn't anything like the competitive edge that exists at the college level."

She is also concerned about the impact on girls, who may soon be subject to the "hoop dreams" syndrome of their male counterparts.

"When kids think they're going to be that one-in-a-million professional basketball player, they lose perspective on what is really important. Sometimes the player is moved along in school and not held to the same standards as others." Also, she says, "it can be a real negative when kids get caught up in logos and who's wearing what. I think professional athletes, to some extent, have an obligation to be role models."

The responsibility to place one's talents at the service of community — so central to team sports — is at the heart of McGehee's outlook on life. An Episcopalian and the daughter of Coleman McGehee, former Bishop of Michigan (also a former basketball player and attorney), McGehee says that the most important aspect of her faith is "compassion, the importance of helping others with whatever talents you have, being conscientious about how you can make a difference."

Her sense of obligation to her work has undergone careful scrutiny and evolution. "I started out more cut-and-dried in terms of my role as an attorney," she reflects.

"I'm finding out more and more that probably the most important aspect of my practice is counseling people. I'm dealing with people who typically have been emotionally impacted by their loss of employment or been sexually or racially harassed. If you're not sensitive about what their needs are you aren't doing them a service.

"In refereeing I'm involved in kids' lives, so I have an opportunity perhaps to be an influence, and that's important to me as well." TW

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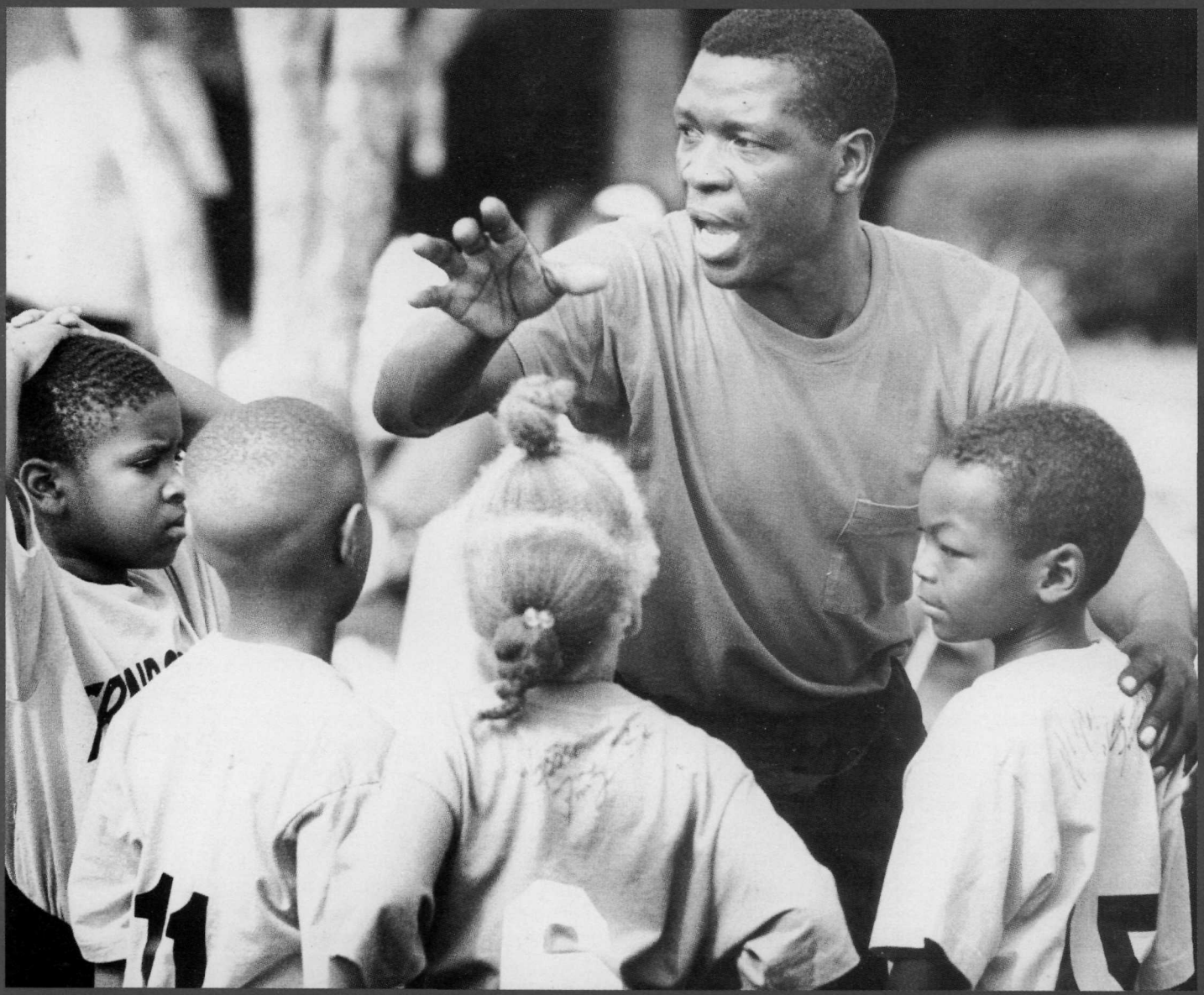

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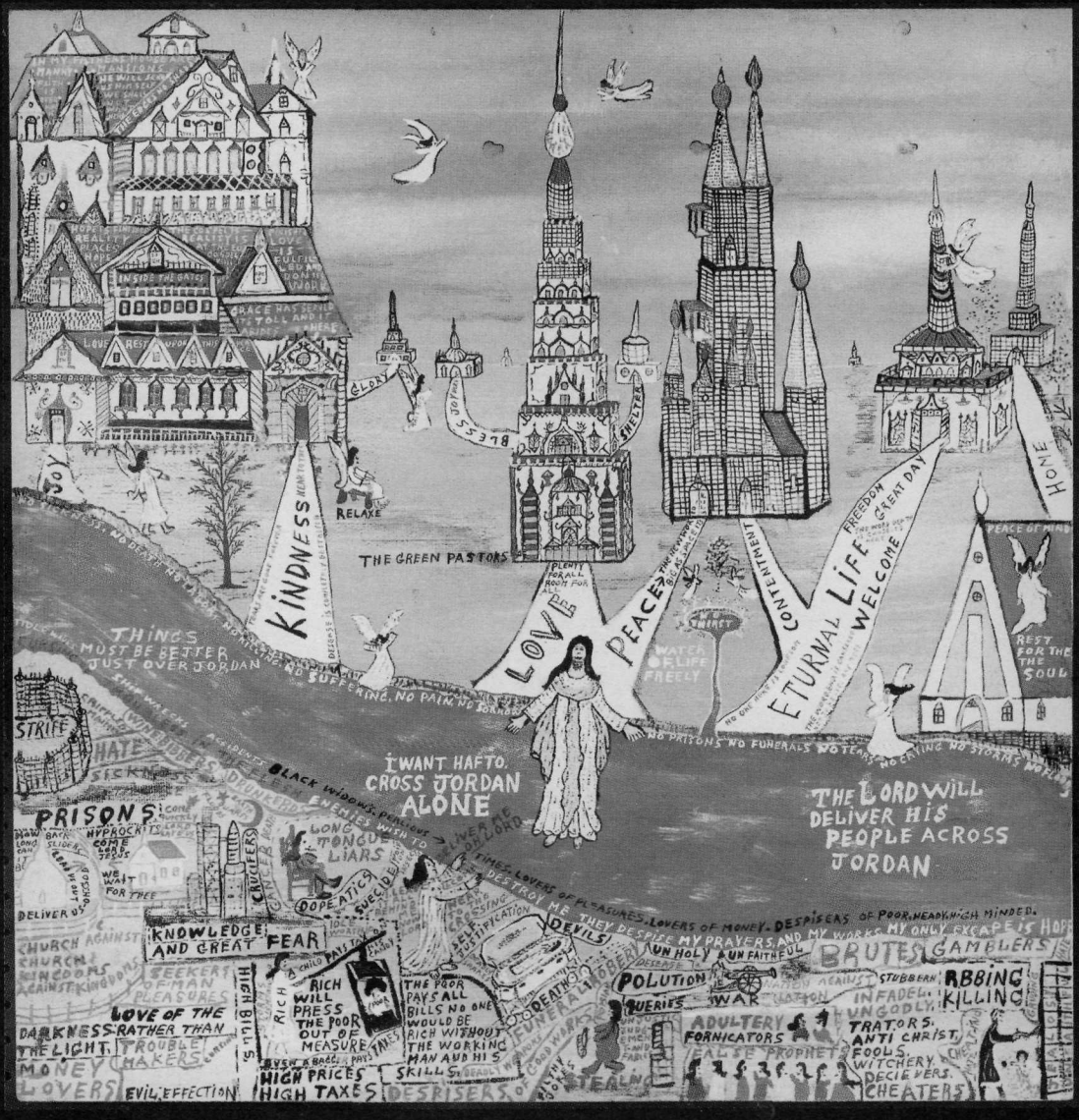

Welfare 'reform' and poverty in the 1990s

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Northern Ireland

THANKS FOR ANOTHER EXCELLENT issue. This time on the "winds of peace" in Northern Ireland. I want to add to the Corrymeela article that our mutual friend and mentor, the late Very Rev. H.C.N. Willams, Provost of Coventry Cathedral and founder of the International Community of the Cross of Nails did much to bring healing, reconciliation and trust to the Corrymeela community. It was through his vision back in the 1970s that many of us in this country led our congregations in reaching out in faith and hope that the winds of peace could gather strength.

Thanks for keeping the church on the cutting edge of the issues. It was Wm. Sperry of Harvard, 50 years ago who cautioned us:

"Give to us, Lord, a right discernment between that which comes first in our faith and that which follows after. When we would make much of that which cannot matter much to Thee, recall us to the heart of our Christian profession, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The Witness comes like clean, icy water to a church which seems to prefer luke-warm, saccharine, toxic tonics. Keep up the good work. Your publication gives us hope!

Gordon Price
Dayton, OH

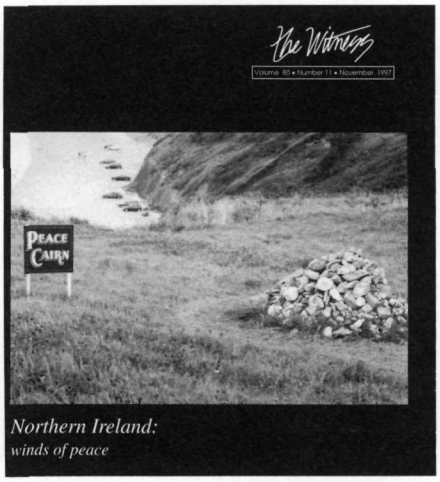
JUST A NOTE TO THANK YOU for sending on the November issue of *The Witness*. Thanks also for featuring the photo of our "Peace Cairn" on the front cover.

We receive a lot of visitors here at this "Centre of Peace & Reconciliation."

John O'Keefe, OFM
Rossowlagh, Co. Donegal

Diana's funeral

HAVING BEEN IN ENGLAND at the beginning of September, I have some things to say about Douglas Theuner's comments on the funeral of Princess Diana [*TW* 11/97].



Northern Ireland:
winds of peace

First, considering that Archbishop Runcie betrayed Diana's confidences about her failing marriage to a journalist, and that the official C of E, as I saw when I lived there, virtually ignored her during her lifetime, preferring to whitter about whether Charles could still be its defender, it was probably just a little late for "the church" to start preaching about its special knowledge of life or death to Diana's family and friends.

Second, Westminster Abbey is no more George Carey's "house" than it is Doug Theuner's, or mine. To suggest that Carey's "worldview" is devalued because the Princess's gay friends are seen to enter an Anglican place of worship is insulting nonsense. The camera's eye showed us lots of people going into the Abbey, including Baroness Thatcher, whose politics and beliefs are brutally antithetical to what Diana stood for in many people's minds and hearts.

Last and most important, "the church" was there for people who mourned Diana's death. Services were held in many denominations and faiths all over England — and elsewhere! Pastors and rabbis did double duty responding to the pain and questions and puzzlings of the public, not just their parishioners.

If we take seriously our commission as Christians, we surely must realize that the gospel message is not to be judged by a single funeral — least of all a state one. The family has the most right to decide what kind of funeral they want, or — in this case — can put up with. People within and without the Abbey — of all faiths, or of none — needed to say goodbye to Diana, not be subjected to the conservative Anglican take, however sincerely offered, on salvation and resurrection. Far too many people have used Diana's suffering and death to promulgate their own agenda — bishops, it seems, among the rest.

Mayne Ellis
New York, NY

Death penalty

I'M AN INMATE on "Alabama" death row. Will you please donate me a copy of your September issue featuring the death penalty?

The enclosed is a back issue of one of our "Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty" newsletters that I thought you might find interesting and enlightening. "Project Hope" is an organization created and established by a group of us here on death row in a common cause and in a sworn commitment to fight to stop this terrible evil killing. If you feel in any way we can be of some service to you toward the issue of the death penalty and enlightening the public, please don't hesitate to contact me or any member of our board.

Arthur Lee Giles Z-394
D.R. 5-U-6
Holman 3700
Atmore, AL 36503

Greening prayer

I HAVE LOVED YOUR WORK for years — the combination of art and poetry and variety in articles on a theme and plainspeaking re: church issues, and your unique persons as you have been revealed. I hope this prayer will reach you as the one-by-one souls who work together to create *Witness*. A check accompanies it to subscribe and help. Wish it could be more, but as an unwaged professional chaplain at the University of Iowa hospital, I am in fact paying myself and enjoying my chosen ministry on survivor benefits. My specialty is geriatric spirituality.

A Greening Prayer

Godde
keep me always
greening

keep me rooted
in the dark
keep me turning
into light

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keep me well
and deeply watered
keep me bending
with the winds

keep me growing
beyond fences
keep me leafing
budding blooming

keep me fruiting
keep me yielding
ever blessing
everything

keep me healing
calm and able
keep me still as
stillness calls

keep me always
greening
Godde

Blessing me as I am
this day blessing what I do
drawing me into your ways
of love

LET IT BE SO

Nancy Cogan
Iowa City, IA

Not renewing

I AM NOT GOING TO RENEW my subscription this year but I may resubscribe in the future. There are two reasons. The first is that I am "weeding out" excess paper from my life and only keeping the subscriptions to magazines I can't live without. The second is that your political stance is difficult for me — not that I don't agree, because in most cases I do, in theory, but because my own view as a Christian requires me to look for the common ground and seek unity and communication rather than polarization. So while I may agree with your point of view, your method of expressing it is difficult for me.

Zabeth Adams
Hartford, VT

Witness praise

THE MOST USEFUL GIFT my sister-in-law ever gave me.

Mary Beth Summer
Cincinnati, OH

ENCLOSED IS A CHECK for a year's subscription to *The Witness*. The magazine has an excellent format and themes. It's great to have a publication in the church that's so interesting, thought-provoking and inclusive.

Paul Winters
Framingham, MA

EXCELLENT, THOUGHT-PROVOKING, stimulating. Addresses itself to relevant issues in a very helpful way.

William B. Kerner
Richmond, VA

YOUR MAGAZINE KEEPS ME ALIVE! So often when I despair over the state of the church, the superficiality and indifference, something you write says, "keep on trucking." It's so personal and warm. Thank you.

Mary K. Goode
Milwaukee, WI

WHY DID IT TAKE SO LONG for me to hear about this publication? It makes me sad because of what I've missed.

Marybeth Jorgensen
Evanston, IL

continued on back page

Corrections

David Ota, the subject of our December 1997 profile, writes to say that his father's two brothers-in-law, not brothers, were Episcopal priests. He also notes that the non-Anglo population of Foster City includes persons of Chinese and other Asian heritages. The Vietnamese priest he worked with is Duc Nguyen. He adds that while the Episcopal Church continues to allocate inadequate resources to Asian ministries, there are now several Episcopal Church congregations or ministries that are Vietnamese.

In the same issue we neglected to note that the photo by Jim West on page 22 was supplied by Impact Visuals, although the other Jim West photos in that issue were supplied by Jim West directly.

Classifieds

Communication/evangelism training

Communication consulting and evangelism training for progressive parishes and organizations. The Rev. Walt Gordon has 8 years experience as a diocesan communication officer and editor of the award-winning diocesan newspaper SOUNDINGS, and 10 years parish ministry experience. References, evangelism brochure available. 612 874-6887, <walt@storytellers.com>, 230 Oak Grove St. Suite 115, Minneapolis, MN 55403.

Parishfield research project

I am looking for material (papers, photos, etc.) and people willing to be interviewed pertaining to history of Parishfield, including planning and inception. All materials will be returned or donated to Parishfield archives at Bentley Library of University of Michigan. Please contact Sara Winter, Lang College, New School for Social Research; 65 W. 11th St.; New York, NY 10011; tel. 212-229-2653. E-mail: <winter@newschool.edu>.

Episcopal Urban Intern Program

Work in social service, live in Christian community in Los Angeles. For adults 21-30. Apply now for the 1998-99 year. Contact: The Rev. Gary Commins, 260 N. Locust St., Inglewood, CA 90301. 310-674-7700.

Vocations

Contemplating religious life? Members of the Brotherhood and the Companion Sisterhood of Saint Gregory are Episcopalians, clergy and lay, married and single. To explore a contemporary Rule of Life, contact: The Director of Vocations, Brotherhood of St. Gregory, Dept. W, Saint Bartholomew's Church, 82 Prospect Street, White Plains, NY 10606-3499.

Classifieds

Witness classifieds cost 75 cents a word or $30 an inch, whichever is less. Due 15th of month, two months prior to publication.

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The Witness

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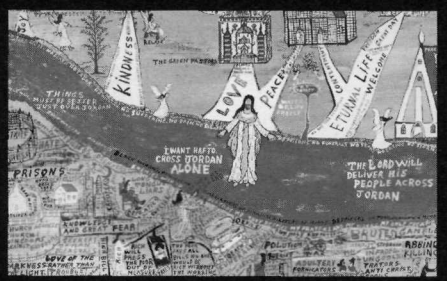

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Cover art: "The Lord Will Deliver His People Across Jordan (Panel one of three)," by Howard Finster, 1976, National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of Herbert Waide Hemphill, Jr.

The Witness offers a fresh and sometimes irreverent view of our world, illuminated by faith, Scripture and experience. Since 1917, *The Witness* has been advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those people who have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." We push boundaries, err on the side of inclusion and enjoy bringing our views into tension with orthodox Christianity. *The Witness'* roots are Episcopalian, but our readership is ecumenical. For simplicity, we place news specific to Episcopalians in our Vital Signs section. *The Witness* is committed to brevity for the sake of readers who find little time to read, but can enjoy an idea, a poem or a piece.

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

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Office: 7000 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210-2872. Tel.: (313) 841-1967. Fax: (313) 841-1956. To reach Julie Wortman: HC 35 Box 647, Tenants Harbor, ME 04860. Tel.: (207) 372-6396.
E-mail: <[first name]@thewitness.org>.
Website: <\\www.thewitness.org>.

Poverty needs 'off the grid' approach

by Julie A. Wortman

Witness readers may remember that Maine experienced one of the severest ice storms in its history this past January. We living here on the St. George peninsula were spared the storm's worst damage, but inland a few miles the sound of chain saws filled the air and most households were without electricity for many days — some for up to two weeks.

Despite the hardships, Mainers felt good about how well they weathered this calamity. People pulled together in hundreds of reassuring and heartwarming ways, noting that Governor Angus King's impassioned plea that we all take time to check on the safety of our neighbors — the rural elderly, especially — was just the right thing to ask of us.

A remarkably popular governor, King, an Independent, is no liberal. In the welfare reform debate his position has been to insist that the poor should help themselves. How strange to hear a person with such views insisting that our mutual well-being depended on an aggressive alertness to one another's needs!

My guess is that trying to exercise leadership in a state so massively off the public utility grid momentarily caught the governor off guard. Certainly, all the normal assumptions about the essentials of existence were for a time called into question for all of us — the long absence of television alone, some said, was a bracing shock to the system.

Unless we occasionally get jolts like this, how easy it is to accept, unquestioned, the assumptions behind the way our society chooses to operate. As the articles in this issue make abundantly clear, the so-called "reform" of the welfare system we are experiencing is a sickening sleight-of-hand maneuver to cut our human "losses" as ruthlessly as CEOs do when they are trying to improve corporate profits. Decades of misinformation and malicious, racially motivated stereotyping by politicians catering to the interests of big business and the rich, however, have gradually persuaded a wide spectrum of Americans that welfare programs cause rather than limit poverty; that people of color in urban ghettos, most of them teenaged and unmarried mothers, are the chief users and abusers of the welfare system; that, left to themselves, most poor people won't look for work; and that the private sector would do a much better job than our inefficient, fumbling government in getting poor people off the welfare roles.

We will do well to remember that the powers count on our sense of urgency.

Thanks to the work of social scientists like Rebecca Blank (see p. 29), Lucy Williams (p. 10) and others, we have access to information that shows that such assumptions are wrong — and that, as a result, most of the assumptions behind welfare "reform" are wrong, too. Our national trickle-down mantra that the availability of jobs will eliminate poverty no longer holds. Poor people today — most of whom are white and live in economically mixed communities — are working more for less money.

Blank stresses that policymakers truly serious about combatting poverty must avoid facile characterizations of the problem. "There is no single cause of poverty," she writes, "and there is no easy way to abolish it."

Chewing long and hard on the realities of who is poor in this country and why — all the while resisting hasty judgment — will not be easy. People are losing their lives, afterall.

But we will do well to remember that the powers count on our sense of urgency. In our eagerness to save lives *now* by a single-minded focus on ways to 'fix' welfare reform's obvious flaws, we are much more likely to leave unquestioned the larger systems that work to widen, not lessen, the gap between rich and poor. The powers also count on our inability, however strongly our intuitions tell us something is amiss, to extricate ourselves from the default assumptions of the current systems of power, privilege and profit.

I think of our recent ice storm and a feisty Rockland woman who reminded a journalist that the fact she was without electricity did not mean she was powerless. Such insights might have a chance of sticking with us longer if we would intentionally go "off the grid" more often and in every way possible — from converting to solar power or confining one's diet to foods available locally to bartering goods and services or adhering to a discipline of observing sabbath time each week no matter how large one's workload.

Going off the grid, we are engaging in a spiritual exercise that will help us loosen the powers' grip on our lives, both individually and collectively. In doing so we might, like Governor King, be flooded by surprising clarity about where our mutual salvation truly lies. TW

Julie A. Wortman is co-editor/publisher of *The Witness* (<julie@thewitness.org>).

editor's note

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Mentors passing over

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

As 1997 drew to a close, *The Witness* received word that members of the generation that blazed the way for us were dying. Within the month of December, we learned of the deaths of war tax resister Ernest Bromley, 85; poet Denise Levertov, 74; long-time activist and community builder Maurice McCrackin, 92; and Mennonite scholar John Howard Yoder, 70. Bromley and McCrackin were friends, both rejected by the Protestant churches which had ordained them in the middle of the century, who went on to preach peace, to cross lines in social protest and to build community. Only eight years ago, McCrackin and Bromley scaled the White House fence to protest the Gulf War. Their indomitable spirits are captured in the *Cincinnati Enquirer's* cartoon shown here.

Jim Borgman/*Cincinnati Enquirer*

Maurice McCrackin

I met McCrackin in 1983 when he helped a group of us prepare for a civil disobedience action outside the gates of a cruise missile manufacturer. He talked easily about resisting jail by "surrendering the body" which was, it seemed, the only part of McCrackin that the authorities could hope to capture. McCrackin preferred to go limp, refuse legal representation and often declined meals. He sometimes proved indigestible to the system; he was hard to keep and no fun to punish [*TW* 11/91].

McCrackin, who founded the racially integrated Community Church in Cincinnati after being rejected by the Presbyterian Church in the 1960s for war tax resistance, spent his life fighting for the homeless and prisoners, fighting against gentrification and participating in protests. The Presbyterian Church restored his orders in 1987 and apologized. McCrackin's life is chronicled in *Building the Beloved Community* (Temple, 1991).

McCrackin died December 30 in a nursing home. Friends report that he was seen not long before — at midnight, in his wheelchair — in a drumming circle.

Denise Levertov

On December 19, poet Denise Levertov, 74, died in Seattle. Levertov chronicled the political upheavals of our times, writing, "I choose revolution" [*TW* 11/91].

Levertov juxtaposed vivid images of street confrontations with police against descriptions of the world's beauty. In a poem about Berkeley's People's Park, Levertov described students and neighbors when police razed the park. She concluded, "there comes a time when only anger is love."

Yet, she could also write:

Have you ever,
in stream or sea,
Felt the silver of fish
pass through your hand-hold? Not to stop it, block it from going onward, but feel it move in its wave-road?

To make
Of song a chalice
Of time,
A communion wine

Ernest Bromley

Ernest Bromley finished his life on December 17 in hospice care with good friends. In 1946, Bromley left a Methodist pastorate in North Carolina after an uproar about both his decision to perform a marriage for an African American couple and his willingness to go to jail rather than pay war taxes. The following year, he participated in the first freedom ride.

Bromley joined the Fellowship of Reconciliation where he met his wife, Marion. They moved to Gano, Ohio, setting up a peace center and editing *The Peacemaker* for 25 years. The IRS seized title to the property in 1975, but within a year reversed itself.

In 1992, Bromley celebrated his 80th birthday by bungee jumping.

John Howard Yoder

John Howard Yoder, a Mennonite theologian, died at Notre Dame at the age of 70 on December 30. In *The Politics of Jesus* (1972), Yoder helped define a Christian ethic that embraced pacifism and offered a critique of Reinhold Niebuhr and Karl Barth. Yoder taught that Jesus brought a vision, not of a new ethic, but of a new community, one that embodied forgiveness, self-sacrifice and love. He also believed that rather than trying to convert the world, the church must live its vision. TW

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is co-editor/publisher of *The Witness* (<jeanie@thewitness.org>). She is returning after a three-month sabbatical during which she enjoyed the first respite from monthly deadlines in 12 years by spending time in the woods, with her family and in solitude.

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The dream of the suburbs

by Mary Minock

In those days
in the neighborhood
was the dream
of leaving it:
escape to the northwest side —
brick houses with working screen doors,
aluminum curlicues
would stop them bellying,
a mailman would work the beat
and birds would chirp quietly.

The dream of Dearborn —
the streets would offer more than plumbing supplies
and used furniture;
there would be dress shops
and diversions —
bowling alleys and miniature golf
a youth center
a little city hall
with a cornice like an A & P
a swimming pool;
the houses would be laid out for normal people —
no dark hallways
no oversized bathrooms

and undersized kitchens
no climb up the steep stairs
no buzzers to let the callers in
that confused the callers.

A three-bedroom ranch home in Inkster —
a picture window
all for ninety nine ninety nine dollars,
and ninety nine dollars moves you in.

The bliss of the suburbs —
the reasonability
the shopping plazas
where you could go from store to store
a fat green Cunningham's on the corner
bigger than the Cunningham's on Junction
withered and shrunken to hold tightly
the little we had to buy.

No warehouses at the end of the street
no pounding out of tin at Timken's
no smell of tobacco in the early morning
from the Scotton-Dillon plant
no trucks shuddering down the street
no closures of swimming pools
for lack of chlorine in polio season
no cutting of trees in the park

no taking down of a perfect copper umbrella
over a nonworking drinking fountain
no tearing down of a band shell
because a simple-minded girl
was murdered there.

No migrations of new people
no threat of the poorer moving in
to replace the ones who got their dream
no bums from skid row coming our way
down Vernor Highway
after the expressway was built.

Oh ranch house
oh wall-to-wall carpet
oh three doors to open directly
on three separate bedrooms
oh laps of three bright-colored
wall-to-wall carpets
oh vacuum cleaner of many implements
oh windows that work
oh fenced back yard with two disciplined little trees
oh suburb
oh sameness, no peeling paint
no passageways, no junk rooms to hide.

There would be new dresses with price tags
to show to the neighbors;
the women would have time for coffee
the women would talk about sales on lamps
stockpiles of canned goods and Saran Wrap
the women would be wise about colors
the women would have painted nails
the women would use mops and electric mixers
in Loretta Young skirts
instead of hands and knees
in rosebud zippered house dresses
the women would wait for men
who worked in suits and were gone all day
no split shifts
no afternoons
no night shifts
no heavy wrists holding beer cans on the table;
oh suburb — dinner at six
the man, the newspaper, the boys on shiny bicycles
arrive at once
hungry and civilized and feedable.

The dream of the suburbs:
after they were gone
we were lonely
we kept our time by the seasons
we rose in the morning
we settled in the evening
with the sparrows and the pigeons
and looked to the river.

— *Love in the Upstairs Flat,*
Mellen Poetry Press,
Lewiston, N.Y., 1995

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Welfare 'reform' and poverty in the 1990s

by Camille Colatosti

In the squares of the city, by the shadow of the steeple
Near the relief office, I saw my people
And some were stumbling, and some were wondering if
This land was made for you and me.
— Woody Guthrie (1944)

In October 1996, President Bill Clinton signed into law the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. As he did so, he ended the safety net that had existed in this country since 1934, when, in response to tremendous suffering and to poor people's protests, the government determined that families with incomes below a certain poverty level should receive public assistance. In 1996, the poverty level was $13,330 for a family with one parent and two children. That year, 38.1 million people, or 14. 5 percent of the population, lived in poor families. Approximately one-third of these families received welfare.

Clinton told the country that he was doing this for the poor's own good. As he explained, "A long time ago, I concluded that the current welfare system undermines the basic values of work, responsibility and family, trapping generation after generation in dependency. ... Today we have a historic opportunity to make welfare what it was meant to be: a second chance, not a way of life."

This rhetoric did not convince everyone. When the new welfare law was passed in 1996, Frances Fox Piven, City University of New York professor, poverty expert and co-author of the 1973 classic *Regulating the Poor*, criticized the assumption that welfare itself is responsible for poverty. She said, "Never mind low wages and irregular work; never mind the spreading social disorganization to which they lead; never mind changes in family and sexual norms occurring among all classes and in all western countries. The solution is to slash welfare. But slashing welfare does not create stable jobs or raise wages."

Others saw Clinton's act as a political ploy, a chance for him to take the welfare debate out of the presidential race and seal his victory over Republican candidate Bob Dole. In October 1996, Representative Charles Rangle (D-NY), said, "My president will boldly throw one million into poverty. This is a political bill. It should not be passed into law."

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney urged Clinton to veto the bill. Consumer advocate Ralph Nader called the act a "betrayal of the American people." Marian Wright Edelman, founder of the Children's Defense Fund, the most influential children's advocacy group in the country, conceded that Clinton's act was a "moral blot on his presidency."

The federal government puts few restrictions on states, allowing them to design programs as they choose. This means that there are no national standards to alleviate poverty.

Today many economists and advocates for the poor remain critical. As Mary Cooper, associate director of the Washington Office of the National Council of Churches, explains, "Poor people are being blamed for being poor, as if it is something that they chose for themselves. Our belief is that people are on welfare because they have no other choice."

Replacing AFDC with state grants

The new welfare law was implemented on July 1, 1997. On that date, state departments of social services began providing public assistance funding through a new federal program — Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) — instead of the former program — Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

The new law put in place a six-year plan designed to save $55 billion. Forty percent of the savings comes from cuts to food stamps and 44 percent from cuts in public assistance to legal immigrants. States now receive block grants based on previous years' spending on AFDC, job training, basic skills education and emergency assistance programs. (In 1996, approximately 5 percent of the U.S. population received AFDC grants averaging $6,000 annually for a single mother with two children, the standard family size for AFDC recipients.)

The federal government puts few restrictions on states, allowing them to design programs as they choose. This means that there are no national standards to alleviate poverty; the U.S. may soon have 50 different welfare programs in place. As National Council of Churches' Cooper explains, "The states can decide if they're going to help people or just let them sink."

Camille Colatosti is a professor of English at the Detroit College of Business. Artist **Dierdre Luzwick** lives in Wisconsin.

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Brothers Dierdre Luzwick

Each state has the right to define who is eligible for TANF. No one is guaranteed funding. In fact, the federal government prohibits states from helping some people who had been eligible in the past. For instance, families cannot receive TANF aid for more than two consecutive years, or a total of five years. (Thirty-seven percent of AFDC recipients received aid for less than two years and 25 percent received aid for more than eight years.) Teenage parents who do not live with their parents or go to school are also prohibited from receiving TANF. In addition, the federal law gives states the option to deny assistance even to teen mothers who comply and to deny assistance to children born while the mother is already receiving benefits. The law categorically denies cash aid and food stamps to anyone who has, at any time, been convicted of felony drug charges.

Strict work requirements

Strict work requirements are the heart of the new legislation. Single parents can receive a maximum of two years of TANF while unemployed, only if they are seeking or training for jobs. States may deny not only TANF grants but also Medicaid to adults who do not comply. They may, however, allow hardship exemptions for 20 percent of their cases.

There are also new restrictions on food stamps. In recent years food stamps have made up about 25 percent of a working family's aid. Now, able-bodied 18 to 50 year olds without children may receive only three months of food stamps in a given three-year period if they do not work at least 20 hours a week. (If a working recipient is laid off, but has used the three-month maximum, he or she can be granted a three-month grace period for a new job search.) Child nutrition programs — such as Women, Infants and Children (WIC) — will be cut $2.9 billion in the next six years.

Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) has called the new law "legislative child abuse." The Urban Institute estimates that the law will increase child poverty by 20 percent.

Perhaps most important, says National Council of Churches' Cooper, is the issue of whether mothers of young children should go to work at all. While funding for child care is necessary, and child care is a huge issue for families who are trying to get out of poverty, it also seems as if poor mothers have lost their right to stay home with their children. "If the well-being of children is a priority," says Cooper, "then the issue of forcing mothers into the labor force strikes me as a misguided piece. We need to consider welfare in terms of what it does to children and what it does to future generations."

Challenging myths

According to advocates for the poor, the battle over preserving the social safety net was lost, in part, because progressive people acquiesced to a 30-year effort by the Old and New Right to set the agenda, according to a recently released report by Northeastern University Law professor Lucy Williams through Political Research Associates, an independent research cen-

The deserving poor

The U.S. has always been ambivalent about assisting the poor, unsure whether the poor are good people facing difficult times or bad people who cannot fit into society.

Public welfare programs in the U.S. originated as discretionary programs for the "worthy" poor. Local asylums or poorhouses separated the deserving poor, such as the blind, deaf, insane, and eventually the orphaned, from the undeserving, comprising all other paupers including children in families, with wide variation and broad local administrative discretion.

"Traditional" family values have always been part of the discourse. There have also always been those who thought poverty was caused by individual fault and that the receipt of any governmental assistance was debilitating.

The Social Security Act of 1935 emerged from the Great Depression, when the massive unemployment of previously employed, white male voters made it politically impossible to dismiss the poor as responsible for their own situation. The AFDC program, only a small part of the Social Security Act, covered children living with their mothers. The legislative history of the Social Security Act allowed the states, which administered the AFDC program, to condition eligibility upon the sexual morality of AFDC mothers through suitable-home or "man-in-the-house" rules. These behavioral rules were often intentionally used to exclude African Americans and children of unwed mother from the rolls. One Southern field supervisor reported: "The number of Negro cases is fewer due to the unanimous feeling on the part of the staff and board that there are more work opportunities for Negro women and to their intense desire not to interfere with local labor conditions. The attitude that 'they have always gotten along,' and that 'all they'll do is have more children' is definite."

However, in the 1960s, the civil rights and welfare rights movements resulted in the inclusion of many who had been excluded from the original AFDC program. Aggressive lawyering on behalf of poor people removed many of the systemic administrative barriers used to keep African American women off the welfare rolls. As a result, the number of African

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ter which analyzes the political Right. The Right sought to diminish support for welfare among white Americans by focussing the welfare reform debate on racially stereotyped images of "welfare queens" who accept government "give aways." As Douglas Dobmeyer, publisher of *Poverty Issues ... Dateline Illinois*, explains, "Reform means something positive. I won't call these changes reform, but everyone else does, even liberals. Everyone has accepted the conservative rhetoric."

The first step toward shifting the direction of reform — or ending the repeal of welfare — involves changing the terms of the debate by distributing accurate information about poverty, welfare, and the new law. Dobmeyer explains, "Unless people state the truth, we will continue in soundbite language saying that people need to work. But if there are no jobs, how can people work? If there is no training for jobs that do exist, how can people work?"

Reg McKillip, a field organizer at NETWORK, a national Catholic social justice lobby, agrees. "The legislation is directed at every myth regarding people on welfare: People on welfare have lots of kids; they don't want to work; they are lazy. These are myths. The facts don't show this."

Indeed, according to an Urban Institute Policy and Research Report, there is no correlation between benefit levels and women's choice to have children — states with higher benefits do not have higher birth rates. Likewise, many welfare recipients work and have significant employment histories. But, like most poor people, welfare recipients move in and out of low-wage, unstable jobs. These jobs often cannot sustain families.

"I won't call these changes reform, but everyone else does, even liberals. Everyone has accepted the conservative rhetoric." — Douglas Dobmeyer

Keeping track of the poor among us

Contrary to what many believe, most poor people are not isolated from the non-poor, but instead live in areas of mixed and diverse income. While poverty rates are higher among minority groups than among whites, the largest group of poor are white people. A growing number of poor families are headed by women, as are a growing number of families at all income levels.

"Americans think that the poor are very separate from them," says Barb Beesley, a staff member of Groundwork for a Just World, a Detroit-area organization founded by women religious over 20 years ago. "They don't realize that the poor are among us."

The Children's Defense Fund and a number of other organizations have instituted a new monitoring project tracking people removed from welfare rolls to document the effects of the new legislation. Arloc Sherman, the monitoring project's director, explains, "The notion

Americans on the AFDC rolls increased dramatically, by approximately 15 percent between 1965 to 1971, although the vast majority of those receiving welfare continued to be white.

Racism and wage work

A racist stance is also evident in the 1967 amendments to the Social Security Act, which for the first time placed mandatory work requirements on AFDC recipients. As more white women moved into wage work, at least on a part-time basis, and that became more acceptable, and as the states were finally required to open the welfare rolls to women of color, the image of "productive" became more complicated. In the rhetoric of the Right, "good" (i.e.,white) women were still relegated to their calling as mothers and homemakers; although for many "liberal" women, their self-definition and the resulting partial societal understanding of them now included a career.

However, African American women had always been expected and required to do wage work in U.S. society, predominantly as domestic and agricultural workers. Thus as the new image of welfare recipient was constructed as African American, it was only to be expected that they (unlike white women) should be required to work.

Thus the images in the Congressional debate were of unmarried illiterate women with a massive number of children and a lack of appropriate parenting skills. Most of these women lived in inner-city slums, particularly the largely African American neighborhood of Harlem.

This is only one example of the Right's two-sided attack on women. On one hand, a woman's "natural place" is in the home; she finds dignity and security beneath the authority of her husband; and day care is opposed because it keeps children away from their mothers. On the other hand, a woman without a man (i.e., a single mother welfare recipient) should be in wage work.

A similar tension exists between the Right's commitment to limited government intervention in individual's lives and the recommendations regarding welfare policy as a mechanism for economically mandating "intact marriages."

— from *Decades of Distortion: The Right's 30-Year Assault on Welfare,* by Lucy Williams, Political Research Associates, Somerville, Mass., December 1997

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is that there are going to be a lot of people at the local level who will see what is happening with the law before researchers and politicians will."

As people's assistance is cut, they will become harder and harder to track. "One of the first things that will happen," Sherman says, "is that the phone bill goes unpaid. People become hard to contact. Then families may seem to disappear as they are made homeless or are pushed into precarious housing situations — maybe doubling up with relatives."

Is work enough?

The new welfare reform legislation is based on the premise that once people are removed from government assistance, they will get jobs and their lives will improve materially. But is this true? Many economists fear that the low-wage labor market — the likely entry point for people moving off assistance — cannot absorb a sizable increase in new or returning workers. Former welfare recipients, they conclude, will face long periods of unemployment between periods of insufficient and low-paid work. A survey conducted by the Northern Illinois University Center for Governmental Studies reveals that there will be large increases in competition for low-wage jobs. In Illinois alone, "approximately 285,459 unemployed workers and welfare recipients will be competing for only 68,645 entry-level jobs. There will be six job seekers for every job in Chicago."

Increased competition will reduce wages. The Washington, D.C.-based Economic Policy Institute report, *Flooding the Labor Market,* explains, "For the economy to absorb almost one million more workers: nationally, the wages of low-wage workers (defined here as the bottom 30 percent of workers — about 31 million men and women who earn less than $7.19 an hour) will fall by 1.9 percent. Wages for low-wage workers in states with relatively large welfare populations will have to fall by even more: in California, 17.8 percent; in New York, 17.1 percent."

Greg Duncan is the deputy director of the Poverty Research Center at Northwestern University and a professor of economics. The mission of his center is to evaluate the impact of the new welfare provisions.

In the past, explains Duncan, when there have been state-level welfare reforms with time limits and so on, poor people have worked more and received less aid. "But they do so without a net change in income. They receive more from employment and less from welfare, but the level doesn't change much, and if you add together other benefits like the health insurance they lose from the state, their resources actually decrease when they work."

"We have a $5.25 an hour minimum wage. It doesn't even begin to come close to support a family even if someone gets full-time work." — *Jean Ross*

Duncan remains unsure of what the future holds. "It's impossible to characterize what is happening now and what is going to happen with any single kind of story," he says. "It is almost certain," he adds, "that in ten years there will be fewer families receiving welfare. Whether that will reduce the numbers of the poor we don't know."

Duncan also wonders what will happen when economic conditions, which he now characterizes as "robust," return to normal levels or even to some kind of recession.

Rebecca Blank, author of *It Takes a Nation* (Princeton 1997) and a member nominee of the Council of Economic Advisors to the Clinton administration, clearly explains why forcing poor people to work will not — in and of itself — end poverty [see p. 29]. She argues that welfare reform, even as it mandates work, does not take into account important labor force changes. "The primary change in the lives of the poor over the past 20 years," explains Blank, "has been the deteriorating set of economic opportunities available to less-skilled workers. The favorite solution to poverty among most Americans has always been overall economic growth that creates jobs and helps the poor escape poverty through work and wages. Unfortunately, wage rates have declined steadily in the jobs available to less-skilled workers, which means that employment has become progressively less effective at reducing poverty."

Blank says "poverty remained stubbornly high through the 1980s and 1990s, despite overall economic growth. The problem wasn't behavior. It was jobs."

Jean Ross, executive director of the California Budget Project, a non-partisan policy, research and education organization based in Sacramento, Calif., says the current federal poverty standard are probably too low. It doesn't subtract unavoidable expenses like child care and taxes and it makes no adjustments for differences in the cost of living.

Her organization calculated what they believe it really costs a family to live. Ross' model is a single mother with one preschooler and one second grader, who lives in a modest two-bedroom apartment. When you add in child care costs, explains Ross, "this mother would need to earn about $28,000 a year just to get by. This is about $14 an hour. We have a $5.25 an hour minimum wage. It doesn't even begin to come close to support a family even if someone gets full-time work."

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Solutions

Economists and advocates for the poor expect the studies currently being conducted to point to directions for future change. However, there are common ideas about what should be done now. First, restore what was cut, says the National Council of Churches' Mary Cooper. "Get back food stamps for legal immigrants and able-bodied 18 to 50 year olds without dependent children. These cuts are a big mistake. There is no reason to discriminate against immigrant families. And why discriminate against people without children?"

The National Council of Churches is also lobbying the government to fund safe, quality, affordable child care. "This is what makes it possible for people to go back to work or to work for the first time," says Cooper. Other measures, such as an increased earned income tax credit, may also help. Likewise, it is necessary for all workers to have health insurance, whether this takes the form of national health care or expanded Medicaid.

Ed Kraus of the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs notes that "effective welfare reform is expensive." But if the country is serious about moving people to be self-sufficient, then the nation needs to be willing to spend money.

Kraus notes the need to increase funding for education and job training. Currently, many states enforce a "work first" provision in their welfare programs. This means that recipients must leave education and training programs to seek work, even if they lack qualifications for jobs that would remove them from poverty. Kraus points to a poor, single mother he knows. "She is a very bright person committed to a degree program. She has no family to turn to. Under the new law, she has to choose between continuing in her program in radiology — a career that makes sense — or dropping out of the program in order to find work to pay the rent."

Creating jobs that pay more than poverty wages is crucial. Despite the economic recovery of the 1990s and the decrease in unemployment nationally, poverty rates continue to rise, reports the Economic Policy Institute in *The State of Working America 1996-7.* Like others, Philip Harvey, associate professor at Rutgers University School of Law and co-author of *America's Misunderstood Welfare State* (Harper Collins 1992), does not believe that the 1996 law, as currently structured, will reverse this trend. He suggests that solutions will come only when the goals of welfare reform are redefined.

"The focus now is on finding ways to get people off the welfare rolls," says Harvey. To that extent, reform is successful.

"That may be the battle, but not the war. What about ending poverty? Isn't that what it should be about?" TW

Restorers of hope

Restorers of Hope: Reaching the Poor in Your Community with Church-based Ministries that Work, by Amy L. Sherman (Crossway Books, 1997).

The seven church-based social welfare ministries studied in the preparation of this book are described by its title: They are restorers of hope. They range from Phoenix to Richmond, from multimillion-dollar enterprises to small operations constantly in the red, from organizations focused on a targeted population to ministries serving an entire community. All are committed to witnessing to God's love in the world.

And all believe that outreach to the poor and needy is not only a matter of obedience to Scripture, but also a necessary component of spiritual growth.

Sherman, who serves as Director of Urban Ministries at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Charlottesville, Va., describes the way restorers transform urban street culture, reform thinking and behaviors, and counteract the structural causes of poverty in the inner city. A central portion of her book contains instructions for developing a congregational ministry to the poor. Ten specific steps are described: A church should assess its strengths and weaknesses; learn about the community; identify what others are already doing; begin building relationships; gather together a core community team; determine its unique niche; learn from other models; decide on basic organizational policies; establish a system for recruiting, screening, training, placing, and affirming volunteers; and establish an evaluation system.

Finally, Sherman looks at the benefits and potential pitfalls of collaboration with government, urging a model of collaboration that builds on the cost effectiveness of faith-based ministries but also recognizes their unique strengths as religious organizations ministering holistically —building relationships and educating and demonstrating commitment and faith.

Restorers of Hope offers specific, strategic advice to congregations seeking involvement in ministry, buttressed by the experiences of congregations that have transformed lives and reclaimed communities. Sherman warns that "being a RESTORER is long, hard work that requires tremendous patience and perseverance." Her book is particularly appropriate as the church explores faith-based ministries in anticipation of Jubilee 2000.

— Judith Esmay, from ENEJ (Episcopal Network for Economic Justice) newsletter; *<CalifonNH@aol.com>.*

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'Yo' Mama's Disfunktional!'

by Robin Kelley

These days, as a professor at New York University, Robin D.G. Kelley can afford to live "downtown," in Greenwich Village. He's an acclaimed scholar of the black working class, whose four books bring to light the everyday acts of resistance to racism that historians usually disregard. But Kelley grew up in West Harlem. His mother and his two sisters, he writes, "all spent a brief moment of their lives on welfare." He wrote his new book, Yo' Mama's Disfunktional!, *in defense of his mother, his grandmother, his daughter, and the many, many other black women reviled in Right-wing lectures on welfare.* — *Jane Slaughter*

I grew up in a world in which talking about somebody's mama was a way of life, an everyday occurrence. Whether we called it "snapping," "ranking," "busting," or simply "the dozens," most of it was ridiculous, surreal humor bearing very little resemblance to reality: "Your mom's so fat she broke the food chain." You would think that as a kid growing up in this world I could handle any insult, or at least be prepared for any slander tossed in the direction of my mom. But academics, journalists, policymakers, and politicians have taken the "dozens" to another level. In all my years of playing the dozens, I have rarely heard vitriol as vicious as the words spouted by Riverside (Calif.) County welfare director Lawrence Townsend: "Every time I see a bag lady on the street, I wonder, 'Was that an AFDC mother who hit the menopause wall — who can no longer reproduce and get money to support herself?'" I have had kids tell me that my hair was so nappy it looked like a thousand Africans giving the Black Power salute, but never has anyone said to my face that my whole family — especially my mama — was a "tangle of pathology." Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan has been saying it since 1965, and Moynihan's "snap" has been repeated by legions of analysts and policitians.

Black neoconservatives (or "negrocons") have placed much of the blame for the current state of affairs on racial preferences.

Old images of the lazy, irresponsible Negro endure in the form of "the underclass," "matriarchy," "welfare queens," "criminals," and "dysfunctional," to name a few. We have been consistently marked as dysfunctional; we have been the thing against which normality, whiteness, and functionality have been defined. Whether we are short on cognitive ability or long on sexual drive, it all adds up to a merciless attack on black mothers specifically, and black families more generally.

Why do so many people believe that barriers to black progress have been removed? If racism is essentially a thing of the past, as conservatives and many neoliberals now argue, then the reason for the failure of the black poor to lift themselves out of poverty has to be found in their behavior or their culture. In short, the problems facing the vast majority of black folk in today's ghettos lie not with government policy or corporate capitalism, but with the people themselves — our criminally minded youth, our deadbeat daddies, and our welfare-dependent mamas.

Today sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and economists compete for huge grants from foundations in order to get a handle on the so-called underclass, the newest internal threat to civilization. In *The End of Racism*, Dinesh D'Souza, boy wonder of the Far Right, says in no uncertain terms that African Americans have ushered in "a revival of barbarism in the midst of Western Civilization." Terms like "nihilistic," "dysfunctional" and "pathological" have become the most common adjectives to describe contemporary black urban culture. "I think this anthropology is just another way to call me a nigger," observed Othman Sullivan, one of many informants in John Langston Gwaltney's classic study of black culture.

[Back in the early 1970s,] Richard M. Nixon was in the White House, attacking welfare mothers and blaming the black poor for their own poverty. Nixon's domestic advisor, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, passed on a confidential memo proposing that "the time may have come when the issue of race could benefit from a period of 'benign neglect.'" Much of the white middle class agreed. They believed that African Americans received too many government handouts. They were tired of "paying the bill," especially now that racism had allegedly been eliminated with the Civil Rights movement.

Sounds a lot like the 1990s, with one exception: 25 years ago black people still had reason to be optimistic. The Civil Rights movement had made remarkable gains. The black middle class expanded, as col-

Reprinted from *Yo' Mama's Disfunktional: Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America* by Robin D. G.Kelley. Copyright © 1997 by Robin D. G. Kelley. By permission of Beacon Press, Boston, Mass. **Jane Slaughter** is a freelance writer who lives in Detroit. Artist **Robert Shetterly's** "Blake and Shetterly Series" is available on cards from Borealis Press, 39 Hancock St., Ellsworth, Maine 04605.

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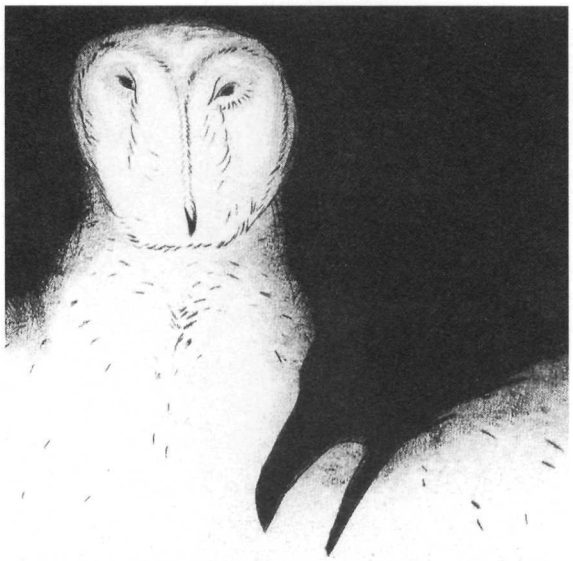
lege-educated professionals moved to newly built suburban homes. And black politicians won mayoral races in several major cities, including Los Angeles, Atlanta, New Orleans, Newark, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.

We did get our "piece of the rock," but at what cost? For many urban residents left behind in the nation's "chocolate cities" while the upwardly mobile fled to "vanilla suburbs," once the victory parties were over they had a difficult time obtaining city services, affordable housing, or improved schools. The decade of hope was marked by the disappearance of heavy industry, the flight of American corporations to foreign lands and the suburbs, and the displacement of millions of workers across the country. Permanent unemployment and underemployment became a way of life. A few years after the War on Poverty had been declared a victory, the number of black poor grew dramatically.

Black neoconservatives (or "negrocons," as I like to call them) have placed much of the blame for the current state of affairs on racial preferences. Economist Thomas Sowell, for example, has insisted that the problem of poor African Americans can be attributed to a lack of moral values and a work ethic. Welfare and affirmative action must be eliminated since they undermine middle-class values of hard work and thrift, and make African Americans dependent on government assistance.

Calls for color blindness and *laissez-faire* economic strategies camouflage the critical role the state has played in reproducing inequality and creating an "uneven" playing field. Tax laws and social welfare, retirement, and housing policies have impaired the ability of African Americans to accumulate assets while facilitating white access to wealth.

For most people, the key to wealth accumulation is home ownership. White homeowners in the post-World War II era enjoyed a dramatic rise in property values, which served as the basis for the baby boom generation's upward mobility. The return on their investment enabled them to pass on wealth as well as educational opportunities to their children.



The crow wish'd everything was black, the owl that everything was white. Robert Shetterly/Borealis Press

For most black folk, however, segregation shut off much of the post-World War II housing market. Federal Housing Administration (FHA) policies of giving mixed and African American neighborhoods lower ratings, racial discrimination by lending institutions, redlining, white flight — you name it — put black folks at a disadvantage. As a result, by 1988, 63.8 percent of whites owned their homes compared to 41.6 percent of African Americans. The median home value among blacks was $31,000 compared to $45,000 for whites.

Race impacts zoning laws as well. A 1987 study estimated that three out of five African Americans live dangerously close to abandoned toxic waste sites and commercial hazardous waste landfills. A 1992 study concluded that polluters based in minority areas are treated less severely by government agencies than those in largely white communities. Federally sponsored toxic cleanup programs take longer and are less thorough in minority neighborhoods.

Government policies generate racial inequality in other ways as well. We can point to the billions spent for highways, water, and sewage facilities for white suburban communities while inner city infrastructures crumbled.

Just as jobs began to disappear, so did federal funding, particularly after Reagan took office. Reagan reduced aid to cities to a fraction of what it had been under Nixon. City governments were forced to cut their budgets, leading to massive layoffs. Since African Americans held many of these jobs, they were hardest hit. To make matters worse, many cities experienced a "tax revolt" from suburban communities that no longer wanted their property taxes to fund urban schools or city services.

Middle-class and affluent white Americans have benefited from certain kinds of "affirmative action" under a different name, i.e., government supports and subsidies. Many of the benefits white workers and students receive are not merely the product of thrift and hard work but outcomes determined largely by government policy.

The fact is, we do not have a free-market economy and never completely had a free-market economy. Instead of avoiding the state, we need to recognize it as an extremely important site of struggle. All the self-help in the world will not eliminate poverty or create the number of good jobs needed to employ the African American community. A well-paying, fulfilling job and a strong "safety net" in troubled times should be a basic right, not a handout or an entitlement. Whether we ever create a state that puts working people's needs before corporations will depend on which vision of society we embrace. TW

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America's welfare capitalists

by Christopher D. Cook

America's 60-year-old commitment to the poor ended last July, when President Clinton's repeal of public-assistance entitlements took effect. Sure to be a symbol of Clinton's legacy, the law limits U.S. citizens to just five years of assistance. Most immigrants, "legal" or not, get nothing. Aid recipients must accept any job, no matter how low-paying, temporary, or hazardous. City-run "workfare" programs are forcing recipients to sweep sidewalks, pick up trash, and clean subway cars for sub-minimum wages, with no safety protections. This has proved fatal in at least one instance, reported by the *Village Voice*, when a recipient with a documented heart condition died while hauling heavy garbage bags in the hot sun.

On paper at least, welfare repeal has produced the nation's lowest caseloads in a quarter century. But while Clinton heralds the drop-off as proof of success, officials acknowledge they have no way of knowing where the 1.4 million recipients who have "left welfare" over the past year have gone; the federal law penalizes states that fail to slash their rolls, but doesn't require any follow-up to determine whether people are getting jobs. The law's "caseload reduction credit" requires states to cut caseloads by a full 50 percent by the year 2000 in order to maintain federal funding. But even in today's relatively strong economy, numerous studies show that the number of people being kicked off welfare outstrips available jobs by the millions.

Advocates for the poor are seeing red, but U.S. corporations see vast green pastures of profit. Welfare reform, they say, has created "the business opportunity of a lifetime" — a booming market with "massive growth potential." Lending new aptness to the term "corporate welfare," the law enables wholesale privatization of $28 billion worth of welfare administration programs — turning public assistance into a private, profit-making venture.

"This law is a boondoggle for corporate America," says Cecilia Perry, a public policy analyst with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), which represents public-sector employees. It provides new contracts and new opportunities for them to make money. ... Welfare is a program to benefit poor people. If you're going to take that money and give it to large corporations that are designed to make profits, there's a huge contradiction."

"We envision people getting $7 an hour with few benefits and no training, under pressure to push through as many people as possible and give out as few benefits as possible."— Lynn McCray

'Cherry picking'

The corporate rush to control welfare will exacerbate the deadly effects of the new welfare law, which replaces aid guarantees with highly flexible block grants sent to the states. Advocates warn that for-profit welfare operators will "cherry-pick" recipients who are easiest to move off the rolls and into the workplace, while neglecting or discarding people who require more social work and training. The government typically pays job-placement contractors about $5,000 for each recipient placed in a job; the law now adds incentives for these contractors to reduce their caseloads as rapidly as possible. "There should be incentives for getting people employment," says Ellen Bravo, executive director of the National Association of Working Women (known as 9 to 5), "but instead there are incentives for throwing people on the street."

These reverse incentives are already taking their toll, according to Maurice Emsellem, staff attorney with the National Employment Law Project in New York City. At a privately run job center in Boston, Mass., he says, "they're not serving the people with the greatest needs because it's just more expensive. ... It has to pay for them to do it. There's no financial motivation for them to serve those who are hardest to serve, who need lots of education, who have disabilities, who need transportation from the inner city."

Rural welfare recipients are also ending up on the wrong side of the bottom line. Texas State Representative John Hirschi, a Democrat representing a mixed rural-urban district where 10 percent of the population is on Food Stamps, says for-profit firms, with their zeal for cost-cutting, may avoid rural recipients who are more difficult to reach. "When you contract out to somebody who's doing this for profit, there's an inclination to make convenient services available. There's a disincentive to serve rural areas," where transportation is more costly, says Hirschi, who has opposed efforts to privatize $2 billion worth of welfare programs in Texas. "There's some concern that these for-profit companies would tend to skim those that are most easily employable, and would be less inter-

Christopher D. Cook is a freelance investigative journalist based in San Francisco. He has covered welfare for *The Nation* and *The Christian Science Monitor.* Artist **David Adams** lives in Lima, Ohio.

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ested in taking care of special needs clients, who we worry would fall through the cracks."

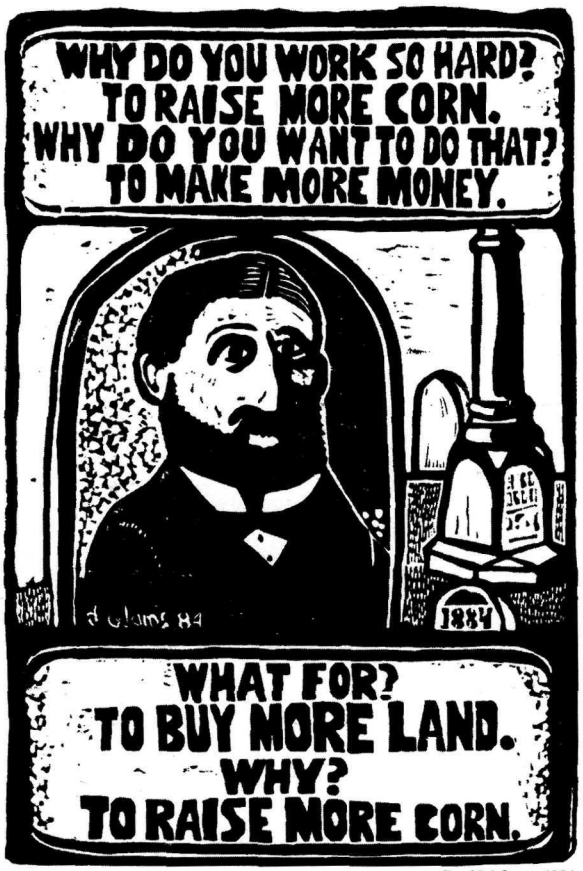
Losing public sector union jobs

Also at risk of falling through the cracks are tens of thousands of public-sector employees (the nation's most highly unionized workforce), many of whom will lose their jobs due to welfare downsizing and outsourcing. In the name of "efficiency," private firms plan to severely reduce staffs, putting public workers on the unemployment lines — and, quite possibly, on welfare.

"We envision people getting $7 an hour with few benefits and no training, under pressure to push through as many people as possible and give out as few benefits as possible," says Lynn McCray, organizing coordinator of the Texas State Employees Union. McCray's union represents some 5,000 welfare-system employees who could lose their jobs due to privatization. She warns that in the name of cost-cutting, firms will provide bargain basement services for the poor. "We feel that a corporation whose chief motive is profit won't be hiring the people with the right skills, and won't pay well enough to attract people who are trained enough to know what welfare recipients need and what they can get."

Privatization also endangers public information and accountability. There is an enormous amount of misinformation that results in recipients being disqualified," says Bruce Bower, an attorney with the Texas Legal Services Center. "This will be exacerbated by private corporations. ... Rather than state officials accepting responsibility, they'll say it's the contractor's problem, it's not our doing."

The arrival of corporate titans on the welfare scene also threatens to drive away non-profits which have historically been the government's welfare subcontractors of choice. Non-profits can't compete with these corporations on bids," Perry observes, noting that huge corporations bring to the bidding table state-of-the-art technology and superior economies of scale — not to mention heavyweight political connections. Beyond the prodigious competition, says Cecilia Perry, some non-profits and charities may be dissuaded by the rules promoting speedy caseload reduction. "Non-profits aren't necessarily going after the eligibility [review] function, because they don't want to turn people away."



David Adams, 1984

Corporate greed

Corporations, meanwhile, are hardly masking their eagerness to capitalize on this opportunity for new profit-making ventures. At a conference in Washington, D.C., brazenly titled, "Welfare Privatization: Government Savings and Private Earnings," corporate executives hob-nobbed with state welfare officials and received tips on how to "capitalize on the massive growth potential of the new world of welfare reform" and "gain a leading edge in the market while it is still in its early stage," according to a conference brochure. For a $1,295 fee, they could "establish a solid network with key [government] players and decision-makers," and "identify future strategies in this new booming market." The conference also helped government officials "identify 'targets' for privatization," and develop strategies to "manage union opposition."

With welfare privatization well underway, corporations are now pushing to privatize more pieces of the U.S. social-service pie. Eyeing this emerging market, corporate executives and their government allies in Congress are pursuing privatization of Food Stamp and Medicaid programs which, for now, require public administration. "The federal government is under pressure to waive Medicaid and Food Stamps" from privatization restrictions so that for-profit firms can take over these functions, says Perry. A similar flurry of welfare waivers preceded — and hastened — Clinton's 1996 welfare rollback. The ultimate aim, says Perry: to create corporate-run, one-stop shopping, in which "you go to Lockheed for every type of government assistance you need. How does that sound to you?"

Jockeying for welfare contracts

Indeed, the ever-expanding Lockheed is snapping up government programs at an alarming rate. Best known as a contrac-

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tor for the U.S Defense Department, Lockheed's spin-off, IMS, now collects delinquent parking-ticket fees for the city of Los Angeles, and is retained by several cities and states to track down "deadbeat dads" who have failed to pay child support. Now, despite its well-documented trail of massive cost overruns and poor performance, Lockheed is leading the race for lucrative welfare contracts.

The biggest public purse up for grabs is in Texas, where Republican Governor George W. Bush (the former president's son) is pushing the largest welfare privatization plan in the country. In their aggressive jockeying to feed on the public trough, Lockheed and other corporate giants such as IBM and Electronic Data Systems (EDS, once owned by presidential aspirant Ross Perot) have hired well-connected former public officials to lobby for welfare contracts.

A feisty bidding war is being waged over a five-year, $2 billion contract to run the Texas Integrated Enrollment System (TIES), a statewide service determining eligibility for nearly a dozen welfare-related programs. The system coordinates and computerizes eligibility reviews in "one-stop shopping" centers where people can apply for several benefits at once. Texas Health and Human Services Commissioner (HHSC) Michael McKinney trumpets TIES as "a program which will serve as a model for the rest of the nation." It's also a cost-cutting plan that would consolidate dozens of programs and could mean layoffs for about 5,000 state workers. As HHSC official Charles Stuart acknowledges, "The majority of the savings are in personnel."

In their heated race to gain mega-contracts, corporate bidders have tapped high-ranking former Texas officials who, critics say, helped pass legislation hastening the privatization of welfare. State Representative Hirschi finds this public-private hopscotch disturbing. "These high-ranking officials would be of great value to these companies. ... I just don't know about the propriety of this situation, where officials are trying to leapfrog from a destructing state agency into profitable firms."

To get a leg up on the competition, Lockheed Martin IMS hired Governor Bush's chief welfare lobbyist and legislative director, Dan Shelley. Now lobbying for Lockheed, Shelley was Bush's "point man" in convincing the Texas Legislature to pass measures in 1995 promoting the outsourcing of welfare to private firms. A call to Mr. Shelley produced a revealing response from Lockheed consultant Bill Miller. "Welfare reform, of course, is privatization," he said. "That was part of the governor's initiative. As his legislative director, of course, it was [Shelley's] responsibility to get the bill passed."

"The whole notion of serving this population is not just to get them on a computer screen." — *Rick Levy*

After mounting allegations of conflicts of interest and backroom deal-making, Governor Bush signed a bill last June calling for public hearings and legislative oversight of the privatization process. The reform came just one month after the Clinton administration disallowed the Texas plan, saying it privatized too much too quickly (because it proposed privatizing Food Stamps and Medicaid, programs which must be run by public employees). But federal officials softened the rejection, affirming that, as regards most welfare programs, the state "can use non-public employees without limitation." Rest assured, the letter stated, "significant opportunities exist for the State to take advantage of the efficiencies and expertise available through the vendor [business] community."

Paralleling privatization is another TIES initiative — part of a growing U.S. trend to distance government from the poor: the automation of welfare eligibility reviews and benefits payments. TIES documents call for "automated screening" to determine eligibility for individuals and families, and "automated financial assessment" of "programs that require financial information to determine eligibility."

The automation of welfare has generated yet another new profit niche for businesses. Cities in 26 states across the U.S. dispense some welfare and food-stamp funds through "electronic benefit transfer" (EBT) systems with ATM-style cards and cash machines — most of which are operated jointly by Lockheed Martin IMS and Citibank EBT. These electronic welfare kiosks create a new business opportunity for banks, while causing numerous headaches for recipients.

Meanwhile, EBT malfunctions have left welfare recipients high and dry, with no access to cash or Food Stamps, and no recourse. One day in 1995, half of the EBT computers in Texas went down, recalls Bower. Tens of thousands of people using the "Lone Star Card" couldn't get their benefits. "When people got a message saying there was no money in their account and called the help desk, that help desk didn't respond." As it turned out, the "desk," run by Transactive Corp. had moved to Florida. Recipients were given a toll-free number to call an office in Florida for help.

The move to automate benefits marks a departure from hands-on, interpersonal assistance. Rick Levy, legal director of the Texas AFL-CIO says the EBTs are part of governments' increasing "reliance on technology as a cost-cutting mechanism." Explains Levy: "The ultimate goal is to have recipients get all their assistance from an ATM machine, which is absurd given the population you're dealing with. ... The whole notion of serving this population is not just to get them on a computer screen. You really have to work with people." TW

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Sharing the wealth through a fair economy

by Daniel Moss

Is laughing a first step towards narrowing the widening income and wealth gap in the U.S.? The folks at United for a Fair Economy (UFE), formally called Share the Wealth, think so. UFE is a Boston-based national organization that places issues of economic inequality squarely in the public eye. "We are known for our lively theater and educational training," said Chuck Collins, one of two co-directors of UFE.

UFE's first annual Economic Inequality Comedy Cabaret featured the "Corporate Soup Kitchen," with an aproned cook serving up hand-outs not terribly useful to a dejected homeless man. A CEO elbowed him aside and carted away platefuls of corporate subsidies (including $160 billion a year in timber subsidies, foreign tax credits and other tax loopholes).

A similar point is comically made in another skit, "The Economic Insecurity Rat Race," which amplifies the real changes in income in the last 20 years. The wealthiest top 5 percent gallop to victory, the middle 20 percent run in place at the starting line and the poorest 20 percent actually run backward, reflecting a real decline in their income.

Street theater is just one tactic that UFE uses to provoke serious debate on economic inequality issues, though humor is sprinkled liberally throughout UFE's legislative campaigns to eliminate subsidies for America's wealthiest corporations and individuals, what some call "Wealthfare" or "Corporate Welfare". In 1997, UFE launched the Wage Gap Campaign, a national effort to reduce the growing gap between the highest and lowest paid workers.

One component of the campaign is the Income Equity Act (HR 687). The legislation has already attracted 60 co-sponsors and would limit the ability of corporations to take tax deductions on paychecks that exceed 25 times the wages of a firm's lowest-paid workers.

Is such legislation necessary? Felice Yeskel, UFE's other co-director, points to the fact that in 1997, CEO earnings were 209 times the average workers' earnings, far in excess of the reasonable allowance for executive salaries that the U.S. tax code allows to qualify as tax deductible. Last year, a quick count of revenues lost through this loophole from just the top 365 firms cost U.S. taxpayers $514 million.

A cornerstone of UFE's work is "Growing Divide" workshops. Last year, over 25,000 people participated in 700 training sessions for religious congregations, labor unions, business associations, schools and community organizations across the U.S. The format encourages honest, participatory conversations about money and class, weaving in the perspectives, traditions and values of the sponsoring organization. The newly formed Episcopal Network for Economic Justice is working with UFE to design programs tailored for Episcopal congregations.

UFE public hearings on economic insecurity have also played a key role in furthering economics education, advocacy and political action.On Superbowl Sunday '97, 1,000 people packed Boston's Faneuil Hall to testify before six U.S. Congressional representatives from Massachusetts. Similar hearings have taken place across the country.

Looking to further magnify their message in the halls of power, UFE has recently spun off a project called Responsible Wealth. It is spearheaded by a group of business leaders and wealthy individuals (among the top 5 percent of income earners and asset holders) alarmed that "the growing economic divide is eroding our sense of community and shared responsibility and weakening the fabric of our society." On Tax Day 1998, the group is planning to publicly redirect the savings from the 1997 Tax Reform Act whose tax cuts were tilted toward the wealthy, to programs and priorities that restore fairness to the nation's tax code.

"Very little of what we're seeing in Congress and the media is an honest debate on welfare reform and how these changes feed growing inequality," Chuck Collins said, tapping a finger on UPE's study entitled "Executive Excess." "Until corporate welfare is put under the same microscope as some of these admittedly flawed welfare programs and dismantled, reforms to welfare will amount to no more than a cynical scapegoating of the poor."

Daniel Moss lives in Dorchester, Mass. United for a Fair Economy can be reached at 37 Temple Place, 5th Floor, Boston, MA 02111. Phone: (617) 423-2148. Fax: (617) 423-0191. Email:<STW@stw.org>. Web: <http://www.stw.org>.

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Fighting poverty by weaving spiritual communities of hope

by Victor Kazanjian

This past December, as I sat waiting for the sun to rise over the Ganges River as it winds its way through the ancient city of Banaras (now Varanasi) in India, a phrase from Diana Eck's *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras* (Beacon Press, 1993) became my constant prayer:"Hope is the heart leaning forward towards the horizon of dawn, ready for sunrise."

I had come to India as part of a delegation of activists and academics, led by Mahatma Gandhi's grandson Arun Gandhi and his wife Sunanda, to explore the contemporary use of Gandhian principles of grassroots organizing in addressing poverty in urban and rural communities. The Gandhis are founders of the M. K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence, located in Memphis, Tenn., an organization dedicated to the understanding and practice of nonviolence as a way of resolving personal and public conflicts.

I had also come to examine the possibility that religion and spirituality can be a resource rather than a barrier to the process of progressive social change. As a youth worker and community organizer in the South Bronx and Boston, I had become wide awake to the oppressive realities of economic injustice and the transformative power of grassroots community organizing as a strategy for progressive social change. In my current role as an administrator, teacher and coordinator of religious life at Wellesley College, I have seen religious pluralism and spirituality free a community from the oppressive bonds of religious exclusivism and move it in the direction of justice and peace.

Victor Kazanjian is Dean of Religious Life and on the faculty of the Department of Peace and Justice Studies at Wellesley College in Wellesley, Mass.

External process, internal practice

One of the many great gifts that Mohandas K. Gandhi gave to the world was the insight that the desire for peace and justice must include both an external (political) process and an internal (spiritual) practice. "In Gandhi's mind, nonviolence was not simply a political tactic which was supremely useful and efficacious in liberating his people from foreign rule," Thomas Merton wrote. "On the contrary, the spirit of nonviolence sprang from an inner realization of spiritual unity in himself." For Gandhi, the transformation of political systems was simply the outer reflection of the transformation of the human spirit within.

Marketplace/Share clothing and crafts collaborative now employs women from across the region. Their work is about political and personal transformation.

I found this transformative spirit alive and well in Dharvi, a vast impoverished area just outside of Mumbai/Bombay, which houses over a million people from every region of India. This was not my first experience with poverty, but the sheer magnitude of the poverty here was staggering. We were led through a maze of tiny alleyways to the central meeting place of the Marketplace/Share women's collective. Here we were greeted by the leaders of an amazing group of women who, despite their outcast status, had managed to found, through a massive grassroots organizing effort, a clothing and crafts collaborative which now employs women from across the region. This is far more than an economic development project, however. It is a kind of womb giving life to the community. Their work is about political and personal transformation. Dignity and development are linked in a program which provides as many tools for nurturing of the spirit as the production of material goods.

Hope amidst squalor

Throughout India it was in organizations such as this that we found the most vital aspect of the legacy of the Gandhian movement. Amidst squalor and physical ruination, we would discover communities of hope, mostly organized by women, created by weaving together political processes and spiritual practices.

At the Annapurna Mahila Mandel in New Bombay, a "family" of 80,000 illiterate and below-poverty-line women had formed an organization dedicated to overcoming socio-economic exploitation through organized grassroots efforts leading to economic independence, self-reliance, spiritual fortitude and self-respect. What started as a food preparation collaborative has become an organizing and training center for poor women under the leadership of freedom fighter and trade unionist Mrs. Prema Purao, who has developed a program that includes education around economic literacy, gender, health, child care and environmental issues.

At the Kasturba Savodaya Mandal, a community-based organizing project situated in a small rural village "Madhan" in the Amravati district of Maharashtra, we discovered a safe haven and justice center

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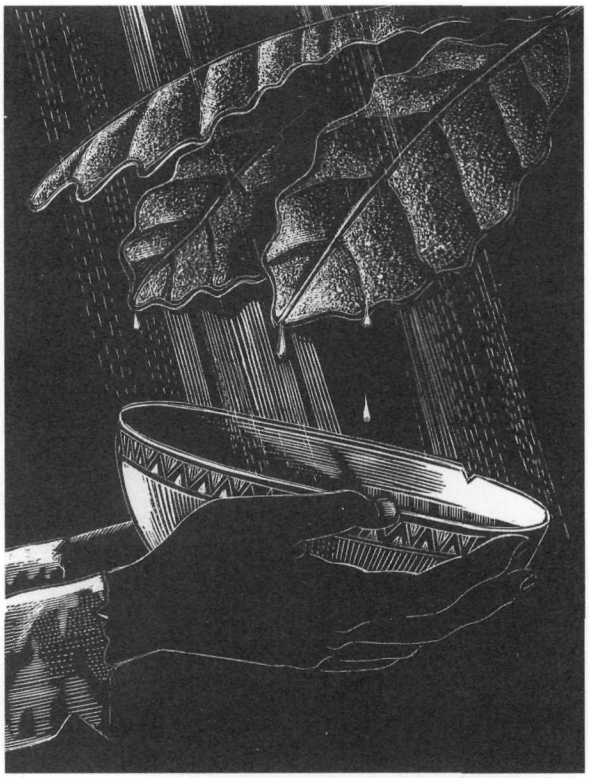
dedicated to outcast girls and women still run by its mother/founder Taraben Mashruwala, who as one of Gandhi's close associates, created the center in 1946. Here health and social services are intermingled with economic development activities and environmental justice projects. Here Gandhi's dream of a community where all people—regardless of caste, regional background, or religion — could live in harmony, has been realized. Here Gandhi's vision for the empowerment of rural India lives on.

Women's strength

And, finally, at SEWA (the Self Employed Women's Association) in Ahmedabad we experienced the full flowering of Gandhi's vision of social liberation through economic independence and his belief in the inherent leadership and strength of women as the natural leaders of the nonviolence movement. Founded as a trade union in 1972 to mobilize women in the unorganized sector of the Indian economy, SEWA is now both an organization and a movement of more than 200,000 members of all religious and regional backgrounds working towards the full employment , self-reliance and empowerment of women.

In each of these places the movement towards a vision of justice and peace involves both inner and outer transformation and the cultivation of the seeds of dignity and self-respect, watered by love and compassion, bearing the fruit of liberation and filling participants and observers alike with hope. Political and spiritual liberation are seen as a part of one movement. This is the essence of the Gandhian philosophy of social transformation.

Back home, waiting for the sun to rise over Lake Waban in the suburban town of Wellesley, Mass., I continue praying that hope is the heart leaning forward towards the horizon of dawn, ready for sunrise. This time, however, I repeat this prayer in defense against the despair that I see gripping a country sick from the toxic environment created by the excesses of a culture of materialism. Having seen hope in the eyes of those living amidst poverty in India, I now recognize despair in the eyes of those living amidst plenty in America.



Michael McCurdy

Specter of despair

Cornel West writes in *Restoring Hope: Conversations on the Future of Black America* (Beacon Press, 1997), "A specter of despair haunts late twentieth-century America. The quality of our lives and integrity of our souls are in jeopardy. Wealth, inequality and class polarization are escalating — with ugly consequences for the most vulnerable among us."

If we are to confront the despair and emptiness that lie just beneath the polished exterior of this country, we must be willing to learn from those women and men engaged in Gandhian style grassroots organizing in India, and take on not simply the external processes of change but the internal practices of transformation as well.

There are stunning examples in the U.S. of community organizations which are organizing along the lines of the Gandhian collectives in India. One inspiring example is the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative in Roxbury, Mass., which is documented in the film *Holding Ground: The Rebirth of Dudley Street* produced by Leah Mahan and Mark Lipman (distributed by New Day Films) and in the book *Streets of Hope: The Rise and Fall of an Urban Neighborhood* by Peter Medoff and Holly Sklar (South End Press, 1994). But organizing efforts in this country often fail to ground themselves in the practice of inner transformation in their concern for developing political strategies to bring about social change. We invest vast resources on political processes in this country and while occasionally some of this political energy has an impact on people living at or below the poverty line, these efforts too often fail to bring sustainable change. The result is the deepening of despair. Religiously affiliated peace and justice movements, unfortunately, are not immune to this.

If religious communities emphasized more the teaching of spiritual practices that enable people to cultivate the peace within — and if grassroots organizations were more able to integrate these spiritual practices into their political organizing process — I think people would be better equipped for engaging politically in a fertile way.

The simple — and powerful — truth of Gandhi's message is that we must be the change you wish to see. When we connect external political process to inner spiritual practice, we can lean forward toward the horizon of dawn. TW

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Extinction or renaissance

"Many people are beginning to shift their attention from the quantity of material resources and goods they could possess or consume to the quality of their connections and relationships: relationships with their own inner and spiritual values, with each other, with their communities, with other cultures, and with the larger living system. Duane Elgin calls this a time of the "awakening Earth"; John Cobb, Jr., calls it "Earthism"; Paul Hawken refers to it as "the restorative Era"; and Paul Ray describes an emerging "integral culture." In this new worldview, wealth is measured by the quality of these fundamental relationships, and the world is viewed as more than a marketplace.

"We currently have two cultures in operation simultaneously. The modernist, materialist culture of economism is a powerful engine that dominates our Western societies. However, we are already seeing the emergence of a new, fledgling start-up of an integral culture.

"What a moment! As we approach the millennium, we seem poised between catastrophe and possibility; between empty and unsustainable consumerism and reconnection with our deepest values, with the natural world, and with each other. We are poised between extinction and renaissance."

— Lisa Friedman,
***Timeline*, 1-2/98**

Media and resistance

"If the only means of communication in a society were interactive, network systems — face-to-face discussions, telephone, short-wave and CB radio, and computer networks — then an aggressor or oppressor would have the greatest difficulty in controlling the population. Network communication technologies do not by themselves eliminate hierarchy and exploitation, but they do aid resistance. The telephone can be used to issue orders, but it is far too labour-intensive for controlling large populations. Also, the subordinate can always talk back.

"The mass media under dictatorships omit the perspective of the oppressed, who therefore must use other media — covert discussions, graffiti, leaflets and clandestine radio, as well as symbolic communication at funerals, concerts and other "legitimate" events — to share experiences. This also applies to some aspects of life in liberal democracies: for example, police treatment of stigmatized minorities, or oppression and alienation in working life, are seldom portrayed in the mass media. Thus, mass media are useful tools for dominators, whereas network media are useful for developing the voice of the weak."

— Brian Martin,
***Media Development*, 2/96**

Immigrants boost economy

Eighteen percent of all new small businesses in the U.S. are started by immigrants, according to the Archdiocesan Immigration Legal Services in Detroit. Small businesses account for up to 80 percent of the new jobs available in the U.S. each year, the agency reports. They also cite research showing that 80 percent of U.S. economists believe that immigrants have a very favorable impact on economic growth, and that legal immigrants' Social Security deductions help keep the system afloat, since a large percentage are young and have years of work ahead of them.

If the price is right

Dollars and Sense reports that, according to a survey of some of the wealthiest one percent of U.S. households published in USA Today, respondents would pay an average of $640,000 for "a place in heaven." The survey of households of at least $2.5 million net worth reported lower bids for eternal youth ($259,000), great intellect ($407,000) and true love ($487,000).

Military bases for homeless

"Addressing Homelessness through Military Base Conversion" is a guide to converting military bases into housing for the homeless. Military bases already contain low-income housing and various other appropriate facilities that are free of cost for homeless assistance programs. Examples of successful homeless assistance programs that use military bases, legal regulations, and procedures for military base conversion are included. Available for $20 from HomeBase, 870 Market St., #1228, San Francisco, CA 94102; (415)788-7961, Ext. 21.

The poetry of exploitation

The Progressive recently reported that the well-known political poet Martin Espada (a member of its Editorial Advisory Board) was approached by Nike's ad agency with an invitation to appear in the Nike Poetry Slam — a competition offering a prize of $2,500 and the chance for winning poetry to be featured in Nike commercials celebrating "the poetry of competition and athletics." In rejecting the offer, Espada suggested that the agency "take the $2,500 you now dangle before me and distribute that money equally among the laborers in an Asian sweatshop doing business with Nike."

Travelers' guide

A new edition of a guide to inexpensive accomodations at religious houses offers worldwide listings of religious communities of various denominations which welcome guests. *Overnight or Short Stay at Religious Houses Around the World* is available from Hugen Press, POB 2286, Bloomfield, NJ 07003 at $19.95 postage paid.

short takes

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Roundtable launches poverty fight

Religious leaders representing 37 denominations, church-based service organizations, advocacy groups, international relief and development groups and national coalitions have formed a "roundtable" designed to galvanize joint action in the fight against poverty. The group has been convened by Call To Renewal, an organization of "Christians for a new political vision."

At a meeting held last fall in Arlington, Va., the roundtable laid out an action agenda that includes plans for a national internet database focusing on successful church-based efforts around the country and aiming to assist churches who might want to get involved in offering similar programs. The national bodies and church organizations participating in the Roundtable are requesting to meet with the governors of all 50 states to facilitate the creation of new church-government-business partnerships, including implementation of the charitable choice provision of federal public assistance legislation, which allows states to finance programs run by religious-based groups. The roundtable will encourage new civic partnerships; community-based organizing; a living family wage and the Earned Income Tax Credit; and mobilizing youth.

The roundtable's widely diverse make-up ranges from the National Council of Churches to the Family Research Council, the National Association of Evangelicals to the U.S. Catholic Conference. Also participating are The Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity, World Vision, Campaign for Human Development, the Center for Public Justice, March for Jesus, the TenPoint Foundation, the Mennonite Central Committee, the Leadership Foundation and America's Promise. Plans are already underway for regional roundtables of equally diverse groups to focus on the needs of poor people in local communities and to begin strategizing and mobilizing resources at the local level.

"The cold war among religious groups over the poor is over," Richard Cizik of the National Association of Evangelicals told a press conference. The NAE supported the controversial welfare bill that passed Congress last year, and was signed by the President. Cizik added, "To support welfare reform and not be here is to be a hypocrite."

John Carr of the U.S. Catholic Conference said church workers should not stand with Democratic or Republican policy, but with moral principle. Referring to the budget debate, he said, "It's not a question of whether you call it a cut or a reduction in growth, it's that people are not living in dignity."

The roundtable first gathered a year ago, on the eve of the President's Summit for America's Future. From the outset, the struggle was to build common ground across a wide spectrum of outlooks and positions.

"I am very proud of our collective voice in this process," said Call to Renewal Convener Jim Wallis.

"We have worked hard to find the common ground. The ground rules for this group are that we stay committed to focusing on the issue of overcoming poverty, that we actively listen to one another and that we do not question each other's motivations — that has brought us a long distance in this discussion."

— from Call to Renewal; <Call_to_Renewal@convene.com>.

BACK ISSUES WITH CONNECTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S TOPIC

The following back issues of* The Witness *contain articles which may relate directly to Welfare or simply to the spirit of this month's topic.

- *Caesar, widows and orphans (4/93)*
- *Economic justice (5/94)*
- *Hospitals: quality, access and spirit (6/96)*
- *Immigration: the flight into America (12/97)*
- *In need of a labor movement (9/96)*
- *Raising kids with conscience (3/97)*
- *Unmasking the death penalty (9/97)*

Other available back issues:

- *Africa: Come, spirit, come (6/95)*
- *Allies in Judaism (10/97)*
- *Alternative ways of doing church (9/94)*
- *American Faces of Islam (5/96)*
- *Birthing in the face of the dragon (12/91)*
- *Body wisdom (5/95)*
- *The Christian Right (10/96)*
- *Church structures and leadership (5/97)*
- *Christians and animal rights (10/93)*
- *The communion of saints (11/93)*
- *Defying presumptions: gay and lesbian Christians (6/97)*
- *Dialogue (4/94)*
- *Disabilities (6/94)*
- *Economies of sin (3/95)*
- *Family reunions/family history (7/96)*
- *Fasting in Babylon (12/96)*
- *Glamour (11/94)*
- *Godly sex (5/93)*
- *Grieving rituals (3/97)*
- *Holy matrimony (12/95)*
- *In defense of creation (6/93)*
- *Is it ever okay to lie? (4/96)*
- *International youth in crisis (7-8/93)*
- *The Left (3/94)*
- *The New Party (11/95)*
- *Northern Ireland: winds of peace (11/97)*
- *Ordination: multi-cultural priesthood (5/92)*
- *Perspectives on Aging (1-2/93)*
- *Resisting sprawl (10-95)*
- *Witness in the world (gen'l conv. issue, 7-8/97)*
- *Women's spirituality (7/94)*

To order a back issue, send a check for $3 per issue ordered to* The Witness, *7000 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210-2872. To charge your back issue to Visa or Mastercard, call (313) 841-1967,

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Welfare reform and refugees

by Thomas Robb

Early in 1997 welfare reform was a hot topic among social service advocates in the U.S. The hard work of writing regulations and causing the new welfare machinery to begin to function had just begun. Now, the machines are operating, but many of the problems of the past welfare system continue and the new machinery is so new that many problems exist in simply defining who will receive benefits and what benefits will be provided.

Welfare reform has been especially ambiguous because it is to be administered by individual states with only very broad federal guidelines. As a result, programs are widely varied from state to state regarding requirements for eligibility and the nature and size of benefits.

Refugees, affected both by the legislation to reform welfare and by the new immigration reform law [see TW 12/97], are facing special problems. This discussion relates specifically to the dynamics facing Bosnian refugees who are in Illinois.

Refugees are defined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as those people who must leave their homeland to avoid death, torture, or imprisonment. In the case of the refugees who came from Bosnia, most had experienced expulsion from homes and towns, been in concentration camps or severely wounded. Under the current conditions in Bosnia, most have no option to return to their homes as they are currently occupied by enemies.

Thomas Robb is a member of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Evanston, Ill., and is currently working with the Bosnian Refugee Center in Chicago. He has worked with welfare and health care delivery systems for the poor for over 25 years.

A unique refugee community

The refugee community from Bosnia is unique, as it represents the largest number of people who came to the U.S. with significant disabilities and includes a large number of elderly refugees who are here without supporting families. In addition to the public assistance provided during the first few months of their stay, many have qualified for Supplemental Security Income due to their disabilities and their age.

Refugees grieving the loss of their families and their country are losing the social system which welcomed them when they arrived.

The Bosnian community began to arrive in the U.S. in 1993 and a very large group came during 1995 and 1996. As a result of political changes in Germany and other European countries and as a result of the reduction of hostilities in Bosnia, refugees who were housed in Germany are being sent back to Bosnia. Many of these people cannot return to their homes. The U.S. has agreed to receive them here. Currently, in Illinois alone, hundreds are arriving each month.

All refugees are offered access to public assistance for the first eight months of their residency. The assistance is intended to allow them to learn English and to find work. For many this plan works well. For single mothers and the severely traumatized, it is not sufficient. A family I know who arrived in 1994, for example, comprised a brother and sister. His wounds were so severe that he continues to be under aggressive medical care. She came to care for him. Because they are brother and sister, and because of her age (under 63), she was dropped from assistance after the first eight months. He receives $494.00 a month from SSI and about $14 in food stamps. She cannot work as she must care for him. This total amount is their only income. One must wonder whether they have found refuge in this country.

Switch from AFDC to TANF not beneficial for the traumatized

Illinois is one of the more affirmative states for refugees and has designed one of the most humane systems for administering the new welfare program. Even in light of these positive statements, refugees are in great fear of the future. Families who have been on Aid to Families with Dependent Children are now on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. What had been an open program for families with dependent children is now limited to a few years for the lifetime of the parent. Recipients must make 20 job applications a month to remain eligible for benefits. If they are unsuccessful in finding work after two months, they will be placed in workfare or non-paying jobs which qualify them for their benefits.

Refugees who have come here grieving the loss of their families and their country are experiencing the loss of the social system which welcomed them when they arrived. For some this is an effective incentive to learn English faster and better and to seek employment faster. For others, it offers the spectre of leaving traumatized children or severely disabled spouses or siblings to fend for themselves while they work.

Another, more significant impact of the reforms is on the aged and disabled.

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Prior to 1994, the U.S. did not permit aged or disabled people to enter as refugees without a sponsoring family member. Specifically due to the shelling of the market in Sarajevo, the U.S. relaxed its rules for Bosnians. A few thousand elderly and severely disabled people came after being driven from their family homes and spending months in refugee camps. When they arrived in 1994 and 1995, many qualified for SSI with food stamps. The new welfare reform law reduced their food stamps to about $14 a month. (The immigration law had also established a time limit for benefits unless they became citizens. Initially, the limit was five years. Since no one can apply for citizenship until they are here for five years and since the application period takes between eight months and two years, this presented a major problem. However, the time limit has now been extended to seven years.)

Language obstacle

Then there is the question of citizenship. The Bosnian refugees are true refugees. They came here for safety and healing. These refugees did not select to come to America for the good and easy life so often described by anti-immigrant political groups. They came without legs, after being in concentration camps as horrible as those of World War II; they came from rape camps; and they came here when they would have preferred staying in Europe, but there was not place for them there.

This traumatized community has displayed considerable difficulty, as a rule, learning English. Their learning ability is further complicated by age and severity of disability. In Chicago, a large proportion of the population is receiving treatment for or living with significant post traumatic stress disorder. The aged and severely traumatized are not exempted from taking the citizenship test in English.

Without citizenship, elderly and severely disabled people, many of whom have seen their children and grandchildren killed, face certain destitution. The meager $494 a month for an individual and $650 a month for a couple they now receive will disappear. The $14 a month in food stamps they now receive plays no role as it is so small.

Demonstrators outside White House on day President Clinton signed 1996 welfare reform bill into law. Jerome Friar/Impact Visuals

A new category of street people?

It is very significant that the U.S. opened its shores to the people from Bosnia. The politicians enjoyed showing their openness to the people of this horrible war. Now we face the prospect that, should these laws continue as written, we have developed a new category of street people — elderly and disabled Bosnians who could not learn English soon enough or well enough to become citizens in a country they never wanted to visit.

There is a need to reflect on this potential tragedy as members of faith communities. Most of the public agencies providing services to the needy are modeled on ones that had been established by religious institutions to help the destitute in the absence of public assistance. Perhaps in this time of waning public commitment to help those in need, it is once again time for the religious community to establish some new models for serving them, including those seeking refuge from war and oppression. TW

IS IT TIME TO RENEW?

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The feminization of the clergy in America

by Alison Cheek

***Feminization of the Clergy in America,* Paula D. Nesbitt, Oxford University Press, 1997**

Like many of us, I have been privy to a considerable number of poignant and painful stories from women struggling to enter the ordination process in Christian churches and from ordained women striving to realize their full potential within the structures of their church organizations. Sometimes it is difficult to assess these stories, as well as my own, in order to discern how much of the difficulty is idiosyncratic and how much is the impact of a gender-biased system. Reading Paula Nesbitt's book, *Feminization of the Clergy in America*, enabled me to move out of the purely anecdotal to a structural analysis of employment opportunities and trends associated with the increased number of women joining the ranks of the clergy.

Feminization of the Clergy in America is a longitudinal study over six decades of male and female clergy employment opportunities. Using interviews and statistical data drawn from two disparate denominations — the Episcopal Church and the Unitarian Universalist Association — she traces career trajectories for men and women in the two religious organizations. Her interest is in the impact of the influx of women into the ranks of the clergy in the 1970s and 1980s, asking the question of whether gender balance among those clergy with substantive power and influence is likely to be realized and whether this might lead to widespread change in both the ideology and social behavior of organized religion.

For women there is a dilemma. Many have no interest in working their way up the corporate church ladder. Others wish to follow the traditional career path and are blocked by lack of opportunity.

I have sat with this study for quite a while now, pondering the significance of its results and wondering why I find it such an important book. I think it is because of the breadth and depth and clarity of its analysis combined with the penetrating and visionary discussion of the issues underlying resistance to inclusion on an equal basis which is set forth in the final chapter. If this study were required reading for all aspirants to the ministry, women with liberationist theologies and a transformative agenda would enter the process with a very clear sense of what they are up against.

Predictable results

In terms of achieving gender balance in positions of power and influence, Nesbitt's results are all too predictable. "Women tend to hold disproportionately assistant, associate or interim appointments, to work in smaller congregations with more limited budgets, to hold specialized positions less likely to lead to promotions, and for Episcopal priests, to work part-time regardless of marital or parental status.There is a greater tendency for women clergy to experience downward mobility compared to men." The Unitarian Universalist Association has been ordaining women for more than 100 years, yet there is a dearth of women ministers in senior level positions. Men have not been disadvantaged by the increasing numbers of women entering the clergy, but rather advantaged. Nesbitt examines in detail the processes which create this situation and hold it in place.

For women there is a dilemma. Many have no interest in working their way up the corporate church ladder. They have different values and may choose specialized positions, part-time work or a saner lifestyle, or may feel a calling to work with small and struggling congregations. Others wish to realize their full potential in following the traditional career path and are blocked by lack of opportunity. The net result is that the current power structure stays intact. "When the structure of gender inequality remains embedded and perpetuated within religious imagery, practices and discourse, men remain disproportionately empowered," Newbitt writes.

Critical first five years

How is it that increasing numbers of women are being ordained, modeling more relational styles of leadership, and nothing changes apart from their labor being coopted into the prevailing patriarchal system? Nesbitt's statistics clearly show that the first five years of ministry are critical for the subsequent career trajectory. Sometimes diocesan affirmative action efforts help a woman to secure a first position, although she may be hired with a job title of lower status than that of a man in his first appointment. After the initial appointment there is seldom any further affirmative help into the critical second appointment. For

Alison Cheek was one of the first 11 women ordained as priests in the Episcopal church in Philadelphia in 1974, and was the first Director of Studies in Feminist Liberation Theologies at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass. She is now associated with the Greenfire community in Maine.

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young white males there is a certain "crown prince" mentoring which doesn't exist for females or for older second career males or men who do not belong to the dominant sector of society. Only a token number of women and minority men jump this hurdle. The rest are kept in place by a consciously inflated job market.

Nesbitt deals extensively with the development of multiple ordination tracks, gender-based job segregation and the growth of non-stipendiary ordained ministries, all leading to a two-tiered ordained ministry. This is examined in a chapter on backlash. While the ordination of Canon 9 priests in the Episcopal church, and permanent deacons trained in diocesan programs, has a socio-economic basis, it is also a means of social control. A deacon is under the direct contol of her bishop. A permanent deacon remains in this relationship.The increase in the number of permant deacons directly responsible to the bishop of the diocese can have a political impact.

Political impact of deacons

"By inflating the overall number of clergy who hold traditionalist perspectives, or who are not likely to challenge the authority, ideology or practices of their clergy leaders, pro-feminist clergy can be effectively outnumbered, outvoted and marginalized without a direct confrontation over affirmative action, inclusive language, or other gender-related concerns," Nesbitt points out. "Furthermore, the occupational conflation of women in the primary ordination track with those in the alternative tracks minimizes women's potential impact on the occupation and religious organization, and serves to set apart male ministers and priests from all others —preserving as much as possible a male professional image at the core of the clergy occupation." Eighty-three percent of permanent deacons do not receive pay for their church work. Many have parish appointments while seminary-trained women cannot find a first job.

There are women who are cardinal rectors, seminary deans and bishops. Such appointments have an ideological effect but are too few in number to represent a significant gender-related challenge to the male dominant authority structure. Nesbitt has a very interesting section on the pros and cons of tokenism.

Why is change so hard to bring about and what can be done to alter the current situation? These questions are examined in the final chapter. Included in it is a very significant examination of the construction of gender and its implications. As to what can bring about change, Nesbitt would say that women must confront head on men's sense of owning the organization. Women clergy need collectively to press issues as to why their labor and status is worth less than men's. She also looks clear-sightedly at the difficulties women face in finding time and energy to overcome differences and form coalitions. An interesting section considers post-feminist strategies which are situational and non-combative.

Nesbitt's analysis substantiates many of the findings of prior studies and is clear and sobering. Without transformation in the church, women remain either exploited or expendable. But she does not rule out radical change from within over a long period of history. Her visionary concluding chapter explores possible scenarios for the future of the church and her deconstructive analysis is matched by a listing of seven reconstructive possibilities.

Women must confront head on men's sense of owning the organization.

The book is not a quick read, but it is rewarding in terms of conscientization and scholarship, and provocative in its analysis of future possible trends in the church. It is worth sticking with the detailed sociological analysis to have realistic ground on which to stand for envisioning a transformed church. TW

Woman celebrates eucharist at Eau Claire cathedral

Over the protests of William Wantland, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Eau Claire (Wis.) and one of the church's most vigorous opponents of women's ordination, Mary Caucutt celebrated the eucharist at Eau Claire's Christ Church Cathedral on Dec. 28. She is the first woman priest ever to celebrate the eucharist at the cathedral.

Caucutt, now vicar of an Episcopal congregation in Wyoming, was baptized at the cathedral and her grandparents are still members there.The cathedral's vestry and dean, H. Scott Kirby, say they invited Caucutt to preach and celebrate because of her family's connection with the congregation, not to make a political point.

Wantland asked that they reconsider the invitation, but acknowledged that there was no legal barrier to prevent Caucutt from celebrating. Following last summer's General Convention decision mandating implementation of the canons permitting women's ordination, the diocese's executive council had repealed diocesan prohibitions against women priests.

Caucutt received a warm welcome from the cathedral congregation, who applauded after Kirby introduced her as "Mother Mary Caucutt." — *ENS*

A *new* PECUSA?

Perhaps in anticipation of just such events as the eucharistic celebration reported above, Eau Claire bishop William Wantland and several other bishops have incorporated as "The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America" (PECUSA), a name frequently used to refer to the Episcopal Church (which is officially incorporated under the name, "Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society").

Wantland says he wanted to create a new institutional "umbrella for orthodox individuals, organizations and parishes" because the Episcopal Church has been progressively abandoning "the old Faith." He has refused to change the name of the organization. — *ENS*

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It takes a nation

by Dale Susan Edmonds

***It Takes A Nation: A New Agenda for Fighting Poverty* by Rebecca M. Blank (New York and Princeton, N.J.: Russell Sage Foundation and Princeton University Press, 1997).**

Dense with facts and illustrative material, Rebecca Blank's *It Takes A Nation* is not the kind of book that one can "speed read." However, it is essential reading for anyone who is serious about poverty and its attendant issues.

This book was conceived and written during the time when the proposals for welfare reform were being debated on Capital Hill. Blank, a Northwestern University social scientist, targets it toward the audience of policy-makers, state and local, who are designing the programs which will directly affect the lives of real people. I would also commend this work to lobbying or neighborhood groups that are in a position to influence law-makers, and religious or community-based organizations that are in the business of attempting to bring about neighborhood change.

Blank's first concern is to identify and address the hosts of "myths" that surround the issue of poverty. Our public policy must be shaped by factual arguments which are supported by careful and well documented research; this book attempts to pull together and interpret that body of work.

The context of the fight against poverty has changed radically. The author demonstrates that, while we could previously count on economic growth to bring about inherent benefit to those who are on the bottom of the ladder, this will no longer be the case. While employment has been bandied about as a certain cure, the author makes evident why "getting a job" provides no assurance of being able to make significant strides toward the doorway out of poverty.

On the other side, the federal government has been advanced as the central player in the war on poverty. While Blank asserts an essential role for the federal government, she recommends that this role be balanced and coordinated with state, local, private and non-profit initiatives.

The answer to the question of "how to solve the problem of poverty" has everything to do with what one first advances as the causes of poverty. Blank devotes major time and attention to this debate. One by one she lays out the major categories of "belief" and demonstrates with clarity of thought and well-researched analysis the limits of our assumptions.

Laid out in a largely "question and answer" format, the book examines the phenomenon of poverty from all angles: "Who is poor in America today?" "Why don't they just get jobs?" "The death of trickle-down economics" "What do antipoverty programs do?" "Who should help the poor?" "Where do we go from here?"

Some of the answers to these questions are surprising because program analyses and documented evaluations offer conclusions which differ considerably from public perceptions. Among the findings discussed are:

- Poor people don't fit the stereotyped images that we are flooded with in the media;
- many poor people already work;
- antipoverty programs over the years have largely accomplished the goals that they set out to (contrary to popular belief, most were never intended to get people out of poverty, rather to reduce poverty's devastating effects);
- job programs are inherently more expensive to run (not less) than direct cash assistance programs;
- the dollars spent by the federal government on antipoverty efforts cannot be replaced by the combination of private charities and state spending.

The solutions to poverty are not impossible, but neither are they subject to quick fixes. They also cannot be solved cheaply. Blank enthusiastically shares with her readers examples of programs which have been very successful with varying target audiences in different parts of the country. Offered not as "cookie cutter" solutions, they are presented so that we can both be encouraged that real progress can be made, as well as admonished not to disregard the complexity and sophistication that will be required.

Creativity and long-term commitment will be demanded of religious, civic and business organizations in cooperation with all levels of government if we are to make serious inroads toward a new future for this nation's poor.

The first step might be studying this book. TW

review

Dale Susan Edmonds is a UCC pastor who recently served as co-minister of her denomination's Chicago Metropolitan Association. She is teaching a course on public issues at Chicago's Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education.

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"Homelessness is relatively new," says Will O'Brien, the Director of Education and Advocacy for Project H.O.M.E., a nine-year-old program serving chronically homeless people in Philadelphia. "We've always had some form of poverty, but there simply wasn't anything like this 25 years ago. To the degree we forget that, we tend to accept it as just part of life in urban America."

O'Brien is currently working with a committee to develop a "Blueprint to End Homelessness in Philadelphia." Spurred by welfare reform and the growing tendency to blame poor people for their poverty, the committee has been looking at what it would take to get people off the city's streets and into decent housing.

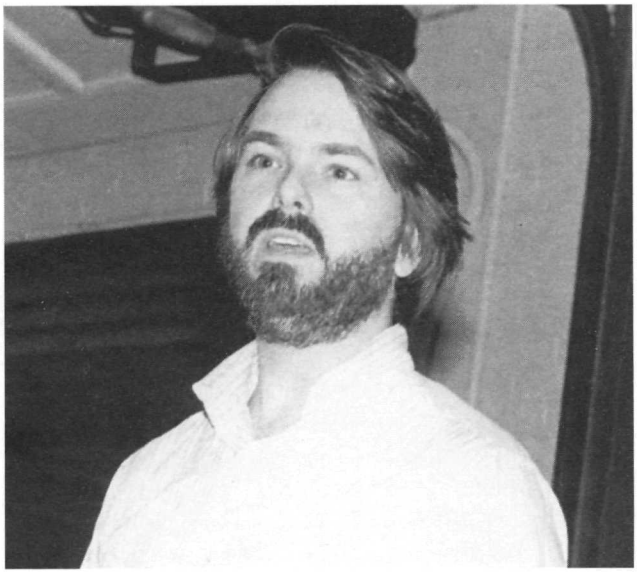
"We felt it was a critical time to not give up," O'Brien says. "The idea was to engage people in the possibility that with the right commitment, we really can solve a great deal of homelessness."

The work is frustrating, O'Brien says, not for lack of creative proposals, but for lack of resources to implement them. "Homelessness is an expensive problem. As a society, we have let this problem fester to the point where it would take enormous resources to solve it. And the political will isn't there."

But even more disturbing to O'Brien is his growing perception of homelessness as the tip of an unacknowledged iceberg.

"In our current social and economic landscape, market forces are rendering more and more people completely disposable.

It's not so much the rich versus the poor, but what is God's will for human community?



Will O'Brien Harvey Finkle

Restoring holy rhythms

by Marianne Arbogast

With globalization and technology and a much more vicious global capitalism, you see, at one level, the downsizing of middle management, but at the other level, people on the street. It's the same phenomenon. The economy no longer needs all these people, and it doesn't care what happens to them. It's deeply sobering because I don't think we are willing to name that reality, and until we can, we're not even going to begin to get a handle on how to solve the level of poverty we have."

O'Brien is well acquainted with both the complexity of the problems and with practical ways of addressing them. After joining the Project H.O.M.E. staff eight years ago, he helped it grow from an emergency shelter to a multi-faceted agency offering services ranging from street outreach to job opportunities in one of three micro-enterprises — the Back Home Cafe, Our Daily Threads Thrift Store and the Cornerstone Community Book and Art Center. Two hundred and fifty housing units offer support for special needs like mental illness or addiction, and job readiness courses are available to residents and neighbors.

At the core of Project H.O.M.E. is "a spiritual conviction of the dignity of each person," O'Brien says. "At the heart of the crisis of poverty is a value system in which some people are valuable because of their possessions, their money, their power; and people who are on the streets, who are broken or wounded, have no value."

Faithfulness to this conviction is Project H.O.M.E.'s yardstick of success.

"We have had amazing stories of people you never thought would make any progress, who are now working full-time jobs and living on their own and doing great," O'Brien says. "Residents often tell us that what works about Project H.O.M.E. is that we really treat people with dignity and we affirm people's gifts.

Witnesses, the quick and the dead

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

"But others are so deeply wounded that what they are going to be able to achieve will always be somewhat limited, so we make room for that, and try to have a safe and good place for them to be. Potential funders always want to hear your success stories — and we have a lot of successes, but there are also many cases where we can't give them the statistics they need of people being mainstreamed. People who are poor and homeless often have deep, deep wounds. It may be profound personal trauma and alienation and abuse that comes out of a desperately poor family and community. And we're continuing to learn how deep and serious addiction is, as a medical problem, as a psychological problem and almost as a spiritual mystery."

O'Brien traces his own commitment to the needs of the homeless to his childhood in a family bruised by alcoholism. "It wreaked a lot of emotional havoc on the family, which is one of my connections to a lot of the people we work with, that I'm still in my own recovery. The experiences of an alcoholic family in some subtle way sensitized me to suffering, so that as I would step out of my normal world — say, volunteering at a soup kitchen in college — something about those encounters with suffering really pulled on me. I went from these personal encounters to the questions that inevitably lead you to social analysis and a broader concern about justice. And I think the work with Project H.O.M.E. has been very healing for me, personally."

After studying literature in college and graduate school (O'Brien lists Flannery O'Connor and Fyodor Dostoyevsky among his favorite theologians), he moved to Philadelphia to work for *The Other Side* magazine. Now married to Dee Dee Risher of *The Other Side*, O'Brien divides his time between Project H.O.M.E. and the Alternative Seminary, a project which gathers people in justice ministries for theological and biblical reflection. Under its auspices, O'Brien has led interfaith study groups on the Jubilee tradition in scripture with Philadelphia rabbi and author Arthur Waskow.

"A traditional understanding of justice from a faith perspective has been that we must care for the poor and stop oppressing the poor — which is true," he says. "But as we've gone deeper into the Jubilee tradition, it's a much more wholistic and awesome vision. It's not so much the rich versus the poor, but what is God's will for human community? How do we live in harmony with the world? How do we balance work and rest? How do we ensure that resources are available for all of us in the community?"

The community cannot begin to achieve the genuine justice and shalom *God desires until it roots itself in quiet and rest. Poor people are among the victims of this hyper-productive culture, so one of the things we can do to try to restore sanity is to slow down.*

Jubilee values challenge the roots of our social crisis, O'Brien believes. "The roots of our market culture are hyper-productivity and radical individualism. Everything is commodity. Nothing ever rests. You're always using up resources, you're always working hard, you're always getting ahead. It's destructive on our psyches, it's destructive on the people in the economy who are left behind, and it's enormously destructive on creation.

"There's a deep sense in which the Jubilee vision answers all of that. It says work, rest, share, live in holy rhythms, worship, play, enjoy the world that God gave you. Let the land rest periodically, redistribute resources periodically, cancel debt periodically. All of those would be profoundly healing if we figured out ways to practice them."

O'Brien points out that a favorite biblical text of social activists — the exhortation to fast by doing works of justice in Isaiah 58 — is immediately followed by a text on observing the sabbath.

"It's part of the same prophetic oracle, and it's integral to that prophetic vision," O'Brien says. "Yes, you pour yourself out to feed those who are hungry, but you also practice sabbath. And, in fact, the community cannot begin to achieve the genuine justice and *shalom* that God desires until it roots itself in contemplation and quiet and rest. Poor people are among the victims of this hyper-productive culture, so one of the things we can do to try to restore sanity is to slow down."

Though he admits to struggling with "a lot of guilt and drivenness," O'Brien is working to integrate sabbath practices into his life.

"I'm trying to learn to revere sabbath — to say that at least one day a week I'm really not going to do any work. It's amazing how hard that is, but it's also amazing how important that is. I try to build into my weekly life good quality time with my wife and with my friends. To get together to play music, to cook good meals. I try to take time in nature, to make sure that I'm praying enough and just having quiet time during the day.

"A lot of it is releasing myself from a sense that solving homelessness and poverty is up to me. Whether I work an 8-hour day or a 23-hour day is not going to make a heck of a lot of difference. But if I can practice a healthy lifestyle in a community, that might draw more people into the values I care about; then maybe they'll pick up some of the slack." TW

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Witness praise

HOPE YOU CAN HELP ME REGAIN some modicum of my Christianity — feel like a Buddhist.

Ara Nelle Robinson
Wester Springs, IL

I HAVE RECEIVED *The Witness* since my subscription to *Christianity & Crisis* was converted. You have a much needed publication, not only for Episcopalians, but for us Presbyterians (and others) as well.

Gordon H. Ringenberg
Clayton, CA

I'VE BEEN A SUBSCRIBER since I was in seminary, and always appreciate your insight. Love the artwork too!

Eliza Linley
Berkeley, CA

THE WITNESS IS MY FAVORITE magazine. There is always something special to me — and many issues more than one thing that speaks to me. Keep up the good work and I'll keep reading. Fair enough?

Marie J. Lennan
Springfield, PA

I GREATLY VALUE your magazine. I learn something valuable and inspiring from every issue. I'd especially like to see future issues on cooperative living and intentional community, and on public education.

Cindy Maxey
Cleveland, OH

I WAS SO ENCOURAGED by your issue on homosexuality. I'm a nurse (RN) and Health Educator.

Louise Smith
Holt, MI

YOUR RANGE OF ISSUES and depth of coverage is outstanding among religious periodicals.

Alban Richey
Plainfield VT

Fundraising appeal

WISH I COULD SEND MORE, but trust that this will help. I've been a *Witness* subscriber since the 1960s and have always found the articles stimulating and right on target!

Douglas M. Spence
Ashland OR

Abusive shepherds

A CERTAIN GROUP OF EPISCOPAL bishops want to bar certain people from activity in the Episcopal Church. As one who believes in inclusion, I'm reminded of what Sam Goldwyn was given credit for saying, "I'm including you out." Don't let anyone include you out.

Certain shepherds seem quite abusive
The way they wish to be exclusive.
Truly, who gave them the nod
To change the loving plans of God?

Robert C. Grieve
Canon City, CO

Sex and debt

THE STATEMENT BY THE DALLAS conference of Anglican bishops and archbishops linking debt to sex is right [*TW* 12/97]. The continued lack of acceptance of homosexuals in the life of the church alienates many Christians and seekers who would otherwise support the church. The lack of knowledge and understanding of the depths of human sexuality by the hierarchy of the church drive many more people from the ranks of the Christian community.

We need more discussion, information and understanding of human sexuality, especially homosexuality, not more efforts to create outcasts in the body of Christ.

Robert Warren Cromey
San Francisco, CA

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The Witness

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What do you do with what you don't believe?

Struggling with feelings of exile

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Sports

I USED SOME INSIGHTS FROM SPORTS as a principality [1/98] in my children's message at the church I serve in Barre, Mass. Every Sunday the kids present me with a shoe box with an object, unknown to me till that moment. I have to "preach" on whatever is in there. It was a little homemade ribbon announcing Jesus as an All Star. Your thoughtful issue helped me use this little piece of "culture" in a countercultural fashion. Incidentally, this manner of "preaching" puts the power in the hands of the kids. Their offering shapes my response; they get the first "word" in physical, symbolic form ... and the adults love it.

Ellie McLaughlin
Barre, MA

BILL WYLIE-KELLERMANN'S ARTICLE "Seduction in sports" fascinated this nonathletic person who never "got it." Confirming his observations: On State Street in Chicago today I saw a billboard advertising a sports-talk radio station. The headline: "We're more of a religious station than a sports station."

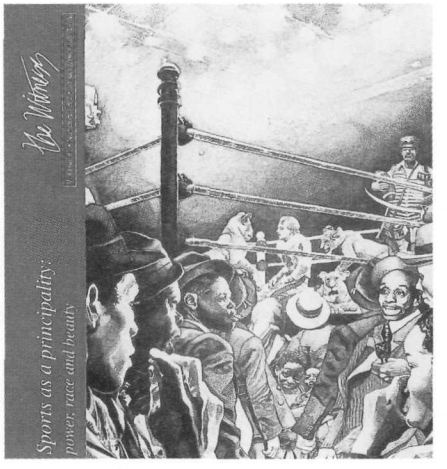
Now I know what that means.

Victoria A. Rebeck
The Christian Ministry
Chicago, IL

THANK YOU FOR SENDING ME A sample copy of *WITNESS* — and especially the topic of SPORTS — the IDOL OF OUR TIME IN THIS COUNTRY is close to my heart.

Helena Schaareman
Bensalem, PA

MANY THANKS FOR THE EXTRA COPIES of the Jan/Feb issue.Of course, we loved the article on Cary [McGehee]. I have had



notes from across the country asking for additional info, like one from Boulder, Colo., requesting pictures and additional data to hold up Cary as a model for their community of children, of which Jon Benet Ramsey was a part.

H. Coleman McGehee, Jr.
Bloomfield Township, MI

I'VE BEEN READING YOUR JOURNAL'S trenchant articles on the role sports play in American culture [1/98]. I received a complimentary edition of your magazine in the mail, and I hope to be able to take out a subscription soon. Your obvious expression of social conscience and spiritual values prompts me to include you among addressees I've been mailing for several years on the now well known Mumia Abu-Jamal case in Pennsylvania and related issues.

The HBO documentary special film, "Mumia Abu-Jamal: A Case for Reasonable Doubt?", updating info on the case along with articles by Mumia, can be accessed at the following PC website: <www.mumia.org>. A video can be obtained from Blockbuster Video Stores.

Two abolitionist mailing lists worth being on are those of the following two organizations: Pennsylvania Abolitionists United Against The Death Penalty, P.O. Box 58128, Phila., PA 19102, phone (215) 769-5408; Equal Justice, USA, a project of the Quixote Center, P.O. Box 5206, Hyattsville, MD 20782, phone (301) 699-0042.

Stephen C. Martorano
Philadelphia, PA

Classifieds

Working for peace in Ireland

Corrymeela is a Christian Community working for peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Corrymeela works with Youth, School, Church and Community groups bringing people of all ages and traditions together. For information contact: Corrymeela Community, 8 Upper Crescent, Belfast, N. Ireland, BT7 1NT. Phone 011 44 1232 325008. Fax 011 44 1232 315385. <belfast@ corrymeela.org.uk>.

Order of Jonathan Daniels

The Order of Jonathan Daniels is a dispersed religious community-information for persons of both genders, single, committed, or married, living and working in the world, who are evangelists for Scriptural justice and liberation. Contact OJD, 567-23 Sagamore Ave., Portsmouth, NH 03801-5550.

Episcopal Urban Intern Program

Work in social service, live in Christian community in Los Angeles. For adults 21-30. Apply now for the 1998-99 year. Contact: The Rev. Gary Commins, 260 N. Locust St., Inglewood, CA 90301. 310-674-7700.

Vocations

Contemplating religious life? Members of the Brotherhood and the Companion Sisterhood of Saint Gregory are Episcopalians, clergy and lay, married and single. To explore a contemporary Rule of Life, contact: The Director of Vocations, Brotherhood of St. Gregory, Dept. W, Saint Bartholomew's Church, 82 Prospect Street, White Plains, NY 10606-3499.

Classifieds

Witness classifieds cost 75 cents a word or $30 an inch, whichever is less. Due 15th of month, two months prior to publication.

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Immigration

THIS IS JUST A SHORT NOTE TO commend you for *The Witness* publication you put out in a world that badly needs to read and become aware of the issues you address. I am impressed by everything I read in the December, 1997 issue. Also so many of your staff are women; the picture of the Flight into Egypt on the cover and its appropriate title; your philosophy "offering fresh and sometimes irreverent views of our world; pushing boundaries, err on the side of inclusion, and ENJOY bringing your views into tension with orthodox Christianity"!!! I love it! Our world needs more of this!

What a wonderful work you are doing.!!! The list of themes of the 1997 issues is so ON ... please continue to address these vital issues. I'd like to offer a topic that I believe in so much: the 12 Step Program of Alcoholics Anonymous and all other programs that spun off from that one. I've been a member of Overeaters Anonymous for 12 years and Al Anon for 5 years. They have saved my life and within its membership — and the spirituality the steps enfold — have effected miracles day by day.

I will hold you in my prayers.

Rose Mary Linhoff
School Sisters of Notre Dame
St. Louis, MO

Northern Ireland

I WANTED TO CONGRATULATE you on the quality of the articles about Northern Ireland. The articles painted an excellent picture of the nature and roots of the conflict here. Many would balk at the complexity of the situation but it is truly encouraging to see *The Witness* tackling the Northern Ireland "troubles" in such depth. I believe your readers will have a much greater understanding of the difficulties in resolving our conflict and will also be much more aware of the numerous peace groups and initiatives which bring people from all sides together in Northern Ireland — giving real hope for a peaceful future for all. [See classifieds for info. on how to connect with the Corrymeela community.]

Peter Anderson
Corrymeela Community
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Saddam, Uncle Sam, four horsemen of Apocalypse Eleanor Mill

Dealing with weapons of mass destruction

Excerpts from a statement from the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR):

The FOR congratulates Secretary General Kofi Annan, President Bill Clinton and President Saddam Hussein for coming to a diplomatic agreement which, at least temporarily, has averted the impending attack against Iraq.

1. The FOR calls on President Clinton to commit our nation to resolving our differences with Iraq diplomatically and to renounce the use of war as an implement for enforcing U.N. resolutions on the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. We further ask our government to remove U.S. military forces from the region to diminish the chance of war by accident or misunderstanding. We cannot calculate the effect on Iraq, its neighbors, and U.S. military personnel of U.S. weapons penetration of stored chemical or biological agents.

2. The FOR calls for the immediate lifting of the U.N. economic embargo of Iraq. UNICEF and the World Food Program have documented that over one million Iraqis, 60 percent of them children, have already died due to the U.N./U.S. imposed sanctions.

3. The FOR calls for the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction. While the elimination of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction is important, it cannot be separated from regional and international efforts to eliminate such weapons. It is incumbent on the U.S., as the only nation that has used nuclear weapons, to lead the effort for the complete elimination of all such indiscriminate weapons.

4. The FOR calls for the establishment of an international summit to deal with the outstanding regional political issues. Much of the arms race in the Middle East and the gulf has been driven by underlying and unresolved regional issues.

FOR, 521 North Broadway, Box 271, Nyack NY 10960; <Dhostetter@igc.org>; <www.nonviolence.org/for>.

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The Witness

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Co-editors/publishers Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann, Julie A. Wortman
Assistant Editor Marianne Arbogast
Magazine Production Maria Catalfio
Book Review Editor Bill Wylie-Kellermann
Poetry Editor Gloria House Manana
Controller Roger Dage
Promotion Consultant Karen D. Bota
Office Support Patricia Kolon, Martha Dage, Beth O'Hara-Fisher

8 **Keeping faith in exile: Jews hiding as Christians** by Lisa Gayle
Living in a climate where open practice of their faith can be dangerous, Jews throughout history have sometimes resorted to observing the religious rites of the empire, while teaching their children a subversive faith at home.

12 **'Nourishing spirit and imagination': an interview with Walter Brueggemann** by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann
Given the decline in the Christian church's influence in the U.S., Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann says it's time to restructure our approach to worship. Like those in exile we need to be able to express our grief and nurture what we consider sacred within a hostile environment.

17 **What do you do with what you don't believe?**
A roundup of views considering what we may not believe and some people's manner of resolving the tension.

20 **Ursula LeGuin: taking exception to expectations** by Jane Slaughter
Science fiction writer Ursula LeGuin has tackled sexism in her genre. Now she tackles Christian chauvinism in our culture.

22 **Ambiguity: the essence of faith: an interview with Verna Dozier** by Julie A. Wortman
Verna Dozier, author of The Dream of God, *explains how her faith grows more rooted when she does not insist on the false power that comes with defining one's beliefs as the right ones.*

Cover: Music by Ursala Roma, mixed media. Distributed by the Syracuse Cultural Workers, 315-474-1132.

The Witness offers a fresh and sometimes irreverent view of our world, illuminated by faith, Scripture and experience. Since 1917, *The Witness* has been advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those people who have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." We push boundaries, err on the side of inclusion and enjoy bringing our views into tension with orthodox Christianity. *The Witness'* roots are Episcopalian, but our readership is ecumenical. For simplicity, we place news specific to Episcopalians in our Vital Signs section. *The Witness* is committed to brevity for the sake of readers who find little time to read, but can enjoy an idea, a poem or a piece.

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

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Office: 7000 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210-2872. Tel.: (313) 841-1967. Fax: (313) 841-1956. To reach Julie Wortman: HC 35 Box 647, Tenants Harbor, ME 04860. Tel.: (207) 372-6396.
E-mail: <[first name]@thewitness.org>.
Website: <\\www.thewitness.org>.

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Refashioning our faith

By Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

I consider it a gift to my kids that I find dinosaurs suspect. When Lydia, now 12, was in preschool her teacher announced that they had recently discovered there was no such thing as the brontosaurus. It was, rather, an apatasaurus — vegetarian, not meat-eating, and with an altogether different head. Yeah, right, I thought. Give me a pile of bones and I could make you five or six reasonably sized animals for any one dinosaur you want to assemble.

As for the big bang and evolution, it seems to me you couldn't write a more alienating creation myth. Many people explain their place in the world by talking about the corn maiden or a goddess who fell from grace or of a turtle who went deep into the seas to bring forth earth so that humans could have a home. The story of Adam and Eve has considerable merit in this light. But a random bang that sent the whole thing spinning? A scenario in which apes blur in to humans and humans eventually blur into something else? My God, what's the point? One might as well plunder the earth's resources and live at the expense of whatever fitter predator is yet to come.

All this is to say that each of us take exception to some of the prevailing beliefs held by our communities.

This issue was first considered when angels, shepherds and kings hovered in anticipation. It is fitting that it is released when the readings draw attention to angels and an empty tomb.

Contributing editor Anne Cox preached a Christmas sermon in 1996 that acknowledged people's skepticism about the Christmas story. Her honesty sparked any number of conversations.

It won't surprise you, given the opening paragraphs, that I don't have too much trouble with virgin births and ascensions, but plenty of people do. This issue is dedicated to examining the kinds of contortions we go through while attempting to stay in community with people whose dominant beliefs we don't share, whether this is in church, school, family or nation. In some cases, we choose to cut all ties. More often, we stay while inwardly debating whether it is cowardice to remain silent or adolescent to speak up.

Sometimes our life and the lives of others may depend on conforming. I think of the early Christians who pretended to be Jews and of the Jews who survived Christian persecution only by "converting" and "worshiping" among the baptized while struggling to preserve what was sacred to their hearts in the deepest secrecy (p. 8). I think of the compromises our ancestors often made in order to pass on life to us — changing names, changing faiths, lying about their nations of origin.

Enmeshed in the ambiguity that both Verna Dozier (p.22) and Walter Brueggemann (p. 12) say is central to our faith are some challenges we rarely acknowledge. Glossing over these can prevent us from taking opportunities to wrestle with the texts and traditions of our community.

Brueggemann's voice is particularly important to me because he suggests that the church is entering a new era but refusing to acknowledge it. The new era is characterized by a rejection of the values, beliefs, concerns, language and symbols of the Christian church; our ethics and faith are irrelevant to most Americans. At the same time, the powers seem unleashed and communities splinter in the face of unrestrained consumerism, rootlessness and fear.

Living as Christians, Brueggemann says, feels increasingly exilic. In *Cadences of Home*, Brueggemann writes that we need to express the "displacement, failed hopes, anger, wistful sadness, and helplessness [that] permeate our sense of self, sense of community, and sense of future." We need to recreate a sense of who we are as people of faith.

Brueggemann points to the Psalms as texts that demonstrate remarkable faith, unambiguous anger and confidence that, while times may be harsh, God will bring liberation. He says the fundamental question is whether God acts in history.

Some are alienated from faith because scientific rationalism seems in conflict (p. 28). For others, this pivotal question has been at the heart of New Age explorations. Many people who worship in Wiccan and pagan circles are not concerned about creedal issues , but are busy creating rituals that relate their hopes, needs and courage to the "universe." They are talking to the spirits in trees and rocks, studying alchemy, looking for transformation through incantation. These are not skeptics immersed in rationalism, but often ex-Catholics who thrive on ritual, while looking for a more feminist and less moralistic framework.

Looking at what we do with what we don't believe is an opportunity to learn to be at ease with ambiguity while also honing the edges of what we *do* believe so that we can sustain it. TW

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is co-editor/publisher of *The Witness*, <jeanie@thewitness.org>.

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A sacred canopy of belief

by Robert Thieme

A sacred canopy of shared belief used to soar above our heads like a large umbrella, keeping us warm and dry as the contradictory data of real life beat down.

No model of reality contains everything. Life is larger than our models. All we need is an umbrella that is "good enough" to manage the odd drops by keeping them irrelevant. As long as our model of reality makes enough sense of the world to let us act, we hold to our beliefs.

But there is an awful lot of rain these days, 40 days of rain, more than 40 days, and it keeps on raining ...

Our trans-planetary network of computers is a rainmaking machine. It's really coming down out there. More and more data just doesn't fit. Our umbrella has more than a few holes in it, and the water is trickling through.

At first we act as if we don't notice. The real experience of our lives contradicts what we say about life. When we hear ourselves speak, we sometimes sound like ... someone else, someone we used to be or someone we're overhearing. If we refuse to believe our experience and believe our beliefs instead, we get a headache. We crawl into bed or pop a Prozac, but we keep getting wetter and wetter.

Alas! We're all too human — stubborn, frightened out of our shivering skins — so we still insist that we're not wet. We hold the handle of the umbrella more and more tightly, telling ourselves and everyone else how dry we are, what an excellent umbrella we have found. Others politely suppress giggles and move on.

Finally the umbrella is so battered that we can no longer deny what everyone else has seen for a long time, that we're holding nothing but shreds of wet cloth on a skeletal frame and we're soaked to the skin.

We want to stay dry, but one legacy of living in the 20th century is that no canopy spans us all. We join organizations to experience the momentary consolation of agreement, but we can't live there. Life today is like living in a village of grass huts in which everyone has a radio tuned to a different station. However high we turn the volume, we can't shut out the other songs.

I recently spoke about "The Stock Market, UFOs, and Religious Experience" to an investment conference. I distinguished between things we think we see out there and things we really see. It's about the psychology of projection and the psychology of investment. I noted that in the U.S. and increasingly in the world, an attitude of respect for other religious traditions creates a good deal of tension. We have to both believe in our own belief system and acknowledge that others are entitled to contrary views. Holding mutually exclusive truths simultaneously in our minds is difficult. We're not even always sure which is the umbrella and which is the rain.

We hold the handle of the umbrella more and more tightly, telling ourselves and everyone else how dry we are, what an excellent umbrella we have found.

We will try to surrender our freedom to those selling cheap umbrellas, but we cannot avoid our destiny: We are each responsible for inventing ourselves. There is no high ground on which to hide.

Our calling is made more difficult by the digital world. The digital world consists of simulations, models so compelling we mistake them for reality. Sometimes the digital symbols refer only to other symbols, what Baudrillard called simulacra, simulations of simulations, copies with no originals. All those simulations are umbrellas — and rain.

Nietzsche saw it coming at the end of the last century. It's what he meant when he said "God is dead." He wasn't talking about the creator of the universe, but about the gods in our heads, the cultural artifacts that we invent. He saw that our sacred canopy had shredded and the rains were pouring down.

Prophets are people who get wet before everybody else and start sneezing. We try to quarantine them, but reality is a cold it is impossible not to catch.

Electronic media are transforming what it means to be human, the gods we are likely to worship — gods, not God. God is with us out here in the rain.

In the digital world, Nietzsche's questions are more urgent than ever. Some treat the digital work as if simulations can be more than an umbrella, as if they can be stitched together into an ark. And who can blame them? Who does not want to be warm and dry? But digital simulations of 3-D umbrellas will not keep us dry. The digital world is a rising tide, a *tsunami* impacting our consciousness with revolutionary force, levelling our villages, sweeping away our shrines, sweeping everything, everything out to sea. What games, asked Nietzsche, what festivals shall we now invent? What games shall we play? What games shall we dare to believe? TW

Richard Thieme writes on the human dimensions of computer technology and the work place. Check out his web site: <http://www.thiemeworks.com>.

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"NON-commitment"

by Chinua Achebe

Hurrah! to them who do nothing
see nothing feel nothing whose
hearts are fitted with prudence
like a diaphragm across
womb's beckoning doorway to bar
the scandal of seminal rage. I'm
told the owl too wears wisdom
in a ring of defence round
each vulnerable eye securing it fast
against the darts of sight. Long ago
in the Middle East Pontius Pilate
openly washed involvement off his
white hands and became famous. (Of all
the Roman officials before him and after
who else is talked about
every Sunday in the Apostles' Creed?) And
talking of apostles that other fellow
Judas wasn't such a fool
either; though much maligned by
succeeding generations the fact remains
he alone in that motley crowd
had sense enough to tell a doomed
movement when he saw one
and get out quick, a nice litte
packet bulging his coat-pocket
into the bargain—sensible fellow.

This poem, by contemporary Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, was published in *In Person: Achebe, Awoonor and Soyinka* at the University of Washington, Karen L. Morell, editor (Seattle: University of Washington, 1975).

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Keeping faith in exile: Jews hiding as Christians

By Lisa Gayle

Some Jewish communities survive with integrity in the middle of powerful hostile forces. What motivated generations to risk their lives and their children's lives to remain secret Jews, particularly when the Christian church and states were adamant about rooting out any vestige of Jewish practice?

There's little general knowledge about hidden communities of Jews, and almost nothing known about their inner lives. When individuals "come out," they lose their Christian community and, sadly, many Jews no longer consider them Jews. The results can be worse. Most of Holland's secret community, hidden since the 1520s, decided it was safe to live openly as Jews in 1920. Twenty years later most were killed. This situation doesn't lend itself to open dialogue.

Trudi Alexy, in her book *The Mezuzah in the Madonna's Foot,* tells of two young doctors, an American Jew and a Spanish Catholic, who developed a close relationship working long hours tending to an endless stream of wounded and starving patients at the end of the Spanish Civil War. After 50 years, in the late 1980s, the American returned to Spain and finally asked if the other doctor's family was Jewish.

The Spanish Catholic took his friend down a long corridor into a room without windows. He lit several candles in a wrought-iron candelabra and opened an iron-studded wooden door that covered an arched niche in the wall. "Whenever I am troubled or need help, I pray to the Virgin Mary or Our Savior Jesus Christ or to the saints. I say the rosary and go to Mass," he said. "But if all else fails, I come here."

He took a threadbare *tallis* (prayer shawl) and ancient phylacteries (amulets containing passages of Scripture) from the niche, put them on in the manner of Orthodox Jews and began to bow and rock as he recreated the age-old manner of Jewish prayer.

The American asked, "Where did you learn to do this?"

"My father taught me. His father taught him and so on into the past. I taught my sons, and I can only believe they will teach theirs."

Most of Holland's secret community, hidden since the 1520s, decided it was safe to live openly as Jews in 1920.

The ways individuals feel connected to deep spiritual places are extremely personal. Other ways of asking about that deep place are: Who is your God? How do you make sense of the world? How do you preserve and deepen relationships that are holy, including the relationship to Self? How do you see the world healing? How do you pass on the most authentic experience of your values and beliefs?

I am struck by how ritual and belief are intensely personal and intensely familial, with the community, at best, sanctifying flexibility.

Jews are reminded of this yearly during the most solemn moment of the year, Yom Kippur. Traditionally, we have taken stock of our relationships with others before Yom Kippur, when we plead for God's forgiveness for past sin (times when we have acted out of separation from Holiness).

The beginning of Yom Kippur's evening service is the *Kol Nidre,* a legal declaration recited in front of a formal court of three, which is required for the legal procedure of granting dispensation. It retracts all vows that apply to the coming year. The *Kol Nidre* seems to contradict the past month of preparation:

All vows and oaths, all promises and obligations, all renunciations and responses, that we make to God between this Yom Kippur and the next, all of them we retract. May we be absolved from them all, may we be released from them all, may they be null and void, may they all be of no effect. May these vows not be vows, may these oaths not be oaths, may these responses not be responses (translated by Arthur Waskow).

Trudi Alexy interviews an ex-priest known only as Matthew. He is a genealogist from a family of secret Jews descended from those forcibly baptized in Spain in 1391. He explains, "In those days most of those forced to become Christians did not take their conversion seriously at first, and nobody expected to have to stay Catholic for very long. They felt that eventually the rules would change ... they say, 'I may be baptized, but I am still a Jew. What's a little holy water to a Jew?' So we went to mass on

Lisa Gayle is a Detroit writer and member of T'chiyah Reconstructionist Congregation.

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Sundays to make the police happy, and when everyone bowed saying *Mea culpa,* we bowed and said *Aleynu,* then went home and said prayers to ask God to forgive us for going to church. That is when the *Kol Nidre* was first said, to let God know that we didn't really mean to keep all the baptismal vows we had to swear when we converted."

My sense of Judaism is that it is anarchistic in the best sense of the word — individual families and communities decide on how best to actualize their values, with a tradition of passionate discussion and multiple paths. Undoubtedly this was born of necessity, yet it is a strategy to pass on values in an intense and meaningful way.

Last Passover, the Dali Lama attended his first Seder. He was seeking answers to questions of how to survive in exile. Like many holidays, including Shabbat, the focus for the Passover celebration is the home. Every family's Seder tells and retells an important piece of Jewish history in the way that family chooses to pass it on, emphasizing the stories and traditions that are most meaningful for them.

There are *Haggadahs* (the book that tells the Passover story) for every orientation. I was given one written by Communist Party members in 1953. I remember pictures of an old European *Haggadah* with a hunting scene in the front. Since graven images are forbidden, some speculate that the hunting scene, because it didn't look Jewish, would protect the book and perhaps its owners.

In 1970, Passover came between mammoth anti-war marches and Black power demonstrations getting prime-time TV coverage. During that Seder, my cousin excused herself from the table. She came back stoned and somewhat belligerent. "What's hallelujah mean, anyway?" she challenged.

After a long, uncomfortable pause, my mother said, "It means right on."

"Well, why can't we say it then?"

Again silence, until my mother said, "Of course."

We rollicked through that Seder feeling very brazen, a family reaching out to a struggling member while breaking and connecting to tradition at the same time.

***Barcelona Haggadah*, mid-14th century**

For a long time, I was content to learn about Eastern European Jewish history. Then my husband and I adopted Jacob, who was born in Guatemala. While looking at the way his hair curls, similar to mine, I wondered if there might be a biological Jewish connection. Not long after, I heard about Jews living in the village of Venta Prieta, now a neighborhood of the Mexican city of Pachuca. We had the honor of visiting them last summer.

The road northeast from crowded Mexico City passes through fields of corn separated by desert scrub and giant cactae. To the east is Teotihuacan, the Aztec pyramids of the Sun and Moon. In the distance, the huge mountains are purple and silent, witness to much history, including the Spanish Inquisition that followed Jews who settled in Spanish-conquered America. One-quarter of those who came to New Spain in the 1500s had Jewish roots. There were also Jews whose families were expelled from Spain by 1492, fled to Amsterdam, and then came to the Americas hoping to find religious freedom.

In the mid-16th century, there were 15 synagogues in Mexico City. If hidden Jews were counted, Jews would have outnumbered Catholics. The Inquisition began in 1571. A Diego Rivera mural in Mexico City shows Jews, stripped, bloody lash marks on their backs, on the way to their deaths.

To survive, Jews moved further away from the centers of the Inquisition, many going as far as what is now New Mexico. They practiced in secret. Bits and pieces of Jewish ritual and prayer, often mixed with Catholicism, passed through the centuries. Sometimes the only practice

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kept was the avoidance of pork or the separation of milk and meat. Sometimes people who observe the traditions no longer know their origins.

This was repeated in India, China, Portugal, Morocco, Ethiopia, Turkey. A word, a belief, a moment of prayer and a deep feeling of being Jewish is sometimes all that reminds outsiders of these people's original faith.

In the small village of Venta Prieta, now a neighborhood in the Mexican city of Pachuca, the Tellez family secretly kept aspects of Jewish tradition alive. The congregation is very insistent on their story, that they remained hidden Jews for several hundred years. While they have enthusiastically accepted religious education from Samuel Lerer, a rabbi in Mexico City, and have developed religious practices more in line with mainstream Judaism, the elders have refused conversion, saying it is unnecessary because they have always been Jews.

There are some possible inconsistencies in the Venta Prietans' story. They were members of a Protestant group, Iglesia de Dios, from 1875 through 1940. They used to pray on their knees. They still use hand motions that look like the Catholic sign of the cross.

However, many such customs crop up in other groups who have survived in isolation. Barros Basto was taught by his grandfather, a Portuguese hidden Jew, to say to himself before entering a church: *In this house I enter, I adore neither the wood nor the stone, but one God who governs all the world.*

Adonai, my God, in my thoughts (touching his brow);

Adonai, my God, on my lips (touching his lips);

Adonai, my God, in my heart (touching his chest).

When performed rapidly, the gesture resembles the sign of the cross. It's not so different from my friend who silently says the *Shema* (Hear, O Israel, the Lord, our God, the Lord is One) when his AA group says the Lord's prayer.

Of the ambiguity, Matthew, the ex-priest, says "Many of those who became 'Super Catholics' were Marranos who put off the church's spies by asking, 'Would I name my son Jesus if I were not the most Catholic of Catholics?' ...When a Marrano kissed the foot of the Madonna by his front door, who would have guessed that a *mezuzah* (a small tube containing a parchment scroll of biblical passages which traditional Jews attach to their door post) was concealed in the foot?" TW

In 1970, Passover came between mammoth anti-war marches and Black power demonstrations getting prime-time TV coverage. During that Seder, my cousin excused herself from the table. She came back stoned and somewhat belligerent.

When you no longer 'pass'

"There's something else I want to tell you."

"What?" I groaned.

"Remember Miss Sallie who used to work for us in the tavern?"

Dad's lower lip quivered. He looked ill. Had he always looked this unhealthy, I wondered, or was it something that happened on the trip? I felt my face — skin like putty, lips chapped and cracked. Had I changed too?

"It's hard to tell you boys this." He paused, then slowly added, "But she's really my momma. That means she's your grandmother."

"But that can't be, Dad! She's colored!" I whispered, lest I be overheard by the other white passengers on the bus.

"That's right, Billy," he continued. "She's colored. That makes you part colored, too, and in Muncie you're gonna live with my Aunt Bess . . ."

I didn't understand Dad. I knew I wasn't colored, and neither was he. My skin was white. All of us are white, I said to myself. But for the first time, I had to admit Dad didn't exactly look white. His deeply tanned skin puzzled me as I sat there trying to classify my own father. Goose bumps covered my arms as I realized that whatever he was, I was. I took a deep breath. I couldn't make any mistakes. I looked closer. His heavy lips and dark brown eyes didn't make him colored, I concluded. His black, wavy hair was different from Negroes' hair, but it was different from most white folks' hair, too. He was darker than most whites, but Mom said he was Italian. That was why my baby brother had such dark skin and curly hair. Mom told us to be proud of our Italian heritage! That's it, I decided. He was Italian. I leaned back against the seat, satisfied. Yet the unsettling image of Miss Sallie flashed before me like a neon sign.

Colored! Colored! Colored!

He continued. "Life is going to be different from now on. In Virginia you were white boys. In Indiana you're going to be colored boys. I want you to remember that you're the same today that you were yesterday. But people in Indiana will treat you differently. ..."

— *Gregory Howard Williams,*
Life on the Color Line
(Plume, 1996)

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Peoples' Global Action

Peoples' movements from all continents met in Geneva Feb. 23-25 to launch a worldwide coordination of resistance against the global market, a new alliance of struggle and mutual support called the Peoples' Global Action (PGA) against "Free" Trade and the World Trade Organization. Visit the web page of the PGA at <http://www.agp.org> or send a message to <playfair@asta.rwth-aachen.de> with the sentence "PGA bulletin #0" in the subject line, to receive the PGA Bulletin.

Indigenous activists threatened

Indigenous leaders, environmentalists and human rights activists in the Mexican state of Morelos are fighting a government-sponsored project to build a multi-million dollar resort on land considered sacred by the community.

Leticia Moctezuma Vargas, a teacher and activist, has been peacefully campaigning with other members of the Tepoztlan community to stop the project, which could seriously damage the local environment. As a result of her participation in the protest, she and her young daughters have been beaten and have received death threats.

In April 1996, Moctezuma Vargas and her daughters joined a rally. At the rally, she saw three officers drag Marcos Olmedo Gutierrez, an elderly member of the community, wounded but alive, into a police vehicle. He was later found shot to death.

[Amnesty International requests letters urging a prompt and thorough investigation into the attacks and threats against Vargas and her community; asking that those responsible be brought to justice; and requesting immediate measures to protect Vargas and her family. Write to: Lic. Emilio Chuayffet Chemor/ Secretario de la Gobernacion/ / Bucareli 99 1erpiso, Col. Juarez/ 06699 Mexico DF, Mexico. Salutation: Dear Minister. Airmail postage: 60 cents.]

— *Amnesty Action,* Winter 1998

Clean energy option

Early this year California will become the first state in the nation to allow its citizens to choose their power supplier. Along with this power to choose comes the chance to protect the environment by buying electricity from clean, renewable sources such as wind farms, solar panels, and geothermal plants.

Competition is expected to be strong in this new power market, and energy companies are revving up their marketing to lure customers.

To help Californians sort through their alternatives, the National Resources Defense Council has developed a power-shopping guide, available on NRDC Online at <www.nrdc.org/howto/encagp.html>.

— *The Amicus Journal,* Spring 1998

Guns in the pews

Last year, Texas passed an amendment to the state's 1995 concealed weapons law which added churches — along with hospitals and amusement parks — to the places where Texans may carry concealed weapons. State Senator Jerry Patterson says he pushed for the amendment at the insistence of Texas ministers, who were disturbed that the old law restricted their ability to carry weapons to and from work.

The law provides for individual churches to post signs reading "No guns allowed," or inform parishioners of a no-guns policy.

— *The Christian Science Monitor,* 1-27-98

Park patrons under surveillance

The installation of police surveillance cameras in Washington Square Park in Greenwich Village was accepted with very little public protest, according to a report in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (1-20-98). *The Inquirer* attributed the quiet acceptance of the cameras in the politically liberal district to residents' despair over the severity of the drug situation in the park, which one resident likened to "running a gauntlet." Norman Siegl, head of the New York ACLU, was one of a few lone voices denouncing the measure, calling it "an undemocratic and Orwellian approach to governing."

Sacred anti-drug violence

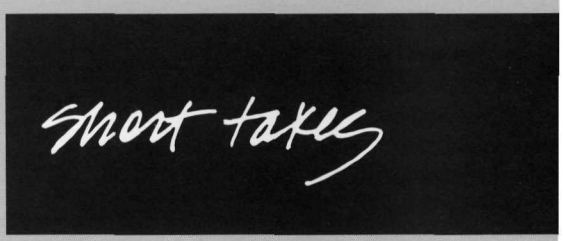
William Bennett's approval of beheading drug dealers and Daryl Gates' counsel that drug users be shot to death show a strong intuitive grasp of sacred violence: literal blood-letting squashes the victim class and produces social meaning far more effectively than tamer forms of scapegoating.

Cultures less influenced by Christianity, like China and Singapore, employ this very strategy: druggies die. Powerful scapegoating strategies push the U.S. to do the same, but Christianity thwarts its full expression, annoying those anti-drug enthusiasts who make TV's drug-busting docu-dramas like "Cops" so popular. This deprivation of scapegoating's full righteous satisfaction accounts for the pervasive belief that we are "soft on crime," even though drug-warring has made us the world's second largest jailer.

— Paul M. Bischke, *Fellowship,* 1-2/98

Bread for the World focuses on Africa

Bread for the World's 1998 Offering of Letters Campaign will be directed toward promoting African agricultural initiatives. Churches wishing to join the campaign can order a guide from Larry Goodwin at Bread for the World, 301-608-2400, <offering.of.letters@bread.org>.



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'Nourishing spirit and imagination': an interview with Walter Brueggemann

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

Walter Brueggemann is an Old Testament scholar at Columbia Seminary in Decatur, Ga., whose views on the importance of imagination and the role of the poet are grounded in Scripture. We interviewed him in this issue to learn more about doubt and belief.

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann: Does anything come to mind when I tell you that the topic of this issue is, What do you do with what you don't believe?

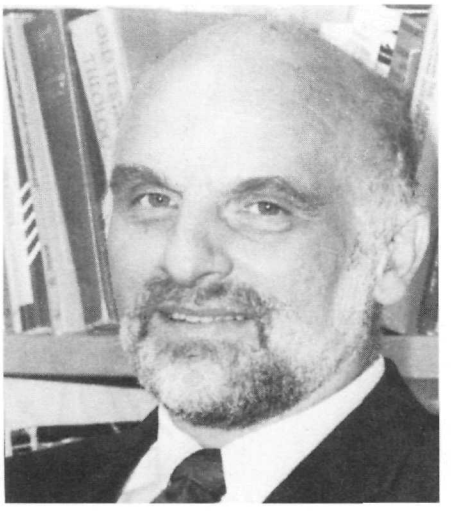
Walter Brueggemann: I suppose what comes to mind is the obvious "I believe, help my unbelief." Also the legitimacy and the importance of doubt for a faith that is alive.

J.W-K.: Are there places within our declared faith where you find things to be too much of a challenge to your reason?

W.B.: Well, one can touch the usual bases — the virgin birth and resurrection and stuff like that, but I suppose that the real issue is whether we keep believing that God's promises will win.

If you think about it, every day you can get talked out of believing that God's justice will prevail, because the evidence to the contrary is so immense. The doubt that I know about, and that I think a lot of people know about, is really about the most central and elemental claim — the reality of God's power in the world.

J.W-K.: You suggest that the culture is offering an exile experience to Christians — even though it may not be what we've imagined for ourselves, living here in a first-world empire. But you say that this very environment is actively working to make sure that we don't have the imagination needed to believe.



Walter Brueggemann

W.B.: The large rubric for that is the disestablishment of the church. As a church, we are no longer economically or culturally privileged. Inside the social reality of disestablishment — the ideology of individualism that is propelled by television advertising and all of the technological definitions — it is very difficult to communicate the categories in which we Christians think. I think that our own spirit for imagination just shrivels in such a context of commodity and abusive conflict.

The practical problem, it seems to me, is to create enough space so that we can nourish the spirit and practice the kind of imagination that keeps us believing that miracles of transformation are possible in this world.

The pressures are really much greater than our awareness or acknowledgment of the changed situation we're in. Until we acknowledge that, it feels we're just going to keep trying the same old ways, and that's very thin.

J.W-K.: In *The Prophetic Imagination* you write that part of the way that the church is made captive to consumer culture is that consumer culture is anti-history.

W.B.: Television thins our memory so that everything is immediate. You live in the now and there is no past and there is no future. I was teaching a Psalms course this morning and we were talking about the capacity of people in the Psalter — in really tough situations — to still be able to hope and to pray.

What came clear as we looked at that is that those people in situations of defeat, where they could have ended in despair, had this huge reservoir of remembered miracles, remembered healings and remembered transformations. They were able to put their present moment in the context of that dense memory which permitted them to look at the present differently.

The more we are in a rat race of individualism, where we don't take time to construct the memory and relish the memory, the more that common deposit disappears and we become victims of the present tense.

J.W-K.: I felt tremendous relief reading *Cadences of Home.* You suggest that the churches ought to be offering a forum, offering texts, that allow people to admit that they're sad and need to grieve.

I've noticed in the last year or so that I have really strong needs that the liturgy is not meeting. I come to the service feeling exhausted and weary — the political action that I've attempted has mostly failed, all I see is the victory of the

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Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is co-editor/publisher of *The Witness,* <jeanie@thewitness.org>.
Artist **René Joseph** lives in Minneapolis. Artist **Cheryl Phillips** lives in Detroit.

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other side — and yet I either hear the texts or they are interpreted for me as indicating that I represent the establishment. Despite my efforts and profound disappointments, I have been taught to see myself as the rich, young man. I'm a white, middle-class person of privilege who's supposed to be doing more.

W.B.: Right. I have been amazed in this Psalms course. I have about 40 students and we did a lot of hymns and everything was fine, but when we got to the Psalms of sadness, grief and anger, it was like a volcano erupted in the classroom. The students talked about all this stuff that they had stored up and had no place to put. These are mostly privileged people. I think that's how it is with us, but I think the church invites us to engage in denial of all that.

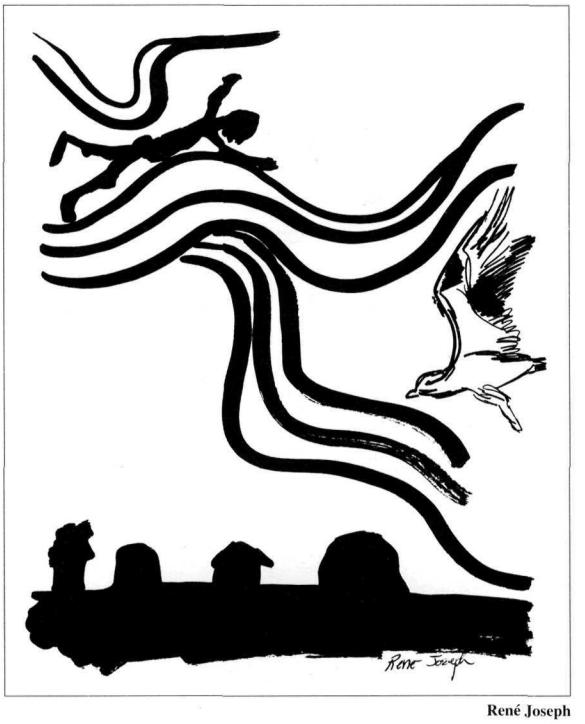
J.W-K.: There's even a way in which it feels like you're not being faithful — like you're letting down the defense of God — by admitting that things are crummy.

W.B.: That's right. That's why I keep saying to the students that these Psalms are an act of faith. But the church has schooled us otherwise for so long that it makes us very uneasy.

J.W-K.: I am glad that you believe the American church should embrace these texts, because I've been feeling jealous of the African indigenous churches that are ritualizing all kinds of grief, anger and ways to purge themselves.

I need to be able to find a way to do this and it will require a revision of the framework that I've had. I will still have to acknowledge my culpability for being part of this nation, but I also need to be nurtured as a minority — as someone working for social change for religious reasons.

W.B.: That's right. That is why I find the metaphor of exile so important. It gives us a massive space to say, "You're not going to pin all that domination stuff on me because that's not how I'm living my life."



René Joseph

The doubt that I know about, and that I think a lot of people know about, is really about the most central and elemental claim — the reality of God's power in the world. The practical problem, it seems to me, is to create enough space so that we can nourish the spirit and practice the kind of imagination that keeps us believing that miracles of transformation are possible in this world.

J.W-K.: How do exilic people rid themselves of disillusionment about whether God is actively concerned with our lives or has any power?

W.B.: Well, I don't know how we're ever going to do it, but I think that the liturgy has got to break with the pattern of confession of guilt and forgiveness. The church, for good liturgical and historical reasons, has made the centerpiece of our worship how bad we are. We're taught that if you don't confess a lot of guilt, then you can't proclaim a lot of grace — and that puts us out of business. I don't think that that's how the Psalter works at all.

I recently read a very close analysis of about 50 complaint psalms. And what this writer, Fredrick Lindstrom (a Swede), showed is that these people — who are in trouble and complaining to God — don't include a word of guilt. Instead, they say, "This stuff is happening to us. We don't deserve it. We're not going to put up with it, because it's not our fault." Of course, those are all the Psalms that by and large the church has disregarded.

I think we need to appeal on the one hand to the great stories of the Exodus — the wilderness and the creation — and then also practice these laments and complaints. In this way, you have a context of larger affirmation inside of which you have honesty about how it really is now. Working that dialectic liturgically is closer to the Bible and is closer to how we live our lives. When the church puts so much liturgical energy into the confession of sin, it is simply debilitating.

The real problem that most of us live with is not guilt, but is a threat of chaos. That requires a very different articulation of the Gospel to give an

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assurance that the promises of God are reliable and will hold in the midst of the threat.

If you look at the exilic Psalms, they really knew that their capacity to stay together as a community of faith was in great jeopardy and they engaged in a lot of remembering and truth-telling.

J.W-K.: You write that liberals have done a fine job of critiquing the current order but offer very little in the way of faith that God might actually intervene and help transform it.

W.B.: The kind of liberalism that I struggle with in my life really doesn't believe in the active workings of God. I think the liberal creed is "God has no hands but our hands." And that way lies defeat!

Rejecting this does not mean a collapse into a rigid conservatism, but a new posture that invites both liberals and conservatives to be spirit-led to newness.

J.W-K.: Do you see any shift?

W.B.: Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon call themselves post-liberals. And while I think there are some real problems with what they do, I think their emphasis upon the concrete disciplines of a distinct community is right.

'Praise is the jazz factor of the Christian life.' I don't know a lot about jazz, but I think the point is that it is always innovative and it is always taking a form beyond whatever was before.

The kind of liberalism in which I've grown up didn't have any sense about our being distinctive as Christians. We were just kind of the nicest guys in the culture. And, uh, it's hard work being the nicest guys. ...

J.W-K.: Can you say just a little about Hauerwas and where you would draw exceptions?

W.B.: Hauerwas is a Methodist, mainly influenced by John Howard Yoder, who was a Mennonite. So Hauerwas calls himself a Methodist Mennonite. He talks about a community of intense missional disciplines that lives its life and does not really engage public policy questions in any direct way with the bet that if the church community really orders its life faithfully, it will be so powerful and so attractive that it will make a difference in public life.

Douglas John Hall says what Christians must do in North America is withdraw from society in order to re-engage society with deliberate identity. And what he says about Hauerwas, that I agree with, is that Hauerwas tends to talk about withdrawal but doesn't talk very often about the re-engagement.

J.W-K.: What you and Douglas John Hall hope for seems similar to what we've been promoting at *The Witness*. Julie Wortman, my co-editor, has moved to live in the Greenfire community in Maine. It's a community of women who are exploring what Gospel values mean in their lives without the support of the institutional church. Many of them are ordained, but they don't want to do parish ministry in the traditional model. Yet there's not a feeling that they're only going to work to resolve their own questions. They're a resource, and, as necessary, I'm sure they'll speak.

At *The Witness,* we've been struggling with the fact that some of us come out of a really confrontational faith-based form of political action and yet we keep

What we know

In Cadences of Home *(Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), Walter Brueggemann recommends creating a congregation which is "a zone of freedom grounded in what the baptized know." He writes the following list of things we know:*

- That our sense of loss and sadness is serious and honorable, and one need not prop up or engage in denial.
- That our rootedness enables us to belong, so that we are not swept away by every wind of doctrine, every market seduction, or every economic coercion, knowing who we are.
- That the promises of the creator surge in our life and in our world, so that the manipulatable despair of the hapless which turns folks into commodity consumers, is not the live edge of our existence.
- That there is a holy, awesome presence that persists against the emptied profanation of promiscuous, economic and lustful sexuality; that true desire is for the presence that overrides all of our trivialized desires that are now robbed of authority.
- That the world is not morally coherent, but there is a deep incongruity in which we live that we need neither to resolve, explain, or deny. A raw, ragged openness is linked to the awesome reality of God's holiness.
- That we are always about to be domesticated; we have these narrative models of resistance, defiance, and negotiation that remind us that there is more to life than conformist obedience or shameful accommodation. We know the names of those who have faced with freedom the trouble that is caused by faith.

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coming to the conclusion that it feels to us like this is a time to regroup. We want to find what matters most and go as deep as we can with those things — in advance of something that's coming which we're not sure about.

W.B.: I think that's exactly right. The whole pattern of confrontation — and that's my tradition too — assumed that there was a power on the other side of the table that was taking us seriously. They might have taken us seriously by being angry with us or quarreling with us, but they knew we were there.

The changed situation is that there's nobody on the other side of the table even noticing us. Therefore, to keep our muscles toughed up for confrontation is just kind of tilting at windmills. There was a time when the great denominations made prophetic announcements and it mattered! Nobody pays attention to those anymore.

J.W-K.: It's the same thing with the kind of civil disobedience that my community comes out of. When the newspapers won't report it and the people passing won't take your leaflets, then ...

W.B.: ... you're out of business.

J.W-K.: Yeah, it's like doing it in a vacuum. The only thing you can say to yourself is you're preventing yourself from being corrupted by your environment, but that's a small gain for ...

W.B.: ... for the price you pay. It certainly is. I do think that the changed situation requires us — your word is exactly right — to regroup. And I don't think we know what comes next, but that's what we have to do.

J.W-K.: Steve Charleston, a Choctaw bishop in the Episcopal Church, prophesies that in the next 30 or 40 years there's going to be a major shift, another reformation. And we've done some interviews with Korean theologian Chung Hyun Kyung who says that there are Korean mystics who prophesied the same thing.

Both of them suggest that the change won't be through a movement like we had in the 1960s. We won't have a few people out front leading the charge. It won't be a movement that we can easily recognize. In Charleston's view, it seems that people will be tending the wells of what is sacred. In time, the wells will grow and merge. An organic shift will happen. They also say that in all likelihood some last hurrahs of patriarchal oppression, struggle and pain lie between here and there.

W.B.: At 64, to say 30 or 40 years ... But I do, I do resonate with that. I think that God is going to do a new thing that's beyond our horizon and we've got to be in a position of attentive waiting. And I think very many people are finding lowered voices and smaller communities make a lot of sense if you're in a posture of waiting.

J.W-K.: It's interesting to me, too, that you write about how Protestants may need to take a second look at some of the things that they threw out — things that you can handle as elements of faith.

W.B.: Recovery of the concreteness of the sacramental is terribly important. We are tempted to a process that has become terribly intellectual.

J.W-K.: There are so many snide remarks made by Christians about New Age spirituality. Some of it is probably right, but a big piece of what those circles of people have

All that jazz Cheryl Phillips

Beyond flat prose

Is there indeed a word from the Lord which would let me live? ... [When a poet reveals the meaning of the text,] it is not a new truth, but rather one long-known truth is now greatly enhanced in riches, texture, availability, demand. My life is mapped in mystery and I accept that new life; but it is also mapped in vulnerability and it frightens me. The mystery gives regal authority and freedom in the face of an IRS audit. The vulnerability permits me to come out from behind my desk, my stethoscope, my uniform, my competence, my credentials, my fears to meet life a little more boldly. Yet again, as the word is spoken one more time, we move through the wearisome death-ridden days of our life and come back once again to Easter to be stunned into disbelief, and then beyond disbelief, to be stunned to life, now filled with fear and trembling.

— *W.B.,* Finally Comes the Poet *(Fortress,1989)*

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been trying to do is tell the truth about their lives and institute a kind of ritual that allows them to be in touch with the sacred through some object that they've made a liturgical focus that carries meaning for them.

W.B.: It's obviously easy to mock it, but we need to pay attention to what's going on and be instructed.

J.W-K.: Do you see examples of places where folks within the Christian tradition have made an attempt to recover some of those things?

W.B.: I suspect it happens in very small local communities. Very many people are disillusioned with the big formal operation and are taking initiative. Think, for example, of many of the nuns' communities — while they keep bringing the priest in to do the eucharist, they really do a lot of other stuff besides that. They are doing it in a way that is sort of unofficial and unorthodox and they don't care. They're going to do it!

J.W-K.: That may be in line with thinking about how confrontational politics may not be the most useful thing at the moment. I was intrigued by your suggestion that we look at stories about Esther and Joseph, biblical figures who had to live in relationship to the powers, but managed to make a difference.

W.B.: In my old guise I would have thought, "That's incredibly compromising." You know, kind of ignoble, but I think it makes an awful lot of sense in terms of how real people in the real world have to practice their faith.

Daniel 1 is so poignant: He advances his career in the Babylonian empire while he is paying attention to kosher food. It's wonderful. I think that sort of ambiguity is the place where people are going to have to live to have any impact on things.

J.W-K.: When *you* say that, it feels different to me than my understanding of what Reinhold Niebuhr says about choosing the lesser of evils so that Christians can be players.

W.B.: Well, it's interesting that you say that because I come very closely out of the Niebuhrian tradition. We went to the same schools, and the air in which I was educated was all Niebuhrian, but Hauerwas has recently said, and I think he's probably right, that Niebuhr didn't really have any sense of church at all. He became so concerned to make it in the world and to play power that the other side of the dialectic almost evaporated. So I am highly suspicious of the people who call themselves Niebuhrian realists because by realism they seem to mean that this is the way the world is, so you better live this way.

I think that the disciplines that Daniel enacts keep one's commitment to the world much more tentative than Niebuhr ever wanted to acknowledge.

J.W-K.: Maybe one of the differences would be not thinking of yourself as a central player.

W.B.: Exactly so, and Niebuhr obviously lusted to be such a player, as have most of us in that theological tradition.

J.W-K.: But you propose an entirely different way to create change in society. You've said that praise is the most powerful tool. You've also written that doxology can transfigure "fear into energy."

W.B.: Praise is the capacity to exuberantly abandon ourselves. If you go to a serious Black church, the praise is marvelous. As you move up the economic scale until you finally arrive at the Episcopal Church, you find hired soloists because the congregation no longer has the capacity to abandon itself.

Praise is really the communal capacity to be foolish, without thought for self. It is the turning of ourselves over to the mystery of God in a public, elemental way. I'm interested in the ways in which our affluence and our intellectual sophistication make it less and less likely that we can engage in honest doxology. What that means in terms of free market gains is, "I don't have to possess myself; I can give myself away."

J.W-K.: Yeah, better that we should be achingly insecure and fill ourselves with products.

W.B.: Exactly. I read a book on praise by two Englishmen, Donald Hardy and David Ford, and one of the nice phrases in it is that "praise is the jazz factor of the Christian life." I don't know a lot about jazz, but I think the point is that it is always innovative and it is always taking a form beyond whatever was before. Likewise, what poets do is break up the controlled, predictable lining of life that makes it seem that there are no gaps, jarrings or incongruities. What poets do is violate the shape and the boundary of our imagination. They open us to newness. TW

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What do you do with what you don't believe?

Mystery

This is my first year in seminary, and over the course of this semester, I have abandoned and rediscovered my faith a thousand times. In the times I have turned away, I have forced myself to live "as if" it all has meaning. I listen to the prayers, hear myself speak or sing the responses, extend my hands for the bread and press the cup to my lips. And each time, without fail, I move from the rail changed, able more fully to live in the dynamic tension between utter rejection and passionate faith, finding in that electric, elastic space Mystery.

Because I am in a crucible of sorts, where knowledge and data and faith and experience converge, I have no choice but to learn to live more comfortably, more presently, in the absurd paradox of being a Christian. Indeed, if I come away from seminary having learned nothing else, I will be grateful.

If all I do here is to be something more than a grand, amusing academic exercise, my faith must be stripped to less than the bones. It must become so transparent — maybe organic is a better word — that it moves through me, and I through it.

Annunciation series: return of the messengers Robert Shetterly

And with this comes a marvelous freedom: the realization that I do not have to analyze everything. I do not have to understand everything. I do not have to wrestle every experience, each bit of information, into submission. I can, with God's unfailing aid, get out of my own way to allow the Divine Mystery an intimate place in my life.

— Jackie O'Sullivan
<jackieosullivan@worldnet.att.net>

Living as a Narnian

One word, Ma'am," he said, coming back from the fire; limping because of the pain. "One word. All you've been saying is quite right, I shouldn't wonder. I'm a chap who always liked to know the worst and then put the best face on it. So I won't deny any of what you've said. But there's one thing more to be said, even so. Suppose we have only dreamed, or made up, all those things — trees and grass and sun and moon and stars and Aslan himself, suppose we have. Then all I can say is that, in that case, the made-up things seem a good deal more important than the real ones. Suppose this black pit of a world of yours is the only world. Well, it strikes me as a pretty poor one. And that's a funny thing, when you come to think of it. We're just babies making up a game, if you're right. But four babies playing a game can make a play-world which licks your real world hollow. That's why I'm going to stand by the play world. I'm on Aslan's side even if there isn't any Aslan to lead it. I'm going to live as like a Narnian as I can even if there isn't any Narnia.

— C.S. Lewis, *The Silver Chair*

Walls

Safer this way
Hedge of suspicion
Uncertainty's stacked stones
Spiked pits of false expectations
"No Trespassing" signs on mind and soul
No buttercups
No wild flowers
No hope at all

— Sally B. Sedgwick
<forward@eos.net>

Artist **Robert Shetterly's** work is published by Borealis Press in Ellsworth, Maine, 1-800-669-6845. Artist **Michael Borst** lives in Santa Fe, N.M.

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Without creed

When I took over this tiny inner-city congregation minutes from Manhattan across the Hudson in New Jersey, the church was almost dead, not a financial pot to pee in, six people left. Kept alive by a government grant to operate an independent after-school care program which pays half my salary as executive director.

Beautiful old Gothic church, falling apart like so many other beautiful churches in inner city neighborhoods ... except that neighborhood is slowly "gentrifying" with folks from Manhattan.

No staff, no lay leadership. After despairing and a few weeks of initial shock/insomnia, it hit me ... hey! No traditions! No one to say "We've never done it *that* way!" What clergy all *dream* of — *reinvent the church* but ground it in Anglican theological/spiritual/incarnational tradition without turning it into a "respectable" British Shakespearean production liturgically. No one in the congregation would know a *Sanctus* from an *Agnus Dei* from a Gospel.

What's the tool for ministry when you have no money and nothing but yourself? Hang around the streets and talk to people.

The Good News is that, 13 months later, we're averaging 35 to 50 people — Anglo, Jamaican, Italian, gay, lesbian, elderly, single, God's beloved rainbow. At last count, 25 were ex-Roman Catholic, 2 were Baptist, 15 had no church affiliation and 7 had never been baptized.

What was the first thing I tossed out? Take a deep breath, don't have a panic attack — the *Nicene Creed*! I've been saying this set of propositions since I was an acolyte at age 7. What the hell does it mean, with all its Greek philosophical constructs, to a congregation in which folks haven't the foggiest notion what it has to do with Jesus — "visible and invisible ... seen and unseen ... begotten not made ... of one substance with ..."

Six months after my arrival, every person in this new member class asked the same question in six different ways.

"Why is the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son? I mean, I don't know what that's all about, you know? Does it mean I can't know Jesus unless I know this or what?"

I had to come clean with myself. I've been afraid to say this out loud, the phrase that dares not be uttered — *"I don't care if we don't say the Nicene Creed every Sunday."* From what medieval scholars tell us, the Nicene Creed was never intended to be recited 52 weeks a year!

I tossed out the Creed and substituted the Apostles' Creed, which, as a theological outline of what is in the Bible, is clearer, more precise and more "bottom line" for these urban types.

I also tossed out the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP) and the Hymnal. Oh, we have it in the pews alright and we use it on special occasions. But the 1979 *BCP* is a tool of *counter*-evangelism, as is the 1982 Episcopal Hymnal, with a few exceptions. When you are dealing with young, hard-boiled, urban types, both are impossible to use, both are guaranteed to put bored looks on your congregation's face and be dull, duller, dullest!

When you're re-inventing church, forget the juggling of a book, yet another book, yet a paper bulletin. So we can either whine, complain, or bravely bid farewell to some of the external manifestations of the Anglican ethos and try to reinvent some other way of communicating Christ through our heritage.

I print out a whole booklet every week, in legal-landscape, pay about $60 a year to a Copyright Clearance place and use six different hymnals from which I can make copies and duplicate for church use only. Folks all gave it thumbs up for being "spiritually friendly." And some volunteers assemble it! We dutifully recycle them.

Anglican means you communicate inclusivity and you welcome the divorced Catholic, the gay or lesbian person, the welfare mom with three kids, the uptight Wall Street broker, the wisdom of the 79-year-old men/women stalwarts who held on for a new vision of their church, the couple who can't agree on a church and the Protestant who refuses to go "Roman."

You provide that spiritual pathway with the eucharist. You come to the realization that most of our church fights today about inclusive language, sexual orientation and the like, most folks haven't heard about and couldn't give a fig. We just *do* theological inclusive language. We don't get hung up about "father" but also tell folks it's alright to image God as mother as well. An 82-year-old woman came up to me and said, "*That* is the *best* thing any preacher ever said to me! My father was a drunk and I've always looked to God as a caring mother. Father didn't mean anything to me!"

Our incarnational spirituality is that if we believe that in Jesus we get a look at who God is, then it means the Good News will not be encumbered by books, papers and songs which nobody can sing because you might not see who Jesus is.

— Steven Giovangelo
<Giovangelo@worldnet.att.net>

Barnacles

In the weeks and months leading up to my ordination to the diaconate, I spent a lot of time in prayer reflecting on the ordination vows I would be taking and what the full implications of saying "I will" to them would mean. I struggled, knowing that I would say "I will" to one phrase of the examination—that of "patterning [my] life in accordance with teachings of Christ"— but that given the current stance of the church *vis-à-vis* same-sex partnerships, some would think I was lying. I wondered how, then, could I honestly look

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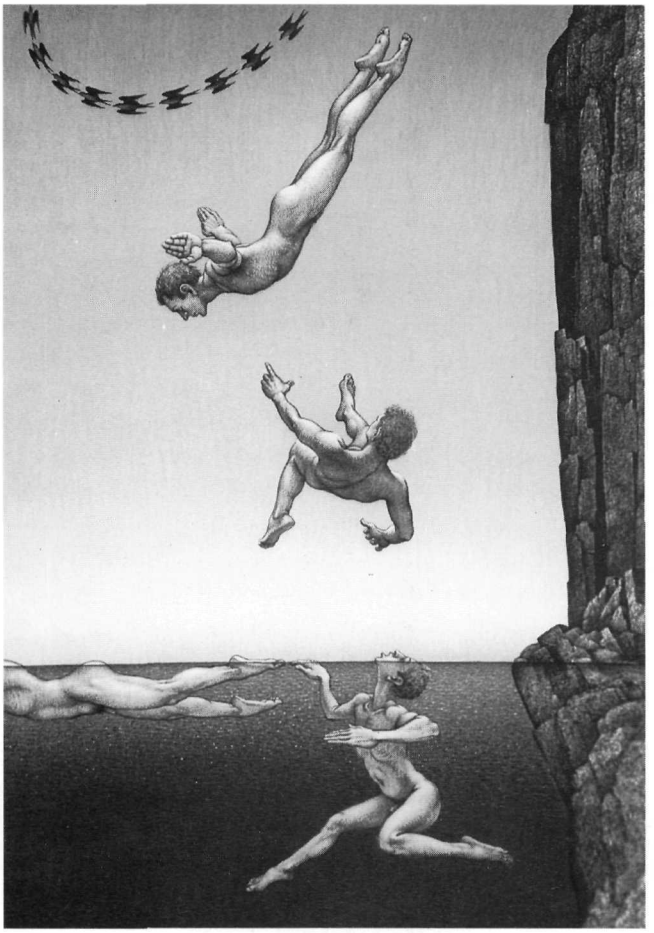
the bishop (and God) in the eye and answer that I would do my best with God's help?

I took my dilemma to my spiritual companion, a wise sister of the Order of Saint Helena. When I told her where I was struggling, she looked at me and answered with a knowing smile: "You have to figure out what is of Christ and what is of the church."

I sat there for awhile, and then replied, "You mean that Christ's teachings are like the hull of a ship and the church's teachings have, in some cases, become like barnacles that have attached themselves to the hull!" She nodded a "yes."

For anyone who has ever brushed up against a barnacle, the exterior shell is extremely sharp, cutting flesh easily and causing great pain and stinging. Its toughness is to protect the living creature within. In this case, some of the church's teachings — while desiring to protect the Spirit of Christ's love, radical inclusivity, justice and mercy— have, instead, become painful and sharp, driving people away. Surely pain and exclusion were not the original intentions of Jesus' utterances.

Lee Alison Crawford
<L_A_CRAWFORD.parti@ecunet.org>



Sink or swim Michael Bergt

Thorns and wounds

My gay friend Jane, who, like me, used to drink a little bit more than was perhaps good for her, said on the winter solstice this year that for her, being a pagan, the solstice is not just about the darkest night of the year but also about the darkest night of the soul. She and her goddess-worshiping friends celebrate this because the seeds of new growth lie in this darkness and develop in the winter to bloom in the spring. I said, What do you pagan homos do at your midnight celebrations, put a bunch of dogs in wicker baskets and push them off cliffs, with Holly Near playing on a nearby boom box? And she looked over at my big Italian crucifix on the kitchen wall, at the thorns, at the bloody wound, the nails through his palms, and then she turned to me with a look of such amused condescension that all I could do was laugh. As soon as she left, though, I went and stared at the crucifix for a long time. I believe in it, and it's so nuts. How did some fabulously cerebral and black-humored cynic like myself come to fall for all that Christian lunacy, to see the cross not as an end but a beginning, to believe as much as I believe in gravity or in the size of space that Jesus paid a debt he didn't owe because we had a debt we couldn't pay?

— Anne Lamott,
Operating Instructions
(Fawcett Columbine, 1993)

Once a priest?

Over 30 years ago, a young Roman Catholic priest whom we knew fell in love with a parishioner. He asked for release from his vow of celibacy and, eventually, the Vatican granted his request. He and his wife have remained faithful lay members of the Church of Rome and brought up their two sons to be faithful members of the Church of Rome.

Once the "pastoral provision" for married Anglicans seeking ordination in the Church of Rome was made public, our friend discovered that the RC hierarchy of his diocese didn't know what to do about himself and other "former" priests who had asked to be released from their vows of celibacy — take note that *none* asked to be released from their vows of poverty and obedience.

In his Christmas card this year, our friend described a luncheon hosted by Cardinal O'Connor for these "former" priests. Since the Church of Rome declares "once a priest, always a priest," he noted the Cardinal's discomfiture.

"They just don't know what to make of us," he wrote.

In the past 20 years, the Vatican has been much slower to release priests from their vow of celibacy. Both the priests and the women whom they marry are faithful adherents to the teachings of the Church of Rome.

'Tis a pity that that church can't count its blessings.

— Odessa Elliot
<Odessa.Elliot@ecunet.org>

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Ursula LeGuin: taking exception to expectations

by Jane Slaughter

As a celebrated science fiction writer, Ursula Le Guin is famous for not sharing assumptions. For 40 years, she's bent our world into fantastic shapes or invented new ones: What if people were androgynous, and never knew, after making love, which one would get pregnant? What if Eve took back all the animals' names? What if a teenage boy could invent his own planet? What if some wolves horrified their families by becoming werehumans?

Her utopias are spiked with rough edges; no people who are "all good and nice and kind and noble and better than me," she insists. "Nobody likes people who are better than they are."

In Le Guin's most reprinted story, the chilling "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas," the city-state of Omelas is a place of abundance where everyone is comfortable. Most citizens try not to think about the bargain that's made their little world a utopia; one child is kept in a dungeon under conditions of unspeakable neglect. If it is freed, the happiness of the city will be destroyed. Everyone, it seems, assumes that the greater good for the greatest number is the principled choice. But some walk away.

Le Guin challenged science fiction conventions head-on in a 1973 talk that was reprinted in a special Le Guin issue of *Science Fiction Studies*. She said, "One of the great early socialists said that the status of women in a society is a pretty reliable index of the degree of civilization of that society. If this is true, then the very low status of women in SF (Science Fiction) should make us ponder about whether SF is civilized at all. ... SF has either totally ignored women, or presented them as squeaking dolls subject to instant rape by monsters—or old-maid scientists desexed by hypertrophy of the intellectual organs—or, at best, loyal little wives or mistresses of accomplished heroes. ...

"In SF, where are the poor, the people who work hard and go to bed hungry? Are they ever *persons* in SF? No. They appear as vast anonymous masses fleeing from giant slime-globules ... or dying off by the billion from pollution or radiation. ... Now and then there's a busty lass amongst them who is honored by the attentions of the Captain of the Supreme Terran Command, or in a spaceship crew there's a quaint old cook, with a Scots or Swedish accent, representing the Wisdom of the Common Folk.

"The people in SF are not people. They are masses, existing for one purpose: to be led by their superiors. ...

"I think it's time SF writers — and their readers! — stopped daydreaming about a return to the Age of Queen Victoria."

Coming out as a feminist, she says, lost her some portion of the traditional science fiction readership, which, in the pulp fiction days, had been "mostly adolescent males. Of whatever age." She and others fought to write science fiction as literature and to treat the social and political "what if?" themes as seriously as the technological.

Besides scads of honors in the science fiction field, Le Guin's books have been nominated for a Pulitzer Prize and received the National Book Award and the Howard Vursell Award of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Her audience has grown far beyond sci fi fans to include many other readers who like their reality with a twist—and often with an intense ethical exploration.

Le Guin says she seldom runs up against orthodoxies in the sci fi community anymore. But she does become "deeply annoyed" by a prevailing assumption in society at large: that everyone believes in God, usually the Christian God. It's important to her, she says, to let it be known that she is a non-Christian: "Because I live in a country that calls itself Christian. Since Reagan came to power this country has had a sort of orgy of self-congratulation about being Christian. I feel it's incumbent upon me to say so, because people seem to be afraid to say anything against Christianity at all."

The most conspicuous result is censorship. Her own works, especially those for young readers, have come under attack. "The fundamentalist Christians have declared themselves to be my enemies in saying that all fantastic, imaginative literature is evil. Okay. This makes me a little combative. I'm with Voltaire, I say, 'To hell with the priests.' If they take that line they have made me their enemy."

Le Guin points out that most attempts at censorship are not directed against pornography. "Ask any librarian—it's not sex that's the problem, it's the religious thing. It is interference by fundamentalists or other Right-wing groups with libraries and school curricula."

But beyond differences on the proper uses of the imagination, Le Guin finds a wider assumption: "It's not just Christianity. It is assumed in the U.S. that you're some kind of monotheist, that you believe there is a God. You always run

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Jane Slaughter is a Detroit-based labor writer. Artist **Mary Pierce's** image is distributed by the Syracuse Cultural Workers, 315-474-1132.

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into this basic assumption of what people are. I meet it in writing classes: everybody's white, everybody's heterosexual, everybody believes in God.

"Reading the newspapers, I get the idea that it's belief that's important, and it doesn't seem to matter what you believe in. I think the movie *Contact* makes that point — you just have to believe.

"Maybe because I'm a scientist's daughter, that really turns me off."

Le Guin was proud of her own daughter when the words "under God" were added to the Pledge of Allegiance in the 1950s. Unprompted by her mom, young Elisabeth kept her mouth shut while the rest of the class recited.

Because Le Guin's work is deeply humane and often concerned with ethical questions, some readers assume that she is religious. "That's because," she says, "they're coming from this culture where you have to believe in something.

"The holding of belief is impenetrable to me. I understand it as a scientist understands it: Yes, I believe Darwin was right, because all the evidence piles up and piles up that he was absolutely, spot-on right. So I believe in Darwin's theory of evolution, as modified by later scientists. But believe in God? I honestly don't know what they mean by it.

"I'm not an atheist in the sense of one who wants to fight with those who believe in God. I am simply not interested in the idea.

"One thing that seems very pernicious to me is the assumption that morality and religion are interdependent. That an unreligious person is an immoral person. An honest look at history and our lives shows that very religious people often behave with profound immorality. There is no connection that I can see."

Although the idea of God doesn't make sense to Le Guin, she's quite comfortable with polytheism: "People like the Hindus or ancient Romans who had little gods everywhere, or Native American religions, which are a fully spiritual approach to reality. What we call Indian gods, the kachinas, for instance, those aren't gods, who demand to be believed in. They are spiritual figures enacted during ceremonies by human beings, representing aspects of the sacredness of the world. They don't have gods, but everything is sacred.

Prayer to the sun Mary Pierce

"Now, that makes complete sense to me. This is the religion I understand. But as soon as you get centered into a hierarchy with a boss at the top, I'm out. I've lived in that place."

Le Guin is an adherent of Taoism, which she describes as "a structure of thought which is completely non-theist." She has recently published a version of the works of Lao-tsu, the core of Taoism. Lao-tsu's 2,500-year-old writing, she says, is about how to live: "Very practical. Totally poems, one of those things you chew over your whole life long and it never stops nourishing.

"Taoism is mystical. Lao-tsu says that the name that can be said isn't the real name. The way that you can go on isn't the real way. But there is a real name, there is a real way. There is something that we cannot apprehend, we cannot perceive, we cannot think, but it is the way to go and we can get on that way and go on it.

"Something like meditation may be one way to approach that way, which is nonverbal. Words and thoughts cannot apprehend it. Here all the mysticisms join. Taoism and Buddhism seem very different. What the Buddha preached, an altruistic way of life, is very different from what Lao-Tsu talks about. But in China the two melded. Zen is an outgrowth of both. And I think the Christian mystics, they're all doing the same thing. They're trying to apprehend what lies underneath what we perceive."

Although she wants to stand up and be counted as a non-theist, Le Guin doesn't usually tackle the matter head-on. "I would rather do it than say it," she explains. "I think it's more effective to have it part of the silent basis of everything I write. If my stories come from this central position of my own life, they'll be honest and clear. And they won't do anybody any harm. I think artists are responsible to their community to try not to do harm.

"That is a very unfashionable, perhaps dangerous thing to say. It doesn't mean self-censorship. It doesn't mean being afraid to hurt people's feelings. It doesn't mean not to rock the boat. It may mean to hurt people's feelings, it may mean to rock the boat. But you're doing it in the interests of not hurting people, not causing pain, trying to make the world a little more endurable. We are members of a community and we need one another's help." TW

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Ambiguity: the essence of faith

an interview with Verna Dozier

by Julie A. Wortman

Plenty of Christians hover on the edge of leaving the church because they find themselves aware that much of what they encounter in the church's worship and theology seems unrealistically absolutist or downright ridiculous. Biblical theologian Verna Dozier, 80, speaks to that reality in her work on ambiguity. Next month the interview continues with a focus on ambiguity and conflict.

Julie Wortman: You're a biblical theologian who has been working on the topic of ambiguity. Some people, especially Christians, might worry that upholding ambiguity is about upholding unbelief.

Verna Dozier: Ambiguity is the essence of faith. Faith involves trusting God. I cast my life on a belief that there is a God, that God is for me and that I can trust that. But I can't prove it.

Ambiguity is the opposite of certainty. It literally means going in two directions at the same time. It is the awareness that wherever you stand, someone just as reasonable, rational and good as you stands in an opposite place. You stand there by faith. That's how you have the courage to stand, but it isn't that you stand where God stands. You stand before God, offering up to God the best you can do at any particular time.

The difference between conservatives and liberals may be that conservatives don't acknowledge that. You can dismiss ideas and people by labeling them, and then maybe you won't have to think about them anymore, but the very fact you go to the trouble to label them means that somewhere back in your brain is the reality that you have only one part of the truth.

Verna Dozier

J.W.: What about the sort of conservatism that calls itself orthodoxy?

V.D.: The insistence on one position is a frightened position. If you were not threatened by another reality you wouldn't have to be so strong on yours.

J.W.: So even those who hold hard to orthodoxy are acknowledging ambiguity?

V.D.: Yes.

J.W.: What's the drive to insist on "right belief"?

V.D.: I think it's a manifestation of the drive for power that's in all of us, all the time. I can control you if I can set up the possibility that there is only one position and I hold it. I am proposing that we live open to the possibility that we don't have absolute answers.

J.W.: What difference would that make in our lives?

V.D.: It would give you some dis-ease, some anxiety ...

J.W.: That doesn't seem too attractive!

V.D.: Well, the attraction of it is that you feel as though you were closer to the truth. "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." This is freedom from the fear of being wiped out and being dismissed as a no-account, of being on the wrong side. A hymn keeps going through my mind: "When the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there." That kind of confidence is a gift that is not granted to many people — even those who talk about it really don't have any assurance that "when the roll is called up yonder I'll be there." That's where faith comes in. It may be a naive way to express the faith that there is a God, that God has a purpose in creation and that God's rule cannot be defeated, but it has power. It has power for me, even though I don't believe that way.

J.W.: My sense of orthodoxy is that it is an enterprise that refuses to entertain another opinion. If the essence of faith is ambiguity, does that make orthodoxy illegitimate?

V.D.: It's a fearful stance. It's a stance of people who are very frightened of the possibility that they may be wrong. I feel that they don't trust God. Faith is trusting in God without the facts.

J.W.: Insisting on the rightness of one side's position has led to schism, persecution, and warfare. Would embracing ambiguity keep people from fighting?

V.D.: It may not keep them from fighting, but it would certainly keep them from persecuting others. Human beings will always struggle to have the position they espouse be the dominant position. But if you embrace ambiguity you will not crucify the person that doesn't have your position, or burn him at the stake, or put him in prison. The world can tolerate

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Julie A. Wortman is co-editor/publisher of *The Witness* <julie@thewitness.org>. Artist **Robert Lentz's** work is distributed by Bridge Building Images, in Burlington, Vt., 802-864-8346

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a lot of difference. We see it in nature. Only human beings seem to be unable to tolerate difference.

J.W.: In the church there has been condemnation of worship that draws on native traditions. People have called that syncretism. In some conservative church journals you see a lot of condemnation of non-Christian faiths because they do not proclaim the uniqueness of Jesus as Lord.

V.D.: I grew up on that — I heard that preached Sunday after Sunday, but I don't believe it. Even as a child I knew there was something wrong with that. And as I grew older I saw evidence of how destructive that position was.

J.W.: Many people, who have shared that experience, quit the church or wash their hands of it. Why do you stick with a church that so often espouses positions and doctrines that would seem to deny ambiguity?

V.D.: My immediate reaction is to say, "Because it's the right thing!" [laughter] But the very essence of ambiguity is that I would tolerate another view. And more than tolerate, that I would support in prayer that which is against me.

J.W.: But you do think that Christianity is the right way?

V.D.: It is for me.

J.W.: So when you are saying the Nicene Creed, ...

V.D.: [laughter] That's more than ambiguity! The Nicene Creed is a formulation of an historical period. Even the language is not our language — it's poetry. It came out of a bitter fight in which the major effort was to do away with ambiguity.

J.W.: So when you say the Nicene Creed, what are you thinking?

V.D.: I'm thinking I'm engaging in a ritual and I'm also thinking that it is ridiculous.

J.W.: But you're there!

V.D.: Yes, I'm there. I'm part of a community that says the Nicene Creed. Most of the people who say it, don't think about it. And then there are those souls who say, "I'm not going to say that, it's ridiculous!"

J.W.: Would you like to get rid of it?

V.D.: Well, I suppose I wouldn't. It came out of a tense period in the life of the Christian community that is worth remembering.

J.W.: Knowing you, I'm assuming your thinking about ambiguity has something to do with your picture of Jesus?

V.D.: Yes.

J.W.: What is your picture of Jesus and what are the pictures of Jesus you reject?

V.D.: Those pictures of Jesus I reject are those pictures that are created in the image of our imagination and our wishful thinking. There was a hymn in our Sunday School hymnal, some of the words were, "If he came again to me, would I know that it was he?" And the chorus is, "Yes, I would know him. Yes, I would know him, the man of Galilee."

Eve, the mother of all Robert Lentz

I think there is nothing further from the truth. If he came again, I would not know that it was he, because I have created him in my own image. I think that is why I reject the images of Jesus. We not only make him look like us physically, we make him feel like us emotionally, intellectually, spiritually.

J.W.: But much of your idea about ambiguity being the essence of faith comes out of your understanding of Jesus?

V.D.: It comes out of my understanding of the experiences he had in his own time. There was always more to him than anybody could fathom. He was not without friends and he needed human companionship. We have so many images of the lonely Jesus, but he liked parties.

We say this one person was fully man and fully God. And that in itself is not understandable. I know that this is a theological formulation, but I think it points to the fact that we don't understand him — reason cannot explain him.

J.W.: So how does somebody follow him?

V.D.: Become as nutty as he was! Throw all caution to the winds. Run contrary to every system, every status symbol that we have. I think that the followers of Jesus are considered mad by their time. We have a tendency to romanticize our saints, but we only do that after they are dead.

J.W.: We have a religion called Christianity that is focused on the life of a man that we basically would reject?

V.D.: Absolutely.

J.W.: That sounds nuts. Tell me how you continue going to church, saying the creeds, participating in the worship and leading Bible study.

V.D.: It's the best thing we have. It is something we can cling to, like a plank in a raging sea.

J.W.: Some people who see that the enterprise is crazy, reject Christianity and the church altogether.

V.D.: I would ask what they have that is better? And if their alternative is better for them, I'd give them my blessing. What I believe is not diminished because somebody else doesn't believe it. TW

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Religion in Batié: a grandmothers' tradition

by Rachel Roberson

For the past 20 months, Rachel Roberson, an active Episcopalian, has been a Peace Corps volunteer in Batié, Cameroon, a village of about 600 families in the western region of the country. Most people in Batié are farmers who grow coffee for cash and food (beans, tomatoes, corn) for their families. Without an Episcopal Church nearby, Roberson began attending Sunday services at the local Catholic church, Sainte Famille de Batié. Roughly 30 percent of Cameroonians are Christian, 30 percent Muslim and the other 40 percent claim traditional religions. Muslims are concentrated in the northern provinces; most people who practice a Western faith in Batié are Christians.

Old church ladies are everywhere. They are the living memory of every congregation, constant fixtures in their pews, orthodox, humble, proper and faithful to the core. At the Catholic parish in Batié, they all sit front-and-center on the wooden benches in once-bright printed dresses and head scarves. They sway to the music, drums and *falafon* (wood xylophone) played by the youth choir. Even if they have to shuffle up to communion bent over bamboo walking sticks, they never miss a Sunday.

Rachel Roberson, 23, is a native of California and a graduate of Northwestern University's school of journalism. At Northwestern she lived at Canterbury House, the Episcopal chaplaincy program's student center. **Spec Art** is an artist in Bamenda, Cameroon.

The whole service is translated for their benefit from French into the tribal language. The translator is an equally old church gentleman who takes the often dour French presentation of the Cameroonian priest and renders it alive with sweeping gestures and tent-meeting volume. He leaves the safety of the lectern and paces the packed dirt floor of the center aisle. The ladies nod vigorously, or sigh or rock with laughter, depending on the lessons that day. I sit in the back with my English Bible and usually practice my French by reading along as the priest intones his part. But I never miss the old man's turn. He jumps up as the priest finishes and bursts into translation. The language — its tempo, its sounds — are completely foreign to my Western ears. It flows and stops almost musically, like popcorn popping up and down a piano scale. A few months back, the priest reprimanded him for adding his own commentary. Supposedly he doesn't anymore, but translations still run about twice as long as the French version.

I can't imagine Philomene's Sundays with eight kids and an hour's walk. But for Philomene, faith has as much to do with effort as passionate belief — and the privilege of being able to make the effort is reason enough to make it.

"What makes them so long?" I asked the priest, Chrisosthome Dongmo. I have never met the old man, who seems to evaporate after each service, nor have I seen him in any other village context.

"He emphasizes everything. One sentence, he repeats three times," the priest groaned. I think he figured I was complaining. Many people in Batié assume all Westerners think of them as ignorant villagers and want to reinforce their worldliness. "It's long and tiresome, yes?"

"Not at all," I replied. "I don't understand a word, but I believe everything he says."

Usually all four of the acolytes at the altar are students of mine from the local high school. Lost in their one-size-fits-all surplices, they go through the ritual motions with the self-conscious seriousness of teenage acolytes anywhere. Sonia, 12, is a regular. Her Mary Janes are always so well-polished that they pick up the weak candlelight. Martial, 13, usually serves with her, wearing matching plastic shoes made to look like soccer cleats. Both, I know, have walked miles to get to church.

Sonia's family — three sisters, two brothers, two cousins, mother, father and grandmother — fit snugly on one long bench. Sonia's mother, Philomene, exudes warm and motherly wisdom after seeing six of her own children and two of her sister's through early childhood. She's 34 years old. I think of my own memories of Sunday mornings: of my mother rushing around, looking for shoes and socks, making sure my two sisters and I were clean, getting us to church on time. I can't imagine Philomene's Sundays with eight kids and an hour's walk. But for Philomene, faith has as much to do with effort as passionate belief — and the privilege of being able to make the effort is reason enough to make it.

"Why would we not come, if we could?" she said. "If we come, it means everyone is healthy. So we come to offer thanks to God and pray that we will be able to come again next week."

Baptism

Pentecost 1997 and baptism at the Catholic parish: I walk to church with my neighbor Emerance, who is also a student of mine who's dressed in her white baptism dress and wobbling on her mother's heels. Closer to the church we are joined by other students from the school. The girls

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all wear a version of what Emerance is wearing. Some dresses are a mass of frilly lace, but most are simple, made by mothers and handed down by siblings. The boys wear stiff, starched shirts, dark pants and dark bow ties.

Baptism is a big day in Batié, and most people, Catholic and Protestant, wait until they're old enough to enjoy it. Today, only one of the 18 newly baptized is an infant. Most are young teenagers like Emerance. I sit near Philomene and Katherine (Emerance's mother) grinning like a fool. I have so few opportunities to sit in an audience and cheer (even silently) for my students. Most of the time I'm ruining their day by making them speak English in front of their friends.

I spend Pentecost afternoon running from party to party snapping photos before the spit-and-polish fades. My students pose with their identical white plastic rosaries, the solemnness of the occasion written all over their faces. They may have been basking in the attention, very rare in the children-should-be-seen-and-not-heard village culture, but someone has also impressed upon them the importance of what has just taken place (without informing them of the celebration involved). Every muscle strains to show their worthiness. I beg for smiles and rarely get them.

Francile and Nadine, two students who go to the Protestant church in town, want to know, eight months in advance, if I will come to their baptism this year.

"Only if you smile," I tell them.

'Sorcerers'

Francile and Nadine's grandmother is a church lady at the Protestant parish. She speaks only the local language and doesn't walk much anymore. But she went every Sunday until she got sick. With the help of her family, she traveled to the capital where she visited the best *marabou* in town.

Spec Art

Marabous are traditional healers. Some Cameroonians refer to them, respectfully, as "sorcerers." Some have gone "modern" in the post-colonial era, advertising their services and offering free "consultations." But what they offer are ancient remedies from a time long before Canadian-built hospitals (or Canadians) entered the picture. Their herbs and charms (*gri-gri*) ward off the forces that cause disease. For Francile's grandmother's generation, the *marabou* is the first line of defense against illness. Christians, Muslims or Other, they turn to tradition when their need is greatest. Yet few people see traditional spirituality as something that conflicts with the services they attend at the mosque or church. When Francile and Nadine's grandmother didn't get better after her visit to the *marabou*, she went to the city's Protestant hospital. It was stocked with medicines and microscopes, but I doubt she thought she was getting a better deal.

When I try to ask about *gri-gri*, everyone just shrugs. They'll tell me what it does, but they'll always end with "it doesn't work on strangers." I could sit in church in Batié for the rest of my life, and I would always be a stranger.

Behind the dedication of the church ladies, underneath the faith and effort of Philomene's family, beyond the solemn parties of Pentecost/Baptism Sunday, the true force that unites the people of Batié is the tradition of Francile's grandmother and her grandmother before her. There is no sense, as there is in the West, that you can have only one mystical attachment. Church, marabous and gri-gri are all part of the same continuous seam.

"I believe in Jesus and go to Mass," Katherine told me. "And I know that, if someone puts a curse on me or makes me fall sick, I will go to the *marabou*. Is there a choice to be made? It is all the same power." TW

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Skeptic in the House of God

by Harvey H. Guthrie, Jr.

James L. Kelley, *Skeptic in the House of God* (New Brunswick, N.J. and London: Rutgers University Press, 1997).

A reflective, interesting, and enjoyable account of James Kelley's 15 years as both active parishioner of St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C., and continuing unrepentant skeptic with regard to the existence of God, this book will be welcomed by some and seen as one more example of the insidious advance of liberal, secular humanism into the church by others. On the last page, the author summarizes what the book is about:

"St. Marks' has been my spiritual home and most important community for 15 years. I'm lucky to have found such a church. It isn't always a comfortable place to be. My skeptical views put me in a minority, and I sometimes feel like an outsider. But my fear that I would feel hypocritical went away early, because, from the beginning, I've been open about my beliefs. I've been a full participant in the life of the church. *Gospel* [the parish paper] editor, elected Vestry member, Sunday School teacher."

Successive chapters document that statement with accounts of life in the parish in terms of racial integration (actually lack thereof), liturgy, a survey of parishioners' beliefs, parish governance and community life, Christian education, women, gays and lesbians, spirituality, outreach, and the realities of divorce and aging in the lives of both parish and author. St. Mark's is seen as an "open parish," in contrast to parishes less open in terms of doctrine and inclusiveness, and an afterword discusses examples of such parishes and where and how to find them in mainline denominations. The author's interesting conclusion is that they are most likely to be Episcopal or United Church of Christ.

Pervasive in American culture is a confessional, doctrinal understanding of Christianity, probably Reformed in origin via Cotton Mather et al. Its roots lie more in Greek and Enlightenment philosophy than in the Bible and early Christianity.

This book will be welcomed by some and seen as one more example of the insidious advance of liberal, secular humanism into the church by others.

Contemporary skeptics, agnostics and atheists — including Kelley — share that understanding with believers. Doctrine, or reaction to doctrine, takes priority over the history and experience and life which doctrine seeks to interpret. Theoretical belief in the concept "God," or rejection of such belief, rather than a trusting belief in the Central Character in the life of the People of God, is taken to be the primary issue.

But it was not so in ancient Israel or the early church. The present-tense part of the classic creeds' statement of belief in God has to do with "the holy, catholic Church, the communion of saints" — that is, with the community out of whose life and experience faith is being professed. The past-tense parts summarize the story of that reality, but are not a doctrine which must be accepted as a prerequisite to becoming part of that community. The creeds originated as summaries of the story of the community into which one is incorporated in baptism — the story which becomes the story of the one baptized.

That is what Kelley is learning existentially through participation in the community at St. Mark's. And that is what St. Mark's is letting happen, even if the confirmation class, seduced by the concerns of our culture's doctrine-first orientation, details what the creeds are not rather than what they really are.

Kelley's rector at St. Mark's, Jim Adams, has it right in explaining why there is no common doctrinal core at St. Mark's or in the Episcopal Church: "What you have instead is a common core of practice. You can form a church around orthopraxy as easily as you can form a church around orthodoxy. ... Our practice is very conservative — in our services from *The Book of Common Prayer*, in our organization. ...The Episcopal Church, going back for centuries, is more interested in orthopraxy than in orthodoxy. Anglicans have never been able to agree with each other on doctrine. And that's why I feel at home in the Anglican tradition."

In spite of our cultural captivity to the other approach, and in spite of current efforts to make the other approach normative for Anglicanism, that is the way it is. James Kelley is discovering the freedom and grace of it in his own way, and they rub off onto the reader. TW

Harvey Guthrie is a retired priest who sought to serve the "open church" as dean of the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass. and as rector of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Ann Arbor, Mich.

COMING NEXT MONTH

The church in conflict. As some people struggle to find common ground on the controversial issues facing the church, others hold fast to their "orthodoxy." As we warm up for the showdown at Lambeth, *The Witness* will look at what prospects there are for finding a resolution. Let us know if there is someone (a potential subscriber?) to whom you'd like us to send this issue. Call 313-841-1967 or e-mail us at <office@thewitness.org>.

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Serving justice *and* prudence

by Judith Esmay

The historic campus and sedate halls of St. Paul's School in Concord, N.H., were the setting in January for a Province I Conference on Investing Profitably for Economic Justice. Convened by Douglas Theuner, Episcopal Bishop of New Hampshire, the gathering drew more than 90 people from every part of New England. Church trustees, vestry officers, community development leaders and others sat beneath wood-paneled walls and leaded windows to hear how socially responsible investments serve both justice and prudence.

The keynote speaker was Amy Domini, founder and chair of the Domini Social Equity Fund and consultant to the Episcopal Church on socially responsible investing. Domini first outlined three ways investments can be an exercise of social conscience. Investors can place funds in a portfolio screened to exclude certain companies or types of companies — such as tobacco, alcohol, or weapons — and include others that work positively to meet human needs.

They can also engage in shareholder activism, using their investor status to pressure corporations to operate more responsibly. It was an act of shareholder activism when John Hines, then Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, stood up in a 1971 meeting of the board of directors of General Motors to urge the corporation's disengagement from business in apartheid South Africa.

Finally, investors can place funds in community investments, making money available to help finance projects that meet the needs of those at the bottom end of the economic spectrum or who take an alternative approach to business. Community development financial institutions — banks, loan funds, credit unions — are not bound by the rules that govern conventional banks; they can lend money where conventional banks cannot.

Domini acknowledged that most church officials are concerned about the low rate of return on funds invested in community development. It's true, she said, that at 3 percent interest such investments will yield less money than funds invested in a portfolio of stocks and bonds at 8 percent interest. That would appear to mean that conventional investments earn churches more money annually for spending on mission projects. But, she pointed out, *all* of the church money invested in community development is working actively for mission purposes — to improve lives and increase opportunity. In mission terms, the community development investment provides a 103 percent return, and the same money can be reinvested year after year to provide the same high return.

> All *of the church money invested at 3 percent in community development is working actively for mission purposes — with a 103 percent return.*

Following Domini, the directors of five New England community development funds described their operations: Juliana Eades, New Hampshire Community Loan Fund; Bonnie Cronin, Massachusetts Working Capital; Rebecca Dunn, New England Coop Fund; Toni Gold, Episcopal Social Responsibility Fund (Conn.); Robert Windsor, Pelham Fund (Mass.); and Leslie Belay, Episcopal City Mission (Mass.). They in turn introduced borrowers — people who have used community development funds to purchase affordable housing and start new businesses.

Dan Neville, carpenter and resident of a stately house built in 1820 and converted to apartments, told how a loan enabled the apartment dwellers to form a cooperative and purchase the house when their landlord defaulted. That was five years ago. When one of the five apartments recently changed hands, it was sold under an arrangement that ensures that it will always remain affordable for lower income families.

Everett Harlow described the graphics arts business he started with Working Capital funds and the advice and assistance he continues to receive from others in his cooperative of business borrowers.

Clark Arrington was one of the founders of Equal Exchange, Inc, coffee importers concerned for justice and ecology on the coffee plantations as well as justice in the American workplace. Now 12 years old, the company is worker-owned, invites outside investors, employs 30, and enjoys sales of $5 million annually.

John W. Spaeth, financial officer for the Diocese of Connecticut, pointed out that community development loan funds have a collection record envied by banks. Loan fund officers work closely with borrowing cooperatives both before a loan is made and during repayment. Borrowers are never alone in their economic dilemmas; help is always at hand. To make socially responsible lending even safer, pooled funds accept investments and direct moneys to a variety of community development institutions.

A conference participant asked how investing in community development squares with the hoary New England precept, "neither a borrower nor a lender be." Domini answered: "Every time money is put in the bank, a loan is made." Socially responsible investment, she said, means taking responsibility for the way your money is used when you've entrusted it to others.

Conference proceedings were videotaped by Reel Vision, Inc., a Working Capital loan recipient. Edited copies of the tape are available from Lesley Belay, Episcopal City Mission, 138 Tremont Street, Boston MA 02111; the cost is $10 plus $3 s/h. TW

Judith Esmay, editor of the newsletter of the Episcopal Network for Economic Justice, lives in Hanover, N.H., <CalifonNH@aol.com>.

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Exiled from culture or church?

by Andrew W. McThenia, Jr.

John Shelby Spong, *Why Christianity Must Change or Die* (Harper Collins, 1998).

John Shelby Spong purports to speak to believers in exile. Much of what this Bishop of Newark has to say has been said before in his other books. But he attempts to bring some 20 years of thought together in *Why Christianity Must Change or Die.*

Spong is upset about many things. He begins with a critique of ancient statements of church belief. Both the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds seem to him irrelevant and based on a world view that has long since been "obliterated by the expansion of knowledge" (4). He concludes his detailed critique with the announcement that he has been forced into exile "from the presuppositions of my own religious past" (20).

He moves on to describe that exile as being similar to the exile of the Jewish people under the lash of Babylon. But his exile is not, according to Spong, driven by the power of foreign invaders but instead by the "steady and relentless advances in knowledge [which] altered forever our ability to believe in the God content that stood at the heart of our sacred tradition" (29). In the following four or five pages he takes the reader on a breathtaking journey through the history of western thought from the world of ancient Greece to the galaxy of the late Carl Sagan. He pauses just long enough to give us detail on light years and solar system distances, presumably to prove how out of synch the Biblical texts are with the galactic truth of Star Wars, before announcing that the notion of the Ascension can no longer have any claim to intellectual integrity (33). He moves on to assert that Darwin's work "caused most of the remaining principles by which human life was understood in religious terms to go up in smoke" (36). In the tradition of the late John A. T. Robinson (author of *Honest to God*), he says we "must discover whether or not the death of the God we worshiped yesterday is the same thing as the death of God" (41). He concludes his description of the exile wondering whether we can sing the songs of Zion when we are lost in the cosmos.

I think that Spong's exile is more from the community called the church than it is from the culture.

What is most puzzling about this book for me is to figure out what exactly Spong is in exile from. And what forces have exiled him. As I understand exile, it means leaving a world which recognizes your truth claims and entering a world which considers those truth claims false or marginal. The dominant world may seek overtly to destroy your culture and religious symbols, as in the destruction of the Temple of Solomon by the Babylonians; or one can be exiled in a culture that simply disregards or trivializes important truth claims. Exile does not necessarily mean picking up and leaving geographical space. One can be a stranger in his home country, a resident alien as it were. Spong claims that "honesty requires that we confront the Bible's limited grasp on truth" (7). He seems to assert the priority in truth and value of the meaning system of what he calls postmodernity. "We live inside a different understanding of reality, and we possess a different experience of both life and the universe" (141). He does not assert that priority as a result of any careful argument or demonstration. He simply asserts it, assuming the authority of modern science and enlightenment rationalism, while giving back of the hand dismissals to "traditional Christian theology."

Spong says he is a believer who increasingly lives in exile. Yet I think that his exile is more from the community called the church than it is from the culture. And his notion of church seems frozen in time. Ironically he seems quite comfortable with the liberal rationalist culture of 40 to 60 years ago when the battle for the Bible was between literalists and liberal rationalists. At the same time he seems not at all uncomfortable with a world view which accepts as normative the claims of modern science. He mentions the postmodern world, but his language is that of a good, old-fashioned modernist. He seemingly accepts without question that the world of the enlightenment represented an advance of truth that simply crowded God out.

I come from a part of America where the battle for the Bible is real and intense. It is not a battle between literalists and

review

Andrew W. McThenia, Jr. is the James A. Morefield Professor of Law at Washington and Lee University School of Law in Lexington, Va., <awm@wlu.edu>.

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liberal rationalists, however. It is a struggle over whether the Bible will be harnessed by the forces of Right-wing politics and made a text of domination, or whether its imaginative and subversive themes can be nurtured and the myriad stories of God's grace seen as texts of resistance and texts that keep hope alive. The question is whether we have the imagination to go to those stories in order to remember who and whose we are in a culture of narcissism which has terminal amnesia. What really worries me about Spong is that I fear he has left the sacred texts at home as he entered exile and carried with him only the tools of classical liberalism. One of the powerful lessons of the Jewish exile is that the sacred memories were carried to Babylon and the stories were retold and re-membered in a new light. Jewish people were sustained by the power of those texts. Maybe they were not willing to sing the songs of Zion as demanded by their Babylonian captors, but they were trusting enough of God's power to express heartfelt rage about their plight. "O daughter of Babylon, you devastator! Happy shall be he who requites you with what you have done to us! Happy shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rocks" (Psalm 137:7-9).

Spong seems obsessed by the notion that he must debunk the "theistic God" by exposing the weakness of that God by logical argument. "To attribute to God omnipotent power in our world is thus logically to assert that the God who possesses this power must have chosen not to use it. The only real alternatives to this conclusion are found in asserting that God is limited, uncaring, malevolent, or nonexistent." It is possible that if he would read the Book of Job rather than dismiss it as having an out-of-date or faulty world view, then he might see something of the limitation of logic or argumentation. He might have some appreciation that we cannot harness a God who can come to us out of a whirlwind. And it just might be that the Book of Job is the very sort of text one ought to carry into exile.

All too often, for this reviewer's taste, Spong resorts to dismissive ad hominem comments like the following: Traditional Christian theology has made Jesus into a "kind of celestial visitor from another planet, not unlike Superman or Captain Marvel!" Now that may pass as serious discussion in some places, but where I come from it gets tiresome pretty fast — and that quote comes from only page 13. Toward the end of the book, Spong talks of transforming Easter and making it a part of our postexilic future, but first he says that "the miracles of physical resuscitation, the angels who roll stones away from tombs, and the bodies that appear out of nothing and disappear into thin air must be dismissed for the developed legends that they are" (191). There are more than enough such trashings salted throughout the book to keep one entertained or on edge. Take your choice. Maybe that is good shock therapy in the Diocese of Newark, but out in the hinterlands where folks are trying to make sense of life in a culture which treats their faith claims as irrelevant, it is not much fun to think about being in exile with one who insists that anyone who could imagine that the resurrection was a political, spiritual, and physical reality must be either terminally stupid or demented.

It is regrettable that Spong has chosen to speak this way because it robs him of his dignity and allows one to dismiss his thesis all too easily. In the latter part of the book, particularly in the chapters entitled "What Think Ye of Christ" and "The Future of the Church," Spong gives his imagination more room to move about. There is less anger, less defensiveness and may also be more of the voice of one who is attempting to come to terms with real exile. Spong is a man of courage and an important person in the life of the church. I wish for both our sakes he had let this book cook a little longer. Maybe then we could have had a genuine conversation. TW

BACK ISSUES WITH CONNECTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S TOPIC

The following back issues of* The Witness *contain articles which may relate directly to* What You Do With What You Don't Believe *or simply to the spirit of this month's topic.

- *Be Ye Perfect (3/93)*
- *Dialogue (4/94)*
- *Economies of sin (3/95)*
- *Fasting in Babylon (12/96)*
- *Glamour (11/94)*
- *Is it ever okay to lie? (4/96)*
- *Staying in my denomination (10/94)*

Other available back issues:

- *Africa: Come, spirit, come (6/95)*
- *Allies in Judaism (10/97)*
- *American Faces of Islam (5/96)*
- *Body wisdom (5/95)*
- *The Christian Right (10/96)*
- *Church structures and leadership (5/97)*
- *Christians and animal rights (10/93)*
- *The communion of saints (11/93)*
- *Defying presumptions: gay/lesbian Christians (6/97)*
- *Economic justice (5/94)*
- *Family reunions/family history (7/96)*
- *Holy matrimony (12/95)*
- *Hospitals: quality, access and spirit (6/96)*
- *Immigration: the flight into America (12/97)*
- *In need of a labor movement (9/96)*
- *The Left (3/94)*
- *The New Party (11/95)*
- *Northern Ireland: winds of peace (11/97)*
- *Raising kids with conscience (3/97)*
- *Resisting sprawl (10-95)*
- *Silence (1-2/96)*
- *Sports as a principality (1-2/98)*
- *Unmasking the death penalty (9/97)*
- *When the church engages rage (12/92)*
- *Witness in the world (gen'l conv. issue, 7-8/97)*
- *Women's spirituality (7/94)*

To order a back issue, send a check for $3.00 per issue ordered to* The Witness, *7000 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210-2872. To charge your back issue to Visa or Mastercard, call (313) 841-1967, or fax (313) 841-1956.

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Saints who resist prevailing norms

by Robert Ellsberg

Witnesses, the quick and the dead

Living in the same era, these two people of faith tested the assumptions of their times. Both are presented as saints in Robert Ellsberg's book, *All Saints: Daily Reflections on Saints, prophets, and Witnesses For Our Time* (Crossroad, 1997).

Galileo Galilei
Scientist (1564-1642)

"The surest and swiftest way to prove that the Copernican position is not opposed to Scripture would be to show with a multitude of proofs that it is true and the contrary can in no way be maintained. Thus, since no two truths can contradict one another, this and the Bible would be seen to be, of necessity, harmonious."

The scientist Galileo, who was born in Pisa in 1564, achieved his original fame through his invention of the thermometer, his experiments in physics and mechanics, and his refinement of the telescope. The telescope inspired a passion for astronomy that would lead, eventually, to his condemnation by the church. The issue was Galileo's determination to prove the theory of the Polish scientist Nicholas Copernicus (d. 1543) that the earth revolved around the sun.

Those who challenged the geocentric view of the universe had to contend not only with the ancient authority of Aristotle and Ptolemy but with the evidence of the senses: the sun, after all, clearly appeared to rise and set. More importantly, however, there was the apparent evidence of many scriptural passages that referred to the motion of the sun. For the church this was the most decisive issue. The works of Copernicus and his theories — except insofar as they were presented merely as "hypotheses" — were formally condemned by the Holy Office.

Galileo fell on his knees and formally abjured any heretical opinions he may have had.

Holy Wisdom Robert lentz

Still, Galileo labored to prove that Copernicus was right. A number of scientists and even interested theologians were sympathetic to his efforts. Many of them, like Galileo, disputed the notion that the authority of Scripture should be extended to scientific matters. In the famous words of Cardinal Baronius, "The Holy Ghost intended to teach us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go." Nevertheless, Galileo was formally instructed to desist from his work on Copernican astronomy. When he violated this injunction he was summoned to Rome by the Holy Office.

The trial of Galileo occurred in 1633. In light of his advanced age (70) and his poor health, he was treated with reasonable courtesy. Rather than the customary prison cell he was housed in a comfortable room. Nevertheless, he needed little reminder of the perils of his situation. The pope had issued a document threatening him with torture if he did not cheerfully submit to the findings of the court. In the end Galileo was condemned as "vehemently suspected of heresy" for maintaining the doctrine "which is false and contrary to the Sacred and Divine Scriptures, that the sun is the center of the world and does not move from east to west and that the earth moves and is not the center of the world."

Galileo, who throughout his ordeal had maintained his devout faith and firm commitment to the authority of the church,

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at this point fell on his knees and formally abjured any heretical opinions he may have had. Convinced of his sincere repentance, the court spared him the sentence of imprisonment. Instead he was confined to house arrest in Florence for the rest of his life. There he continued his scientific work. But by 1638 Galileo, the man who had first seen mountains on the moon, was completely blind. On January 8, 1642, he died.

For many centuries Galileo's ordeal remained a blot on the Christian conscience. Only in the 1990s did Pope John Paul II authorize a papal commission to review his trial and condemnation. The result was a papal decree formally absolving Galileo of heresy and acknowledging the error of the church's previous judgment. The error was attributed, in part, to the church's deficient understanding, at that time, of the nature and authority of Scripture.

And so it has come to pass that the Galileo case, long a symbol of ecclesial obscurantism, has become a signal of the church's ability to recognize and repent of its historical failings. There remains a tendency to claim that the church, as it was once said of the earth, cannot move. To this the legendary words ascribed to Galileo remain appropriate. In making his abjuration, he is said to have whispered under his breath, "Nevertheless it moves."

Anne Hutchinson
Puritan Prophet (1591-1643)

"It was never in my heart to slight any man, but only that man should be kept in his own place and not set in the room of God."

The Puritans who settled Massachusetts in the 1630s were motivated in part by a desire to escape religious persecution. But they did not come to create a haven of religious freedom. On the contrary, they believed their holy commonwealth would stand as "a city on a hill," a beacon of purified Christianity in which biblical values of piety and sobriety would govern the conduct of its members. Severe punishment awaited those who fell short of these standards, a fate that was extended too to those who criticized the Puritan code. Rarely was there ever such a concentration of persons so godly, so sober, and so eager to cast the first stone. Among the most famous victims of Puritan justice was Anne Hutchinson, a mystic and healer, whose particular heresy was to maintain that it was a blessing and not a curse to be a woman.

Anne Hutchinson arrived in Boston in 1634, accompanied by her husband, William, a prosperous businessman, and their several children. They were committed Puritans, though of the two Anne was by far the more zealous. She was an unusually independent woman for her times, a skilled midwife with a particular gift for herbal treatments. She was also an avid student of the Bible, which she freely interpreted in the light of what she termed divine inspiration. Though she generally adhered to the principles of Puritan orthodoxy, she held extremely advanced notions about the equality and rights of women. These positions had put her in some tension not only with the established Church of England but also with her own coreligionists. Nevertheless, she had decided to emigrate in the belief that New England afforded greater religious freedom, as well as wider opportunities for women.

In Boston the Hutchinsons quickly achieved a prominent social position. Anne's services as a midwife were in great demand, and many a family soon found themselves in her debt. Before long she also began inviting women to join her in her home for prayer and religious conversation. In time these meetings became extremely popular, attracting as many as 80 participants a week. Hutchinson would present a text from the Bible and offer her own commentary. Often her spiritual interpretation differed widely from the learned but legalistic reading offered from the Sunday pulpit. In particular, Hutchinson constantly challenged the standard interpretation of the story of Adam and Eve. This was a vital text for the Puritans, key to the doctrine of original sin, but it was regularly cited to assign special blame to women as the source of sin and to justify the extremely patriarchal structure of Puritan society.

Increasingly, the ministers opposed Hutchinson's meetings, ostensibly on the grounds that such "unauthorized" religious gatherings might confuse the faithful. But gradually the opposition was expressed in openly misogynistic terms. Hutchinson was a modern "Jezebel" who was infecting women with perverse and "abominable" ideas regarding their dignity and rights. Anne paid no attention to her critics. When they cited the biblical texts on the need for women to keep silent in church, she rejoined with a verse from Titus permitting that "the elder women should instruct the younger."

In 1637 she was brought to trial for her subversive views. She was 46 at the time and advanced in her 15th pregnancy. Nevertheless she was forced to stand for several days before a board of male interrogators as they tried desperately to get her to admit her secret blasphemies. They accused her of violating the fifth commandment — to "honor thy father and mother" — by encouraging dissent against the fathers of the commonwealth. It was charged that by attending her gatherings, women were being tempted to neglect the care of their own families. ... Anne was held in prison during the cold winter months. Her family and a stream of sympathizers continued to visit her, and to them she continued freely to impart her spiritual teaching. In the spring she was banished from the commonwealth along with her youngest children. TW

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Witness praise

GOT SAMPLE IN MAIL — LOVED the breadth, depth & radicality — multiracialness.

Bruce B. Schultz
New Orleans, LA

I THINK YOUR MAGAZINE is wonderful, like no other. The way you cover the problems, issues, and topics you take up is refreshing and enlightening. I admire the faith that's there in the words and between the lines.

Gerard Borstel
Washington D.C.

MY SISTER GAVE ME A GIFT subscription for the past two years. She couldn't this year 1998, and I find reading/reflecting on the topics presented too vital to even consider not subscribing. P.S. My Mom insists on taking my old copies & she won't give them back.

Anne B. Shaw
Adelphi, MD

I HAVE BEEN RECEIVING over the years two periodicals: *The Witness* and a small paper from Cambridge, Mass. called *Peacework*. Both *The Witness* and *Peacework* have been my inspiration, "keeping me going." I am 85 years old, work in a soup kitchen and for the past five or six years have worked on the street with the poor and the homeless. I belong to the Catholic Workers movement. We opened a C.W. house on Dorothy Day's birthday last year, 1997. Fred Boehner and his wife, Diana Counay, have done wonders here for the poor. Fred was here on Thursday and left with his favorite gift. I pass all my *Witnesses* on to him for Emmaus House and they all love *The Witness* and appreciate my donation

William D. McGarry
Albany NY

Fundraising appeal

THE WITNESS IS AN IMPORTANT magazine and remains an important part of our reading. We are glad to share a bit of our surplus cash (indeed some from investments) with you. We were worried that Mr. Theuner's letter was addressed to the president of General Motors, not to us. However, certainly we benefit from the American boom, even though as overseas missionaries we may not have quite as much of the cake as some do.

Judy and John Gay
Lesotho, South Africa

Grieving rituals

YOU GRACIOUSLY SENT ME A SAMPLE copy of *The Witness* [3/97]. Being that the religious community of women that I belong to is going through a painful downsizing decision to leave our beautiful Motherhouse and build a smaller and more practical home, your March 1997 issue on grieving and letting go was very appropriate. Your magazine was packed with insightful and inspirational articles.

Sr. Ben Leising, O.S.F.
Williamsville, NY

Advent letter

THANKS FOR INCLUDING ME among those to whom you have mailed your *Witness* Advent letter.

I am both fascinated and pleased that this monthly analysis and challenge is one I helped move along its way some years back. *The Witness* remains the principal voice within our church which relates our faith to the issues of today's social order.

Please extend my good wishes and congratulations to everyone on the staff.

John Harris Burt
Marquette, MI

INTERESTING ADVENT LETTER: Board members' thoughts and agendas full of "stimuli": Bishop Shimpfky — poverty of ... worshiped scarcity"?? A subject to be pursued?? Or did he have a specific referent to the resources of *The Witness*?

"Keep the watch."

Pam Coswell
Watertown, NY

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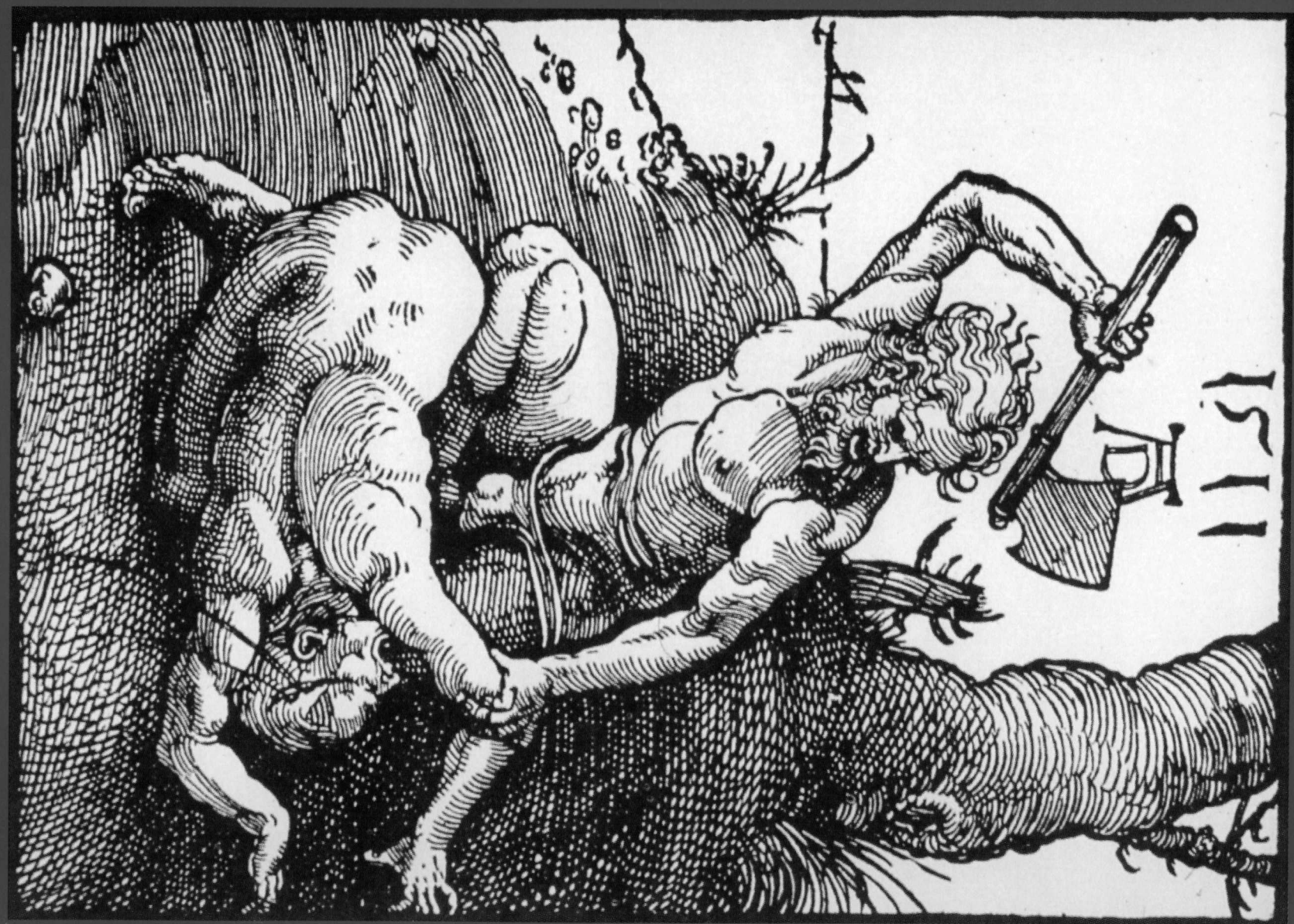
The Episcopal Church in conflict:
showdown or common ground?

The Witness

Volume 81 • Number 5 • May, 1998



Sports as a principality

I WAS INTERESTED IN YOUR ARTICLES on sports in the January/February 1998 issue of *The Witness*. You note that Bill Stringfellow saw commercial athletics as "demonic" in that sport diverted citizens from politics, providing a "vicarious involvement in the place of politics."

Exactly — and very necessary.

To Stringfellow and perhaps to you who engender hope of improving the society in which we exist and enabling persons to focus their attention on God and a higher mission, such a position is certainly logical. For very many citizens of this country, it is braying in the wind.

Commercial athletics are certainly corrupt today; the maddening attitudes of players, the greed of owners, the ridiculous salaries, the continuous rise of athletic-inspired violence and the sad example of Nike exploitation are difficult to stomach.

But the castle built of sand will tumble in the not too distant future. Citizens are beginning to refuse to allow their political chieftains to mortgage the farm for new stadia — witness Minneapolis, Pittsburgh and Boston. Soon ticket prices will disappear into the stratosphere — attendance at many college and professional contests is already dropping. Television is already sliding down the other side of the hill, having to make up income from other sources; witness the recent CBS Olympics.

The sport monument will fail of its own weight, as all monuments to greed always do.

But it will not be due to Mr. Stringfellow's politics. The political life of this country is already of little moment to a great many of its citizens. Examples abound: the enormous expenditure for entertainment, the loss of most of our newspapers, the wonderful "ratings" of the President and the pitiful performance of Washington (translation: My pay-

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Letters

Classifieds

EDS president search

The Board of Trustees of Episcopal Divinity School invites nominations and applications for the administrative and educational head of the School.

Working within a structure of collegial governance, the President and Dean is responsible for the overall administration of the School, represents the School's heritage, insures planning and implementation of the School's mission and represents that mission in public relations and fund raising activities. The President and Dean is accountable to the Board of Trustees.

The purpose of Episcopal Divinity School is to educate lay and ordained leaders for Christ's Church and for the world who serve and advance God's mission of justice, compassion and reconciliation. Candidates must have enthusiasm for the School's vision and mission. They must possess superior leadership skills, excellent managerial abilities, proven effectiveness in fund raising, as well as interpersonal, communication and educational abilities to join in furthering a climate of intellectual, professional and spiritual growth. Candidates shall be ordained members of the Episcopal Church or other member churches of the Anglican Communion.

This appointment carries the rank of Full Professor and responsibility to teach occasionally in the area professed. The President and Dean, together with faculty, should be committed to working in community with a range of students and to continue the School's diligent commitment to anti-racism work, multiculturalism and diversity, evidenced by a comprehensive school-wide plan and specific goals, objectives and a time line; and continuing training of faculty and staff. This commitment stands with the School's ongoing dedication to feminist liberation and education of students of every sexual orientation.

Racial and other minority candidates are encouraged to apply.

Applications and names of promising candidates, with additional information and recommendations where possible, should be sent to The President and Dean Search Committee, Episcopal Divinity School, P.O. Box 382171, Cambridge, Mass. 02238-2171, and received by 30 June 1998. Materials will be treated confidentially.

Communication/evangelism training

Communication consulting and evangelism training for progressive parishes and organizations. The Rev. Walt Gordon has 8 years experience as a diocesan communication officer and editor of the award-winning diocesan newspaper SOUNDINGS, and 10 years parish ministry experience. References, evangelism brochure available. 612-874-6887, <walt@storytellers.com>, 230 Oak Grove St. Suite 416, Minneapolis, MN 55403.

Order of Jonathan Daniels

The Order of Jonathan Daniels is a dispersed religious community-in-formation for persons of both genders, single, committed, or married, living and working in the world, who are evangelists for Scriptural justice and liberation. Contact OJD, 567-23 Sagamore Ave., Portsmouth, NH 03801-5550.

Episcopal Urban Intern Program

Work in social service, live in Christian community in Los Angeles. For adults 21-30. Apply now for the 1998-99 year. Contact: The Rev. Gary Commins, 260 N. Locust St., Inglewood, CA 90301. 310-674-7700.

Vocations

Contemplating religious life? Members of the Brotherhood and the Companion Sisterhood of Saint Gregory are Episcopalians, clergy and lay, married and single. To explore a contemporary Rule of Life, contact: The Director of Vocations, Brotherhood of St. Gregory, Dept. W, Saint Bartholomew's Church, 82 Prospect Street, White Plains, NY 10606-3499.

Classifieds

Witness classifieds cost 75 cents a word or $30 an inch, whichever is less. Due 15th of month, two months prior to publication.

check is rising; don't do anything to screw it up). Less than 50 percent of our populace vote in national elections; the figure falls every election. Soon the figure will be 40 percent or even 30 percent. People are not dumb — they know they have no representation in political life. The separation of national and state leaders from ordinary citizens is far greater than that of Michael Jordan and the NBA fan.

So ordinary people turn to sport, for all its failures and problems, because sport is a way to forget lobbyists, political chicanery, incessant campaigns that never stop — a way to forget that there are two kinds of people — those with money to buy political influence and those who cannot.

No, sports are very important to large numbers of people — for it is in sport that we can forget the futility of trying to believe we still have a government that is responsive to people. Sport provides a way to draw a curtain over the political mess; the baseball season starts in three weeks; thank God there is no team in Washington.

Sport in some form will survive; politics may not.

Milton Coleman
East Syracuse, NY

Witness praise

COMPLIMENTARY ISSUE EXCELLENT magazine ... The issue on Sports as principality blew my mind. I thought I was the only person sitting in a stadium saying to myself "something is wrong here!" Thank you.

Dee Binda
Cincinnati, OH

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN ALL OUR lives? This is the first time I can say I am happy someone sold our name to another source. Your free copy of the issue on sports was so thought provoking. I am enclosing a check for a one-year subscription and six back issues.

Peg Stokman
Grand Island, NE

I LOVED MY TRIAL SUBS.

Jo Anne Brausewetter
Norfolk, VA

Those Right-wing politicians who are celebrating because sexual behavior will be a criteria in future presidential elections are at a loss for why the American public doesn't share their glee, but in an interview with the *Christian Science Monitor,* Alan Wolfe, author of a new book on middle-class values called *One Nation, After All,* says, "We're not talking about a people without a moral bottom line. There is a moral bottom line: Don't be cruel. If Hillary were visibly upset or Chelsea was broken, people would react pretty differently."

J.W-K.

An argument for God?

MY YOUNG SON, in his 30s, was raised in the church, confirmed, an acolyte, church camp. Then like so many young people, drifted away. He was and is a good kid. He married a girl he'd known since high school, daughter of a teacher — a friend of mine. She's a wonderful wife, mother, with a responsible job. They've got it made. They're outstanding parents. But this girl was raised without any Christian contacts or learning.

I'm super-careful not to make a point of my concerns, but of course a lovely four-year-old granddaughter adds to that concern.

How do you sell God/Faith to someone who's gotten along just fine without them all these years? I keep looking for the perfect, simple, little booklet to help me and I'm frustrated. This young woman thinks Christians are all like Ralph Reed, Jerry Falwell etc. She thinks we don't believe in evolution — I clear some of these up as we go along.

I've found: *The Episcopal Church Essential Facts(*1995). But it doesn't deal with "Why do I need a faith? Why should I believe in these ancient, unprovable myths?"

Can anyone tell me of a magic, simple, gently stated argument for God? One person I've asked recommended *Christian Believing*, by Holmes and Westerhoff, but it is out of print and unavailable!

Louise Smith
Holt, MI

Dissenting from race initiative

A SET OF 28 SHORT PIECES of "Advice to the Advisory Board [to the President's Race Initiative, chaired by John Hope Franklin]," by well known activists and thinkers, is available, without charge, from The Poverty & Race Research Action Council, 1711 Conn. Ave. NW, Wash., DC 20009. They appeared

continued on back page

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The Witness

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Assistant Editor	Marianne Arbogast
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8 **Lambeth 1998 and the 'new colonialism'** by Ian T. Douglas
Unmasking the "Kuala Lumpur Statement" and its manipulation by "orthodox Episcopalians" reveals the subtle yet powerfully destructive nature of the "new colonialism" in the Anglican Communion.

14 **The Episcopal Church's Right wing: standing against 'the tide of relativism and revisionism':** by Jack H. Taylor Jr.
A review of the leading arch-conservative Episcopal Church organizations reveals overlapping leadership and a concerted effort to circumvent the church's growing liberalism.

20 **Ambiguity and conflict: an interview with Verna Dozier** by Julie A. Wortman
Biblical scholar and theologian Verna Dozier talks about stepping up to conflict while acknowledging that there is always another point of view.

24 **'Emerging Common Ground': a Toronto experiment** by Chris Ambidge
A gay man tells of a sustained conversation between people on both sides of the are-homosexual-relationships-sinful? question which he finds a promising alternative to win-lose debate.

26 **Seeking 'common ground' in Atlanta** by Emmett Jarrett
A priest who upholds the Episcopal Church's traditional teaching about marriage and sexuality is also willing to talk about the issues involved — so long as the conversation is substantive and "not just different folks sharing their feelings."

28 **Resolving conflict when no one's in charge** by Carol Bell
"It is my experience that the further you ascend in a hierarchy, the less likely you are to hear the truth," says Tom Ray, Bishop of Northern Michigan. That insight has led to a new way of ministering — and making decisions — in his diocese.

The Witness offers a fresh and sometimes irreverent view of our world, illuminated by faith, Scripture and experience. Since 1917, *The Witness* has been advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those people who have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." We push boundaries, err on the side of inclusion and enjoy bringing our views into tension with orthodox Christianity. *The Witness'* roots are Episcopalian, but our readership is ecumenical. For simplicity, we place news specific to Episcopalians in our Vital Signs section. *The Witness* is committed to brevity for the sake of readers who find little time to read, but can enjoy an idea, a poem or a piece of art.

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

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Cover: Cain slaying Abel *by Albrecht Dürer, 1511.*

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Office: 7000 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210-2872. Tel.: (313) 841-1967. Fax: (313) 841-1956. To reach Julie Wortman: HC 35 Box 647, Tenants Harbor, ME 04860. Tel.: (207) 372-6396.
E-mail: <[first name]@thewitness.org>.
Website: <\\www.thewitness.org>.

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Looking for signs of life

by Julie A. Wortman

Last autumn, the Sunday morning after Chilton Knudsen was elected bishop of Maine, the rector of an Episcopal congregation here in the midcoast region announced from the pulpit that the time may have come for the congregation to leave the Episcopal Church.

A well-known opponent of women's ordination, this man had been a member of the nominating committee that had voted — unanimously — to recommend the slate of nominees to the electing convention. Ironically, his vote in favor of that slate may have signalled to many that electing a woman bishop would not be a problem for the diocese's "traditionalist" Episcopalians. Apparently this man never expected his peers to pay more than lip service to a woman's eligibility, not to mention suitability, for the episcopate.

It may be that last year's General Convention decision to render invalid the appeal to "conscience," which for so many years had permitted bishops to refuse women access to ordination, marked a turning point in the ongoing struggle of women, gays and persons of color to free the church from its domination by straight (or at least straight-seeming) white men. This is evident in the disaffected statements and actions of allied conservative Episcopalian forces since. Their aim is to provoke a showdown on sexuality at this summer's Lambeth conference of Anglican bishops. American conservatives hope that the Western church's seemingly relentless movement in the direction of accepting the full humanity of women and gays can be inhibited by a clear show of support for traditional, heterosexist, male-centered values by the communion's non-Western primates. Failing this, U.S. traditionalists hope to gain sympathy for their efforts to create a new province over which they would have control.

Anglicanism has had a genius for accommodating incredible diversity in thought and belief. But perhaps we have come to a watershed.

Although this month's issue is unabashedly focused on the Episcopal Church, with an eye forward to Lambeth, readers affiliated with other denominations will see parallels. And statewide battles over whether non-discrimination codes should be rewritten to include sexual orientation make clear that the struggle isn't confined to the churches. [It grieves me that this past winter a well-orchestrated effort by religious conservatives resulted in the repeal of Maine's non-discrimination policy. It is some consolation, however, that the Promise Keepers are on the edge of bankruptcy.]

Is schism inevitable? Are there ways of averting it by building common ground? Anglicanism has had a genius for accommodating incredible diversity in thought and belief. With the denomination's increasingly diverse racial/cultural composition this diversity of perspective can only increase. But perhaps we have finally come to a watershed. Those who ask that the presumptions of white patriarchy — a synonym, it would appear, for "biblical" and "Anglican" orthodoxy — be taken as gospel are drawing a line in the sand that makes this a win-lose debate. Finding common ground requires that each side come to the table honoring that the other has a piece of the truth. As struggles in a number of Episcopal Church dioceses highlight, the sad reality is that it seems impossible to have meaningful debate with those who proclaim themselves "orthodox."

Liberals/progressives are as good at absolutizing our positions as the most traditionalist conservatives. It is genuinely hard, when we believe we are right, to believe that someone who holds another view could also be right. But I take some solace in the fact that an appreciation for ambiguity is a hallmark of a liberal/progressive perspective — as is the desire to break out of old orthodoxies.

Being Christian, I have come to believe, has much less to do with proclaiming Jesus as Lord than with living in the sort of non-hierarchical, caring, truth-focussed communities of peace and justice that Jesus sought to cultivate and inspire. That is why my love for "the church" is not a love for the institution, but for the "dream of God" — a dream that biblical theologian Verna Dozier says the institution carries, but routinely rejects. Our clericalism and hierarchicalism alone, so deeply rooted in Empire's white patriarchy, blind us daily to egalitarian alternatives.

From this perspective, schism could be a welcome sign of life — a sign that at least a part of Anglicanism will no longer deny the full humanity of some church members just to avoid institutional collapse. Most important, it would be a sign that the divine dream the institution carries has not been abandoned — however unorthodox its influence continues to be. TW

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

editor's note

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Can our churches have a different kind of conversation about sex?

by Ched Myers

Jesus looked up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" (John 8:10)

It is God who justifies. Who then will condemn? (Rom 8:34)

Over the past two years I, like others, have had the unhappy experience of witnessing denominational deliberations on the question of whether to allow gay and lesbian Christians to serve the church as ordained ministers. It would all be merely wearisome if not for the fact that we must watch sisters and brothers stand in the dock while they are talked over, defamed and run out.

The patterns of polarization have become utterly *pro forma*, conforming predictably to the ideological battle lines of the wider culture wars. Thoughtful people on either side sense at this point that the church may well lose no matter who "wins" the ecclesial plebiscites. They suspect that it is the discourse itself that is dysfunctional.

They are right. What is happening is neither conversation nor discernment.

I believe that the famous story of Jesus and the adulterous woman (John 7:53-8:11) says something to the sorry state of our current debates about what constitutes sexual sin. (Although this text has second-class status, being widely regarded as a later addition to the gospel tradition, its Jesus sounds every bit like the canonical one; it deserves to be regarded as Scripture).

For her accusers, the woman's fate is already scripturally settled; their "deliberation" with Jesus is really just a litmus test (Jn 8:4-6). Sound familiar? I love what happens next. Jesus says nothing, bending down to write something on the ground. When the accusers persist in pressing him to reveal his "position," Jesus stands up and invites those "without sin" to commence the execution. Then he bends down again and resumes writing on the ground (8:7f).

What is he writing? We are neither shown nor told. It is a delicious, mysterious, wry moment. One by one, the crowd dissipates (not jurors recusing themselves here, but judges!). The social point having been made, the story now makes the moral point. The One who according to orthodoxy was without sin — and therefore qualified to execute justice by his own criterion — refuses to "condemn" (8:11).

The same verb (Gk. *katakrinoo*) is used by Paul in his great argument for grace in Romans. The apostle anchors his case in the universality of human culpability, sounding very much like Jesus' ultimatum to the woman's accusers: "You are without excuse, whoever you are who would judge, for in passing judgment on the other, you condemn yourself, because you are practicing the very same things!" (Rom 2:1). His manifesto culminates with that famous evangelical declaration: "There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1).

Such does not appear to be the faith of our churches, where amendments and resolutions are flying like stones, with intent to kill. All protests to the contrary, the current debate about homosexuality has little to do with concern about character and everything to do with what we might call "hamartography": the compulsion to categorize sins. Denominations that have throughout their long histories embraced without shame robber barons, misogynists and militarists are suddenly concerned to draw the line.

Very well. The crowd is gathered, awaiting the adjudication. Jesus, meanwhile, is writing something on the ground. I suspect it is a suggestion for how we ought to handle such deliberation. It is a simple invitation to self-examination.

What a concept! Imagine if the discourse on sexual standards and mores in our churches followed one of the most basic rules of conflict mediation — enjoining all participants to speak only in "I" statements. What might happen if, as a modest spiritual discipline, we declared a moratorium on addressing other people's sexuality, and spoke only of our own?

We must demand a genuine, gospel conversation, in which each participant talks honestly about his or her own sexual experience, confesses his or her own sexual brokenness, and intimates his or her own sexual hopes and aspirations.

Given the difficult, predatory, deluded, and compulsive environment in which people of faith must try to discover sexual integrity and wholeness today, I suspect none of us, like the accusers in the gospel story, would be willing to stand before Jesus presuming to be "without sin" and willing to condemn. But we might be willing instead to talk together about healing, forgiveness and our common struggle for sexual wholeness.

That would be a conversation worth having. TW

Ched Myers is a *Witness* contributing editor, <chedmyers@igc.apc.org>. He is a member of United University Church in Los Angeles, which is active in the struggle for the rights of gay, lesbian and bisexual persons in the United Methodist and Presbyterian traditions.

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Heaven is Not Closed

by Bessie Head

The missionary was a short, anonymous-looking man who wore glasses. He had been the resident missionary for some time and like all his fellows, he did not particularly like the people. He always complained to his kind that they were terrible beggars and rather stupid. So when he opened the door and saw Galethebege there, his expression with its raised eyebrows clearly said: "Well, what do you want now?"

"I am to be married, sir," Galethebege said, politely, after the exchange of greetings.

The missionary smiled: "Well come in, my dear. Let us talk about the arrangements."

He stared at her with polite, professional interest. She was a complete nonentity, a part of the vague black blur which was his congregation - oh, they noticed chiefs and people like that, but not the silent mass of the humble and lowly who had an almost weird capacity to creep quietly through life. Her next words brought her sharply into focus.

"The man I am to marry, sir, does not wish to be married in the Christian way. He will only marry under Setswana custom," she said softly.

They always knew the superficial stories about "heathen customs," an expression of disgust crept into his face — sexual malpractices had been associated with the traditional marriage ceremony and (shudder!) they draped the stinking intestinal bag of the ox around the necks.

"That we cannot allow," he said sharply. "Tell him to come and marry the Christian way."

Galethebege started trembling all over. She looked at the missionary in alarm. Ralokae would never agree to this. Her intention in approaching the missionary was to acquire his blessing for the marriage, as though a compromise of tenderness could be made between the two traditions opposed to each other.

She trembled because it was beyond her station in life to be involved in controversy and protest. The missionary noted the trembling and alarm and his tone softened a bit, but his next words were devastating.

"My dear," he said, persuasively, "Heaven is closed to the unbeliever ..."

Galethebege stumbled home on faint legs. It never occurred to her to question such a miserable religion which terrified people with the fate of eternal damnation in hell-fire if they were "heathens" or sinners. Only Ralokae seemed quite unperturbed by the fate that awaited him. He smiled when Galethebege relayed the words of the missionary to him.

"Girl friend," he said, carelessly. "You can choose what you like, Setswana custom or Christian custom. I have chosen to live my life by Setswana custom."

Even Galethebege was astounded by the harshness of the missionary's attitude. The catastrophe she never anticipated was that he abruptly excommunicated her from the church. She could no longer enter the church if she married under Setswana custom.

The austere rituals of the church, the mass, the sermons, the intimate communication in prayer with God — all this had thrilled her heart deeply. But Ralokae was also representative of an ancient stream of holiness that people had lived with before any white man had set foot on the land, and it only needed a small protest to stir up loyalty for the old customs.

There was great indignation because both Galethebege and Ralokae were much respected in the community. People then wanted to know how it was that Ralokae, who was an unbeliever, could have heaven closed to him.

A number of people, all the relatives who officiated at the wedding ceremony, then decided that if heaven was closed to Galethebege and Ralokae, it might as well be closed to them too, so they all no longer attended church.

Galethebege could never forsake the custom in which she had been brought up. All through her married life she would find a corner in which to pray. Sometimes Ralokae would find her so and ask: "What are you doing, Mother?" And she would reply, "I am praying to the Christian God."

Was heaven really closed to the unbeliever, Ralokae? Or had the Christian custom been so intolerant of Setswana custom that it could not bear the holiness of Setswana custom? Wasn't there a place in heaven too for Setswana custom?

— from the short story "Heaven is not Closed," © Bessie Head, from *THE COLLECTOR OF TREASURES and Other Botswana Village Tales*, Heinemann, 1977.

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Lambeth 1998 and the 'new colonialism'

by Ian T. Douglas

This summer over 850 bishops from around the Anglican Communion and from churches in communion with Anglicanism, will gather at the University of Kent in the city of Canterbury Cathedral for the 1998 Lambeth Conference. This three-week meeting of bishops, which is held every 10 years at the invitation of the archbishop of Canterbury, has served as a point of unity, fellowship, and common prayer since its inception in 1867. Today, more than ever before, the Lambeth Conference offers the promise of new relationships, new understandings and new experiences in a rapidly changing global Christian community.

The bishops will be meeting at a time of dramatic change in which the overt abuses and indignities of late 19th- and early 20th-century colonialism have given way to a "post-colonial" world where nations in the southern hemisphere are still subject to the economic, political and military whims of the industrialized West. This "new colonialism" infects all international conversations today and Lambeth is not immune from such pressures. The process by which the formal and informal agendas at the Lambeth Conference get developed is not unaffected by the maldistribution of power, both political and financial, within today's Anglican Communion. As such the 1998 Lambeth Conference is vulnerable to the new colonialism in which players from Western industrialized nations, with their sophisticated communication, control of the media, and deep pockets, continue to have a disproportionate amount of control over the lives of sisters and brothers in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in what has come to be known as the "Kuala Lumpur Statement" and its use and misuse leading up to Lambeth 1998. Unmasking Kuala Lumpur will help us to appreciate the subtle yet powerfully destructive nature of the new colonialism in the Anglican Communion.

"A Trumpet from the South"

Ironically, the genesis of "Kuala Lumpur" began with good, well-meaning church leaders, primarily from the industrialized West, who became increasingly aware that they had a disproportionate amount of power and authority in inter-Anglican conversations on mission and church life. In December 1986, representatives of western Anglican mission agencies meeting in Brisbane, Australia, recommended that representatives of younger churches of the Southern hemisphere gather to discuss issues of common concern free from the influence and presence of the older churches in the industrialized West. This idea was advanced in 1992 when the Mission Issues Strategy and Advisory Group (MISAG II) of the Anglican Consultative Council proposed a "South-to-South Conference of Anglicans" be held to "examine and define a basis of identity of Anglicanism outside of the Anglo-Saxon context."

The sins of the new colonialism are not so much in the funding and organization of the Second Anglican Encounter in the South but in the West's misuse of one article from the encounter report to fuel debates over sexuality in our own context.

Funded primarily by the older Anglican Churches in the West, the first "Anglican Encounter in the South" was held in Limuru, Kenya, in early 1994. There 72 lay people, priests and bishops from 22 countries and 23 Anglican Provinces gathered to discuss issues of mission, self-reliance and interdependence as Africans, Asians, Latin Americans, and Pacific Islanders. The encounter's final statement, "A Trumpet from the South," heralded the vitality and strength of an emerging Anglican presence outside of the Anglo-American context. The statement included specific suggestions to build on this initial South-to-South meeting including, but not limited to, a second Encounter in the South.

G-CODE 2000 and rising tensions over gay/lesbian concerns

Responsibility for the planning and development of a second encounter rested with Cyril Okorocha, director for mission and evangelism at the Anglican Communion Office in London. As the evangelism officer for the Anglican Communion, Okorocha also oversaw the various responses of Anglican Churches to the Decade of Evangelism that had been initiated by Lambeth 1988. To review the Decade of Evangelism at mid-point, Okorocha coordinated the Global Conference on Dynamic Evangelism Beyond 2000, or G-CODE 2000, held at the Kanuga Conference Center in North Carolina in September 1995. The conference

Ian T. Douglas is Associate Professor of World Mission and Global Christianity at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass. and past Chair of the Episcopal Church's Standing Commission on World Mission, <IDouglas@episdivschool.org>.

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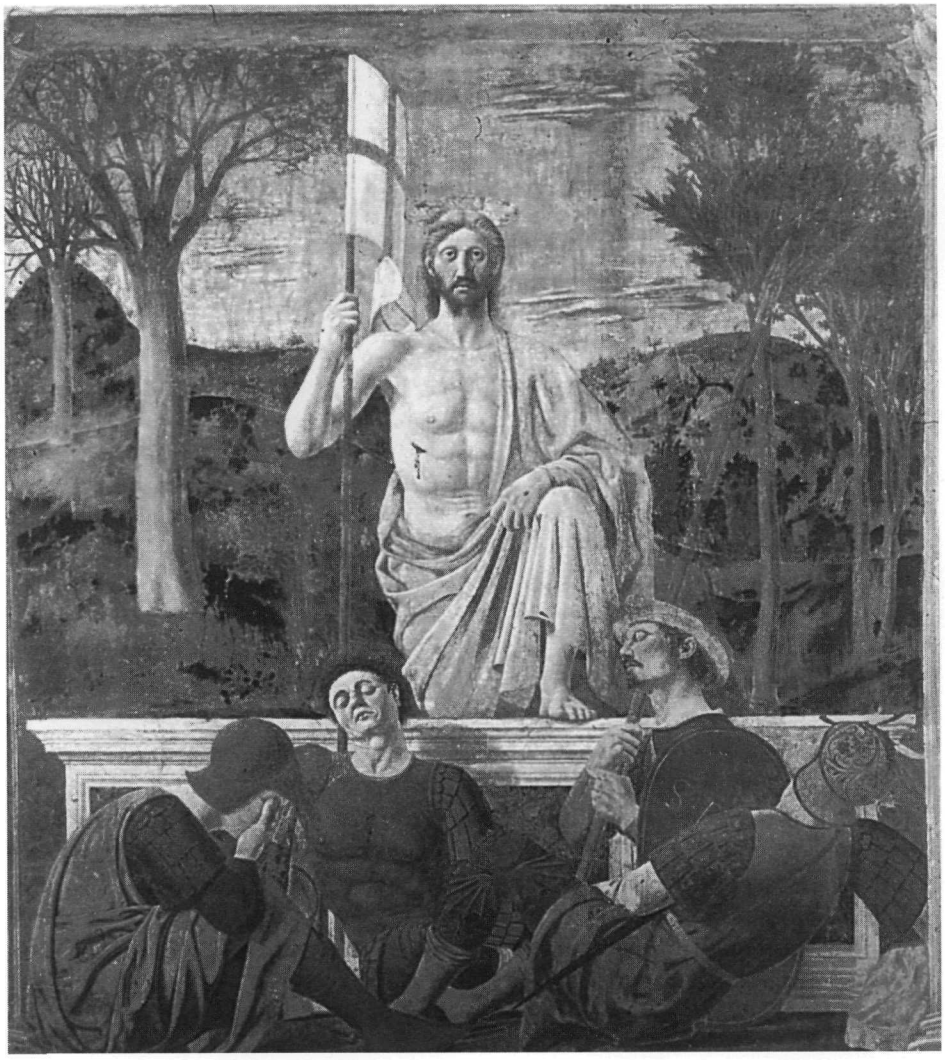
provided a forum for Anglicans the world over to witness to the work of evangelism in each church's context. It was also at the G-CODE 2000 conference that tensions over gay/lesbian concerns in the Western industrialized nations began to be played out at the global level.

The Ekklesia Society: recruitment of Third World allies

Traditionalist Episcopalians in the U.S., who helped to fund and organize the G-CODE 2000 conference, began to appreciate the power and possibility of recruiting Third World church leaders to their position. Specifically, William Atwood, rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in Dallas, a member of the G-CODE Planning Group and a donor to the conference, saw the gathering as the catalyst for his Ekklesia Society. Ekklesia was designed as an international network of Anglicans committed to "counteracting the negative impact of revisionist teaching which seeks to undermine the historic faith of the Bible and the Creeds" and affiliated with the conservative American Anglican Council [see p. 14].

Meanwhile, planning for the "Second Anglican Encounter in the South" to be held in Kuala Lumpur in February 1997 continued. Some of the 80 participants in this second encounter, looking back on the experience, believe that the choice of the encounter's theme, "The Place of Scripture in the Life and Mission of the Church in the 21st Century" was deliberately chosen to chastise those in the West who take a pro gay and lesbian stance. It is no secret that the planning leadership for the second encounter was closely associated with traditionalist strongholds in the U.S., including the leadership of the emerging American Anglican Council and faculty at the Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry in Ambridge, Penn. It is thus no surprise that the "Second Trumpet from the South" from the Kuala Lumpur meeting would contain a statement in line with traditional standards of human sexuality.



***Resurrection*, c. 1463, Palazzo Comunale, Borgo San Sepalcro, Italy** **Piero della Francesca**

The looting of the "Second Trumpet from the South"

In June 1997 the Report of the Second Anglican Encounter in the South was distributed to various constituencies in the Episcopal Church concerned about world mission. It was noted in the report's distribution memo that the national program budget of the Episcopal Church had once again supported the meeting of Anglicans in the South with a grant of $10,000. On first reading, the report, or the "Second Trumpet from the South," did not appear as an overt chastisement of the West for a perceived errant position on human sexuality. Its eight articles, or major sub-headings, speak to challenges before the church in the southern hemisphere, including: prophetic and redemptive witness, mission, people of other faiths, youth, contextualization, the family and human sexuality, church unity, and practical next steps in South-to-South relationships. In its very first article the report decries "the crippling effect of international debt" and "calls on the

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The changing face of world Anglicanism

Understanding and unmasking the new colonialism in the Anglican Communion requires an appreciation of the radically changing face of the world Anglican community. In his address to the 1985 General Convention of the Episcopal Church, Robert Runcie, past Archbishop of Canterbury, said: "We have developed into a world-wide family of churches. Today there are 70 million members of what is arguably the second most widely distributed body of Christians. No longer are we identified by having some kind of English heritage. English today is now the second language of the Anglican Communion. There are more black members than white. Our local diversities span the spectrum of the world's races, needs, and aspirations. We have only to think of Bishop Tutu's courageous witness in South Africa to be reminded that we are no longer a church of the white middle classes allied only to the prosperous western world."

A Third-World church

The changes in contemporary Anglicanism, from a white, predominantly English-speaking church of the West to a church of the Third World is consistent with the changing face of Christianity over the last few 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 41 percent of the world's 1.5 billion Christians live in the same area and by the year 2000 that number will drop to 39 percent. Barrett predicts that by 2025 fully 70 percent of Christians will live in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Pacific.

For the majority of the 19th 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, the Episcopal Church in the U.S. and the Anglican Churches in Canada and Australia. Each supported and controlled their own missions around the world. The three biggest mission fields of the U.S. Episcopal Church in the 19th century were China, Liberia and Japan. From the 1850s to the 1950s mission was inextricably linked to Western colonialism and imperialism.

Crumbling of 'colonial system'

All of this began to change, however, in the 1960s as the "colonial system" began to crumble. With political independence for countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America came the desire for ecclesial independence for the mission fields. Eventually the missions "grew up" into fully autonomous Anglican churches in their own right, ostensibly independent from their "mother" churches in England and the U.S.

With the advent of new Anglican churches in what had been the mission fields, Anglicans searched for new ways of coming together, new ways of relating one to another as the Body of Christ.

The Anglican Congress of 1963, held in Toronto, Canada, was a watershed for the contemporary Anglican Communion. This meeting of Anglican lay people, priests, and bishops from every corner of the globe embraced an influential and far-reaching vision: "Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the Body of Christ" (MRI). MRI proposed a radical reorientation of mission priorities and stressed mutual responsibility for mission between all Anglican churches as equal partners.

Thirty-seven equal and autonomous churches

The real question for Anglicans today is how does this mutual responsibility and interdependence play itself out in a community of 37 equal and autonomous churches? What are the limits of our identity, now that we do not share a common language or culture? Where does authority lie in a global church that looks to the Archbishop of Canterbury as a titular head, but which accords this leader no legislative canonical power outside of England? These are the questions that are at the heart of the upcoming Lambeth Conference.

There are those in the Anglican Communion who believe that our identity lies in a shared British heritage and history. For such folk, the increasing pluralism and multiculturalism of the Anglican Communion is a threat to their Anglo-Saxon sensibilities. In their attempt to reclaim the Church of the British Empire, they draw boundaries and set tight doctrinal controls in order to define who is and who is not an Anglican.

Anglican identity: Who gets invited to what meeting?

Another perspective on the locus of Anglican identity is offered by J. Patrick Mauney, director of Anglican and global relations at the Episcopal Church Center in New York. Mauney says that the marks of contemporary Anglicanism lie less in cultural or doctrinal agreement and more in who gets invited to what meeting by the Archbishop of Canterbury. This is consistent with current Anglican polity that espouses "four instruments of unity," namely: the Office of the Archbishop of Canterbury as titular head of

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the Anglican Communion, The Lambeth Conference of bishops meeting every 10 years, the biannual gathering of the Archbishops of the Anglican Communion known as the Primates Meeting, and the triennial meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council bringing together lay people, priests and bishops from each church in the Anglican Communion.

In addition to these four "instruments of unity" are a host of other international committees and commissions loosely related to, or called into being by all four. Examples of such extra-counciliar commissions include: the Commission on Communion and Women in the Episcopate (popularly known as the Eames Commission after the archbishop of Ireland who chaired the group), the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (IATDC) and the Mission Issues Strategy and Advisory Group (MISAG).

We need not apologize for our Anglican identity lying in "who gets invited to what meetings." For at the heart of such identity is a profound affirmation of relationship originating in the incarnation and lived out when "two or three are gathered together in my name."

It is good and right that we Anglicans celebrate our instruments of unity as genuine vehicles for "mutual responsibility and interdependence in the Body of Christ." At the same time we must recognize that the making and unmaking of international Anglican meetings is subject to the political and economic forces of the new colonialism where those with money often have more power to set the agenda and control outcomes. *— Ian Douglas*

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churches of the West to put pressure on their governments and on the World Bank and the IMF to respond to the many appeals coming from various quarters worldwide to make the year 2000 a year of Jubilee, to remit the Two-Third World debt." Sex does not appear until article six and as such is a subsection of the larger report.

The sins of the new colonialism are not so much in the funding and organization of the Second Anglican Encounter in the South but rather in the West's misuse of one article from the encounter report to fuel debates over sexuality in our own context. In the hands of American traditionalist spin-doctors, what was originally presented as an eight-article "Second Trumpet from the South" soon became the "Kuala Lumpur Statement" on human sexuality. The wholesale looting of raw materials belonging to sisters and brothers in the southern hemisphere for our own use and misuse in the industrialized West had been effected once again. The mining and export of raw materials from the south for the benefit of the West's industrial machine in the colonial era was not wholly dissimilar from the stealing of words in the new colonialism of Kuala Lumpur.

Conservative misrepresentations of Kuala Lumpur

Armed with the new abbreviated "Kuala Lumpur Statement" on human sexuality, traditionalists in the U.S. were quick to use the voice of sisters and brothers in the South to advance their own aims. Conservative media soon misrepresented Kuala Lumpur as an authoritative, unanimous, statement from all of the bishops in the Third World chastising the Church in the U.S. for ordination of gay and lesbian people and the blessing of same-sex unions. Because so many in the Episcopal Church, USA, are ill-informed and uneducated as to either the realities of the global Anglican Communion or the relational polity of contemporary Anglicanism, such misinformation about the Second Anglican Encounter in the South was not challenged as to its truthfulness or completeness. The fact that at least one participant at Kuala Lumpur, an archbishop no less, spoke forcefully against the report's statement on human sexuality was never mentioned in the press.

The misuse of the "Second Trumpet from the South" as the "Kuala Lumpur Statement" on human sexuality came to a head at the 1997 General Convention in Philadelphia when conservative deputies and bishops sought endorsement of the "Kuala Lumpur Statement" by resolution of the Convention. Although the resolution failed, there was little rebuttal by those who opposed the resolution as to the misuse of sisters and brothers in the Southern hemisphere to advance one camp's aims in the U.S.

Money for sex

Soon after General Convention, Bill Atwood and the Ekklesia Society set about organizing an Anglican Life and Witness Conference to be held in Dallas/Ft. Worth in September 1997. The four-day conference had both a public and private agenda. Publicly the group of 50 Anglican Bishops from 16 nations preached and taught in a variety of parish settings in the dioceses of Dallas and Fort Worth. Privately, conservative theologians and biblical scholars met to draft a statement confirming what had been said in Kuala Lumpur on human sexuality. What these drafters had not bargained for was that the Third World bishops, who were enjoying a free trip to the U.S. at the expense of the Ekklesia Society and the Diocese of Dallas, had more pressing concerns than the West's hang-up on sex, namely the sinfulness of Western capitalism and the international banking system. In a classic case of money for sex, the bishops from the Southern hemisphere traded their con-

cern about international debt relief for the American's statement regarding traditional, "biblical" norms of sexuality. What ensued was the "Dallas Statement," linking the traditionalist agenda on human sexuality with the call for debt relief in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific. What most proponents of the "Dallas Statement" fail to realize, however, is that many of the African bishops who signed the "Dallas Statement" embracing "biblical standards" on human sexuality had been the key advocates at Lambeth 1988 for a more accepting position on polygamy! Politics makes interesting bedfellows.

Spong-Carey tit for tat

It must be acknowledged, however, that the West's preoccupation with sex and the American attempt to make it the overriding issue at Lambeth 1998 is not limited to only the conservatives in the U.S. As the "Dallas Statement" hit the Anglican media waves, advocates of gay and lesbian ordination and the blessing of same-sex unions in the U.S. struck back. In November, John S. Spong, bishop of Newark, N.J., and one not to shy away from controversy, issued "A Message to the Anglican Communion on the subject of Homosexuality," sending it to all archbishops. The "Message" took on various archbishops, including the archbishop of Canterbury and the "Kuala Lumpur Statement" as to their traditional views of human sexuality [See *TW* 1/2 1998]. The archbishop of Canterbury immediately responded, defending his position and showing his sympathy with both Kuala Lumpur and the "Dallas Statement." In the tit for tat between Spong and the archbishop of Canterbury, the importance of international debt relief in the face of grinding poverty for sisters and brothers in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific, raised both in Kuala Lumpur and in Dallas, was never mentioned.

As we draw closer to Lambeth in July, the forces that want to push the Communion to take a stand, one way or another, on human sexuality do not seem to be diminishing. Recently a group of American Episcopal priests known as the "First Promise" signatories have advocated that the acceptance of the "Kuala Lumpur Statement" on human sexuality should be a condition of communion within Anglicanism. These "First Promise" signatories, along with other colleagues in the American Anglican Council, have further pledged $50,000 so that bishops in the provinces of Burundi, Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, the Sudan and Tanzania can meet ahead of time to prepare for Lambeth.

Disproportionate power of the West

The American money and power of the new colonialism is a force with which to be reckoned. It is seldom acknowledged that the affluence of the West allows for a greater number of bishops per church than in the Southern hemisphere. Whereas the Episcopal Church can support upwards of 250 bishops for a church of 2.5 million members, a church of equal or even greater size in sub-Saharan Africa can afford one-tenth the number of bishops. Such disparity in the number of bishops in each church guarantees that a disproportionate number of bishops at Lambeth will come from the industrialized West.

It is important that bishops attending Lambeth, especially those from the Anglo-American context, wrestle with the meaning of human sexuality today. It is equally important that such conversations do not overshadow the primary agenda of the majority of Anglicans in the world today, namely international debt relief [*TW* 6/98]. If we in the West control the agenda of Lambeth for our own ends, either overtly or behind the scenes, the sins of the new colonialism will continue to be perpetrated and our sisters and brothers in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific will slide further into poverty at the hands of international debt. TW

Women bishops in for cool reception at Lambeth

Margaret Duggan of London's *Church Times* reports that the 11 women bishops expected to attend this summer's Lambeth Conference may be in for a cool reception by brother primates who reject their ordinations.

"Two Anglo-Catholic traditionalists have already indicated that they will not be coming because they find it too difficult to accept the women. They are both expatriates in Madagascar, Keith Benzies of Antsiranana and Donald Smith of Toamasina," Duggan writes.

"Another traditionalist bishop, the Rt. Rev'd Noel Jones, bishop of Sodor & Man, has said he will not attend any service, Bible study or working group in which a woman bishop is taking part; nor will he walk in a robed procession with the women nor be photographed with any of the women bishops."

Jones is president of the International Bishops' Conference on Faith and Order (IBCFO), the body at the center of the opposition to the women bishops. It was founded in 1990 by Clarence Pope, then bishop of Fort Worth, together with Graham Leonard, the former bishop of London (now a Roman Catholic), and Eric Kemp, the bishop of Chichester.

Duggan says conference organizers have been bending over backwards to make the women's presence palatable to those traditionalists who do attend. One sign of this is that "for the opening service at least, the procession into Canterbury Cathedral will be low-key, with the bishops in cassocks."

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Medicine comes full circle

"A Brief History of Medicine" offered by *The Utne Reader* (3-4/98):

200 B.C.: "Here, eat this root."

1000 A.D.: "That root is heathen. Here, say this prayer."

1850 A.D.: That prayer is superstitious. Here, drink this potion."

1940 A.D.: That potion is snake oil. Here swallow this pill."

1985 A.D.: That pill is ineffective. Here, take this antibiotic."

1998 A.D.: That antibiotic is artificial. Here, eat this root."

Women's human rights

The impact of widespread protest against the repression of women in Afghanistan is evidence of significant progress in global consciousness of women's human rights, Maria Riley writes in *Center Focus* (3/98).

"Women around the world have condemned and demonstrated against the Taliban Islamic militia that took over Afghanistan and subsequently barred women and girls from schools, hospitals and public places," Riley reports.

"For the first time, the UN sent a 'Gender Mission' to investigate what was happening in the Taliban-held regions of Afghanistan. Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton have both condemned the Taliban's policies toward women. The outrage of women's groups in the U.S. has kept the Clinton Administration from recognizing the Taliban government unless it radically changes its policies toward women. Without such recognition, the Taliban is unlikely to get financing from international lending institutions. And a current plan between Unocal, a California-based global energy company, and the Taliban to build a trans-Afghan pipeline is in jeopardy, if the Taliban does not change. Ten years ago, it would have been inconceivable that the violation of women's human rights could affect a foreign policy decision."

Migrants' rights

A global campaign to persuade governments to adopt the UN human rights convention on migrants' rights was launched on March 20. The convention, adopted in December 1990 by the UN General Assembly, will enter into force only after 20 member states ratify it. To date, nine states have done so: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cape Verde, Colombia, Egypt, Morocco, Philippines, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Uganda. Chili and Mexico have signed, the preliminary step to ratifying. Organizations represented on the campaign's steering committee include Human Rights Watch, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the World Council of Churches. For more information on the convention and the global campaign, contact Patrick Taran, Secretary for Migration, World Council of Churches, e-mail:<pt@wcc-coe.org>.

The right to consume?

Americans "have come to believe, deeply, that it is our right to consume," Vicki Robin, co-author of the bestselling book on voluntary simplicity, *Your Money or Your Life,* told *Mother Earth News* (1/98). "If we have the money, we can buy whatever we want, whether or not we need it, use it or even enjoy it. After all, it's a free country. Beyond the constitutional rights of free speech, assembly, due process and so on, there is the right to have anything you want, as long as you are willing to pay for it ... or at least promise to pay for it on time."

Alaska ruling on gay marriage

The Associated Press reports that in February Alaska Superior Court Judge Peter Michalski ruled against Alaska's ban on same-sex marriages, "ordering the state to show why it should be able to regulate who people marry."

The ruling requires that the state show "a compelling reason why such unions should be illegal." Choosing a partner is a fundamental right, Michalski said, noting that the state Constitution protects both the "traditional choice and the non-traditional choice."

Defense Secretary on faith

John Hamre, who became U.S. Deputy Defense Secretary last year, belongs to "a congregation with an anti-war history" and "struggles with" the tension between the gospel and public policy, according to a *Washington Post* profile described in *Initiatives* (2/98), a publication of the National Center for the Laity.

According to the profile, "Hamre was disturbed with the cheering that accompanied the U.S. victory in the 1991 Gulf War. He recalls a rabbinic story about the Exodus. 'After the waters closed on the Pharaoh's soldiers and chariots, the children of Israel were shouting, cheering and celebrating. And God said to Moses: 'Tell the people to be quiet. Can't they hear that my children are drowning?'"

Weapon of mass destruction

Kathy Kelly, a co-coordinator of Voices in the Wilderness, a campaign to end the U.N./U.S. sanctions against Iraq, traveled to Iraq in February with a delegation carrying $110,000 worth of medicines.

"From previous trips, we knew exactly where to find overwhelming evidence of a weapon of mass destruction," Kelly writes. "Inspectors have only to enter the wards of any hospital in Iraq to see that the sanctions themselves are a lethal weapon, destroying the lives of Iraq's most vulnerable people."

Voices has been warned that its members face 12 years in prison, one million dollars in fines and a $250,000 administrative penalty if they continue to publicly violate the sanctions.

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The Episcopal Church's Right wing:
standing against 'relativism and revisionism'

by Jack H. Taylor, Jr.

They call themselves orthodox Anglicans or traditionalists. They are the arch-conservatives, the rabid Right wing of the Episcopal Church, a close-knit confederation of pressure groups whose core leadership is composed of the same bishops who tried unsuccessfully to bring Walter Righter to trial for heresy for ordaining Barry Stopfel, a partnered gay man. At times they spend lavishly to further their causes, but they have never been able to attract more than a tiny minority of Episcopalians to their ranks. At their gatherings men — mostly white, with a median age of 55 to about 62 — predominate. Publicly enthusiastic about "evangelism," they seem singularly focused on such issues as gay ordination, same-sex blessings and women priests.

Although each organization seemingly steers its own course, there are many overlaps in leadership and direction. They help one another, promote one another and champion each other's causes, sometimes even sending "shock troop"-style priests without canonical authority to "rescue" conservatives from the clutches of liberal bishops. Most have Internet web sites. Some sponsor web servers which link many of the groups and their manifestos, press releases, "dispatches" and publications. Some share executives and business addresses.

American Anglican Council

James Stanton, the bishop of Dallas, says the American Anglican Council (AAC), which he heads, arose from prayers for God's guidance "for those seeking to maintain and uphold biblically grounded faith and witness in the Episcopal Church" to "stand against the tide of relativism and revisionism in the basic beliefs and teachings of the Church." The group employs Roger A. Boltz for $70,000 a year as its administrative director.

Explaining the AAC to nearly 700 people who gathered on March 23 for a "First Promise Lay Leaders Conference" at the Church of St. John the Divine in Houston's upper crust River Oaks, AAC trustee Geoffrey W. Chapman, rector of St. Stephen's in Sewickley, Pa., said the AAC has "pulled together dozens and dozens of organizations [which] are kind of joined together to bear influence and to share resources and to make an impact together."

He gave surprisingly candid insight into how the Right wing hopes to spread its influence through two specific projects: first, at Lambeth, and second, pumping its own brand of priests into the church by circumventing current procedures and possibly, some wonder, canon law.

On Lambeth, Chapman said, "We have put multiple tens of thousands of dollars aside" and have two staff members to send to England to help "bishops of orthodox faith and values" at the decennial Lambeth conference this summer. (Stephen F. Noll, an AAC trustee and a member of the faculty at Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry, the seminary most affiliated with the church's Right wing, has authored a new book, *Handwriting on the Wall: An Appeal to the Anglican Communion*, which includes his plea to the Lambeth Conference that it adopt the Kuala Lumpur statement "as the Anglican norm for sexual behavior." It also includes an address he made to Third World bishops during a conference in Dallas in September 1997 in which he rallies the "fight over the sexuality agenda because it denies Scripture, dishonors marriage and introduces a pagan spirituality into the Church.")

"The ESA says 'our strategic goal is the establishment of an Orthodox Province of the Anglican Communion in North America, a province which is not connected with the institutional Episcopal Church.'"

Chapman also revealed that the AAC has devised "something of a national commission on ministry" to "break the embargo that exists in too many dioceses on men and women of orthodox faith and values" who face "unsurmountable obstacles" to ordination because they are too conservative. The AAC's program, which is expected to be in place in a year, "will circumvent that problem," Chapman said.

The AAC is cautious to avoid "either/or" actions of its members like, for example, the Episcopal Synod of America, which categorically rejects women priests. The AAC also pointedly does not endorse PECUSA, Inc. (formally known as Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, Inc.) even though PECUSA's chief architect, William Wantland, is on the AAC's council of bishops. But the AAC wholeheartedly commends the affiliated "First Promise" group (its name is taken from the ordination vow to uphold sacred tradition).

The AAC sees its strength in the "support of many bishops [mostly the 10

Jack H. Taylor, Jr. is a former newspaper reporter who is secretary of the Dallas chapter of Integrity, <jhtj@swbell.net>.

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bishops who instigated the Walter Righter "heresy" trial] and its links with overseas bishops of the Anglican Communion [mostly in Africa]." In 1997 it reported $550,000 in gifts, grants and other contributions, a figure that is dramatically higher than in 1996, when it reported $37,185 in this category.

Ekklesia Society

The Ekklesia Society was born with Stanton's help in 1996. He was one of its founding directors, along with Stephen H. Jenko, bishop of Florida. Ekklesia received a $75,000 start-up shot in the arm from Stanton's AAC.

International in scope, the Ekklesia Society's purpose is to fight "an incursion of secular humanism and a radical liberalism which has sought to change the faith and tried to redefine the meaning of orthodoxy" and declares that "the greatest areas of conflict in the U.S. have to do with human sexuality, particularly homosexuality; the nature and character of God; and the role of the Scriptures in the faithful community."

William Atwood, rector of Trinity Church in Carrollton, Tex., is Ekklesia's general secretary, a position for which he was paid $86,000 over and above his roughly equal salary from Trinity in 1996. Ekklesia pays him about $120,000 today. He no longer draws a salary from Trinity, although Trinity still is giving a $36,000 no-strings "outreach" gift this year to Ekklesia.

Last September, Ekklesia co-sponsored the $193,000 "Anglican Life & Witness Conference" in Dallas-Fort Worth. Promoters spent $100,000 to bring African bishops to Dallas — more than triple, for example, what the Episcopal Church has spent on projects to aid Ugandans in a rural health/safe motherhood project, or quadruple what was spent to help Ugandans combat the spread of AIDS, a project, ironically, dear to Stanton.

The Diocese of Dallas contributed $45,500 to the conference, which afterwards issued the so-called "Dallas Statement" on "a Christian moral stand on the issue of international debt," and on "sexual ethics." We "reject the identity politics which makes 'gay' a badge of pride that divides brothers and sisters in the Church and prevents many afflicted men and women from seeking healing," the statement said.

***Two companions being slain together during the Inquisition*, 17th century**
Anonymous

Episcopal Synod of America

The Fort Worth-based Episcopal Synod of America (ESA) was first organized in June 1989 as an association of conservative Episcopalians opposed to the ordination of women, among other so-called liberal trends in the church.

The ESA was incorporated formally in Texas in January 1990 as the ESA Missionary Society by Clarence C. Pope (then bishop of Fort Worth), William Wantland (bishop of Eau Claire, Wis.), John-David Schofield (bishop of San Joaquin), Edward H. McBurney (then bishop of Quincy, Ill.), and Donald Parsons (the retired bishop of Quincy). Wantland, Schofield and Parsons still are trustees. It also had initial help from A. Donald Davies, who was retired as bishop of Fort Worth but then left the Episcopal Church.

When the Synod originally applied for tax exempt status it told the IRS that its purpose was to serve as a "church within the church" as a way of preserving Evangelical faith and catholic order in the Episcopal Church. Today the ESA says "our strategic goal is the establishment of an Orthodox Province of the Anglican Communion in North America, a province which is not connected with the institutional Episcopal Church" and the "strategic plan for reaching that goal is to be the church in a coordinated way without regard to the institutional Episcopal Church."

Following setbacks to hard line conservatives at the General Convention in Philadelphia last summer, the Synod's president, Donald P. Moriarty, complained in an open letter to the new presiding bishop that the last two conventions had "failed to uphold the biblical standards of sexual morality, refused to restrain or discipline those who flout such biblical standards and provided canonical authority for persecution of those sis-

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Living in an 'orthodox' diocese

When Pepper Marts retired from the Air Force in 1979 and moved to New Mexico, he recalls that the Episcopal Diocese of Rio Grande at that time "was comfortably far from homogeneous, with many theological and social positions evident in Annual Convention — Diocesan Council was no less diverse, yet despite the variety of views, discussion was generally civil. We'd argue across the table, then adjourn to the neighboring *cantina* for happy hour." Marts says that since the consecration of Terence Kelshaw as bishop in 1989, a man who sees himself as upholding "orthodoxy," Marts and others of a liberal disposition have detected "increasingly little room for differing theological interpretations and opinions — opponents have become enemies and argument is by assertion, with an implicit declaration of infallibility."

Obtaining accurate information about diocesan decision-making and the life of the national church became a vital concern. "It's hard to work for change if you don't know what's going on," says Marts. "Over these past nine years our diocesan newspaper has become more of a house-organ. The op-ed page has been eliminated and news of the larger church curtailed."

In response, Marts, Laura Hughes and a handful of others concerned about the situation formed the Episcopal Information Network (EIN). Through *Network News: Voices of the Rio Grande*, the group sought to offer news that would help Rio Grande Episcopalians feel more involved in the church's life.

The diocesan leadership has been hostile to EIN's effort, with Kelshaw calling *Network News* "a hate publication to ridicule me."

(A similar independent effort to provide news and opinion that runs counter to that espoused by diocesan leadership is the Council of the Laity in the Diocese of Fort Worth, an ESA stronghold led by Jack Iker. The editorial board of the Council's newsletter writes: "We, who disagree with the 'conservative Right,' are being totally ignored and berated by this administration.")

The most difficult aspect of being part of his diocese's liberal minority, Marts says, has been dealing with a sense of vulnerability within the institution. A case in point comes from St. Michael and All Angels parish in Albuquerque. Having outgrown its physical plant, in 1996 St. Michael's began a building program. After approving the parish's plans, the Trustees of Church Property and the Diocesan Investment Board committed to a $350,000 loan to cover a part of the construction cost.

Meanwhile, partly in response to the ecclesiastical court's decision to drop the heresy charges against Walter Righter, St. Michael's offered a four-week adult education program on homosexuality and the church. Then, on July 10, 1996, the parish announced their intention to hold a special service — *Offering the Olive Branch: a Liturgy of Affirmation and Reconciliation for Gay and Lesbian Christians.* The announcement began: "Simple but powerful words will soon be said to homosexuals who thought they might never hear them: 'God loves you as you are. The church has hurt you and we are sorry.'"

A week later, citing "extreme polarization of the Rector and the leadership of St. Michael and All Angels from the Bishop and the leadership of the Diocese," the Diocesan Investment board abruptly withdrew the loan. According to St. Michael's parishioner John Hunt, the board subsequently told St. Michael's rector and wardens that the loan had been rescinded because the rector had made public statements in the press supporting the Righter decision [Kelshaw was one of the bishops who pressed charges against Righter] and St. Michael's was planning the Olive Branch service. In addition, the board noted that members of St. Michael's belonging to EIN (including Marts) had shown open disagreement with the bishop in *Network News*.

The fourth reason given, Hunt says, was that "the loan was too large to begin with; some of the money was needed for other projects anticipated in the diocese."

The Investment Board's withdrawal of St. Michael's loan "came as a mighty shock," says Marts. "Many felt that the time had come for 'action,' by which we meant 'whatever it takes to get the money back.'" For some that meant legal action, for others a conciliatory approach.

"The most radical voices prevailed," St. Michael's parishioner Cathy Cox later reflected. "Ours would be the deliberate way of the cross. We sought and reached consensus, embracing the cost to us in pride and in dollars. We would not 'fight back.' We would continue to speak the truth as we perceived it, and to welcome into every part of our congregational life anyone who chose to share it with us."

Eventually, St Michael's managed to obtain a commercial loan to finance the project.

"For me and for my parish, life under pressure has meant a new and broader sense of eucharist in all things," Marts says. "We offer up the good and the bad; they are given back to us raised up, made new and whole." — *J.W.*

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ters and brothers in Christ who cannot accept the ordination of women as priests and bishops."

The Synod claims that since its founding it "has grown to be the strongest and largest voice for traditional Anglicanism in the Episcopal Church." It claims its membership is "steadily" growing and that it now has more than 200 chapters and parishes. But a hard look shows that such claims may be grossly exaggerated. The only chapters which could be located which were formally incorporated, like the main Synod group, were in Colorado, Tennessee and Nebraska and all no longer exist. In addition, the Synod's own web site contains a long list of parishes listed simply as "conservative" but several aren't even Episcopal Church parishes and only five are identified as Synod parishes. Not even Moriarty's Placentia, Calif., parish is a Synod parish. William P. Murchison, Jr., the 56-year-old conservative columnist for *The Dallas Morning News,* who also is editor of the Synod's magazine, *Foundations*, likewise says that the chapter once incorporated at his address is now inactive.

An analysis of Synod tax documents for the last three years available, 1994 through 1996, together with some additional information going back to 1990 contained in the documents, show that total gifts, grants, contributions and other revenue appear to be steadily declining — from a high of more than $581,000 in 1990 to less that $220,000 in 1996. At the same time, expenditures are increasing.

Today, the Synod spends on an average more than $300,000 annually with a little over 10 percent for fund raising. Executive director Samuel J. Edwards receives a salary package of $64,770 annually. The Synod puts out magazines, newsletters and slick publications such as "The Episcopal Church in Crisis" and distributes a video in its press kits. It also maintains a sophisticated web site complete with bulletin boards, calendars, surveys and even a chat room.

Episcopalians United

Episcopalians United for Revelation, Renewal and Reformation (EURR), as the coalition was called when formally incorporated in Pennsylvania a decade ago, is the biggest and often the most vocal of the anti-progressive Right wing of the church in terms of wealth, power, influence, longevity and unabashed heterosexism. But its wealth has never matched what it was in the beginning, its power is on the decline and its influence is questionable. The group lists as its chairman (though he denies he functions in the role) David H. Roseberry, a Stanton booster and rector of Christ Church in the Dallas suburb of Plano.

Although EURRR was initially incorporated on June 4, 1987, in Pennsylvania, where it has had considerable support from old-line church conservatives and help from Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry, it is now headquartered in Solon, Ohio, outside Cleveland. Todd H. Wetzel, EURRR's executive director, earns $44,480 a year to manage the group's national education campaign of encouraging a strict adherence to a more rigid doctrine, discipline and worship in the church.

On its Internet web site, where EURRR calls itself "an affiliate of the American Anglican Council" and encourages listings of parishes "that affirm the orthodox Christian faith," only nine parishes are listed.

EURRR's gifts, grants and contributions have declined since the beginning when it collected more than $1 million each of its first three years.

Wetzel concedes "there has been some decrease in contributions" but says "the overall trend is up." He explained that interest in — and consequently donations to — EURRR increases just before each triennial General Convention and drops off sharply afterward.

Wetzel said that since its founding, EURRR has attracted about 30,000 separate contributors with an average of between 9,000 and 10,000 at any given time. Although there have been at least five other EURRR organizations scattered around the country, most no longer exist. Only Episcopalians United of Massachusetts, Inc. is still in business.

On its Internet web site, where EURRR calls itself "an affiliate of the American Anglican Council" and encourages listings of parishes "that affirm the orthodox Christian faith," only nine parishes are listed. Oddly, not one is listed from Dallas — not even the parish of EURRR's chairman, Roseberry.

EURRR seems singularly preoccupied with condemning homosexuals and resisting granting homosexuals rights in the church. In one of his recent pronouncements, Wetzel said that if Gene Robinson, an openly gay nominee for bishop in the Diocese of Newark, is elected to succeed outspoken John Spong, his group would actively oppose ratification of the election.

"We do not feel that an actively practicing, non-celibate homosexual is a godly example, any more than we feel that an openly practicing adulterer would qualify as a godly example. Behavior matters," Wetzel told the *Newark Star-Ledger.*

The day after Frank T. Griswold III of Chicago was elected presiding bishop last July, Wetzel told *The Boston Globe*: "We've just knowingly elected a man who has openly supported the ordination

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of practicing homosexuals and has made no secret of his support for same-sex unions. He's a revisionist, albeit a kinder, gentler version than others."

In addition to its frequent press releases, EURRR publishes printed and electronic versions of a newspaper, *United Voice*, edited by Douglas L. LeBlanc, a 38-year-old Louisiana State University-educated journalist who now lives in the Kansas City suburbs. LeBlanc's reporting tends to be even-handed, objective and sometimes even charitable, although with a largely single-minded focus on issues of homosexuality.

"We certainly focus on issues that would be of concern to Episcopalians United and its supporters," LeBlanc said during a recent telephone interview, "and that would include issues of sexuality, a language for God, etc."

PECUSA, Inc.

The man now marching to his own peculiar drumbeat behind PECUSA, Inc., is William C. Wantland, a 64-year-old former Seminole Indian tribal official from Oklahoma who now heads the tiny Episcopal Diocese of Eau Claire, Wis.

Wantland, one of the four holdout bishops opposed to women priests, quietly organized PECUSA, Inc. in Wisconsin in 1996, setting himself up as president and chief executive officer. Then, just as quietly, he proceeded to register PECUSA in 45 or so states with the help of supportive conservatives in individual parishes and Right-wing organizations around the country, including the Fort Worth-based ESA. In this way Wantland incorporated his sect under the name by which the Episcopal Church has been identified.

Wantland even appeared to have tacit support of the ACC's James Stanton, but when Stanton's involvement became known, he quickly put safe distance between himself and the renegades and has since tried to appear the moderate peace-maker.

After national church leaders discovered Wantland's activity last December, the church's presiding bishop, Edmond L. Browning, asked him to stop, but Wantland refused. PECUSA's board of trustees have said they are resolved "to take immediate and prudent steps to prepare and make available the necessary structures for an Orthodox Anglican Province in North America by either the reformation of the Episcopal Church or by the emergence of an alternative."

"I would have to say to you if you got to a point where one side said you have to accept same-sex marriages, and the other side said you cannot under any circumstances accept same-sex marriages, then I'd say you've reached a point of mutually exclusive positions." — William Wantland

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The statement did not elaborate on what "immediate and prudent steps" mean or on the definition of an "Orthodox Anglican Province." But the action is similar to that taken by the ESA following the national Episcopal Church's triennial General Convention in July 1997. The Synod voted to form a rebel province within the church as a haven for its supporters who also oppose women priests and condemn homosexuality. PECUSA officials have declined further comment but promise to issue more information in the form of future press releases from its Pawleys Island, S.C., headquarters, but at this writing, have not.

In Houston in late March, however, Laurens Hall, rector of the Church of St. John the Divine and a vice president of PECUSA, defended the Wantland enterprise, explaining that "we are not attempting to become another church." He conceded that PECUSA, Inc. is "weak in terms of resources" and for now is simply waiting on the sidelines, a "paper corporation at this point, [available] to be called onto the playing field when needed."

On January 30 the two New Jersey bishops, John Spong and Joe Doss, sued PECUSA in federal court in Newark, N.J., claiming fraud, unfair competition and trademark infringement. Officials at national church headquarters in New York have not indicated the same legal concerns or even hinted at possible court action. David Beers, a Washington attorney who is the presiding bishop's chancellor, has said, in fact, that PECUSA's formation "does not have considerable legal significance" and that the real Episcopal Church's legal rights are "fully protected by law," even though it isn't formally incorporated.

(The issue about which many opponents of PECUSA do feel particularly uncomfortable, however, is that of the ownership of church property. Church law mandates that individual parish property used for worship is actually owned by the diocese in the name of the church. Although Wantland and PECUSA have not laid claim to any real property — and national church lawyer Beers said even if a formal schism occurred, it would be "unlikely they could take existing property" — those familiar with the church's history are not so sure. Some church legal authorities say rebellious parishes may be able to wage a successful court fight to wrest their building and property away from a diocese should that parish decide to bolt.)

After the New Jersey lawsuit was filed

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against him, Wantland showed no signs of backing down. He told a Milwaukee newspaper that he hopes to reform the Episcopal Church, which he said needs a better, clearer method of defining doctrine.

"The whole question of defining doctrine is how broadly you allow differences to exist without getting to the point where you are mutually exclusive," he told the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. "Are there ways and means that you could hold together in tension what appear to be mutually exclusive positions? I would have to say to you if you got to a point where one side said you have to accept same-sex marriages, and the other side said you cannot under any circumstances accept same sex marriages, then I'd say you've reached a point of mutually exclusive positions."

First Promise

Jon Shuler, one of the church's leading conservatives, helped organize the so-called First Promise group of clergy as the senior convener of the first meeting in 1997. The group is so called because of the reference to the first vow articulated at the beginning of ordination which binds a priest to "be loyal to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of Christ as this Church has received them."

This group of clergy might be considered the backbone of PECUSA. PECUSA's January 6th press release, in fact, attributed its entire support to parishioners of these priests when it claimed that "many supporters of PECUSA Inc. are leaders of the largest and fastest growing parishes in the Episcopal Church. More than 150 clergy whose combined parishes represent more than 60,000 communicants have signed the 'First Promise' document."

After Wantland, Shuler has become PECUSA's leading spokesman. "The current leadership of the Episcopal Church, at the national level, has been unwilling or unable to move forward boldly to proclaim Jesus Christ and His truth to this nation and the world," Shuler said when Frank Griswold become presiding bishop. "By God's grace, PECUSA Inc. is going to offer that leadership."

Smaller groups

Some smaller groups, like the Concerned Clergy and Laity of the Episcopal Church Inc., a virtual one-man, small-budget show in Atlanta run by William H. Cheney, get more than their money's worth with links to the Right-wing network.

Martin Schongauer

***St. Anthony tormented by demons*, c.1480-90 (Met. Mus. of Art)**

The CCLEC organized to educate Episcopalians about doctrine and teachings with a view "toward influencing the directions, activities and teachings of the national Episcopal Church for the purpose of returning it to more orthodox beliefs."

The group issues Internet press releases, with a distribution disproportionate to its size (startup funds in 1995 of $249, more than half of which was spent on its IRS tax exempt application).

The Prayer Book Society of the Episcopal Church, a predominately lay group originally formed in Tennessee in 1971 as the Society for the Preservation of the Book of Common Prayer Inc., champions the same causes — "upholding and propagating historic Christian faith and order" — but focuses singularly on that which its name implies. As Peter Toon, president of the $287,000-a-year, Philadelphia-based group, says:

"If the Church were to authorize the use of the 1928 BCP then the Society would have no further reason to exist, except to help people back into the habit of using it."

The Society's present patron is Keith L. Ackerman, bishop of Quincy, Ill., a trustee of the ESA and a board member of the Ekklesia Society and Stanton's AAC. TW

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Ambiguity and conflict: an interview with Verna Dozier

by Julie A. Wortman

[Last month biblical theologian Verna Dozier, 80, talked about how ambiguity is the essence of faith, noting that an insistence on an "orthodox" position comes out of a desire to exercise power over others. This month she discusses how the person who embraces ambiguity might step up to conflict.]

Verna Dozier

Julie Wortman: You speak a lot about human connections, sometimes quoting Martin Luther King, Jr., who said, "We must live together as brothers ..."

Verna Dozier: " ... or die together as fools!"

J.W.: But you also talk about the value of difference. What does that suggest for us? So-called "orthodox" believers and people of a liberal/radical perspective seem worlds apart on most matters. Should we try to bridge those gaps or should we concentrate on the more limited circles where we can find common cause?

V.D.: I'm content with finding common cause with a few. I cannot embrace the whole world. But I can have good will toward the whole world. I can control my desire to destroy that which is against me and I do not need to see myself reproduced in every other person, either physically or intellectually or morally.

J.W.: I'm presuming that we are working for the coming realm of God. But how?

V.D.: Well, Jesus embodied the realm of God and I think that's what we should do. Jesus loved people, which is not the same as doing good things for them. It is perfectly possible to do good things for people and not love them. I've known teachers who hated their students and I think many ministers hate their parishes. But Jesus loved people.

One of the things that loving people means is that you see other people equal to you because they are loved by God. How many people do you know who live their lives like that? Most Christians proclaim that, but I think Jesus really lived it. In fact, I believe that is one of the things that got him killed. He was a threat to the establishment because in him people saw a new possibility for themselves. When a whole lot of people begin to think like that, there will be a revolution. So you kill off the leaders of the revolution.

J.W.: The people saw a new possibility for themselves because they understood themselves to be loved?

V.D.: Loved and therefore worthy. You get a lot of people to think of themselves as worthy and they can tear up the world. I think that is why he was killed. Because the people who participated in his death were people in power. And powerful people cannot stand a lot of other people thinking that they are significant.

J.W.: I have had a long and continuing conversation with a friend who holds a different position from me on abortion. We've sustained that conversation based on mutual respect — we know each other not to be fools and we are on the same side of most issues. But our bottom lines are different when it comes to this topic. As you embrace a world view in which you understand that there is always another point of view, do you have any bottom lines?

V.D.: I guess that's my bottom line.

J.W.: Then where do you fall in these debates?

V.D.: I take my stand knowing that there are other people just as thoughtful and good as I who will take another stand.

J.W.: What does that do to ethics?

V.D.: It makes me leery of absolutizing any position I take on anything. There is no place in which I would stand that I would say this is where God would stand. I would hope that the stands I take would be close to somewhere God would stand, but I would never dare to say that my position is God's.

J.W.: How do we bring up our children to know what is right and wrong?

V.D.: Well, what *is* right and what *is* wrong? I suppose that the thing that I would like children to understand is that they should always have room for another opinion. And that is very hard for children because they claw their way to some stand where they want to be and it is a tough struggle. To think there is another possibility is just too much. And I suppose they would always have to see that possibility lived out to see the value of it.

J.W.: We've been nurtured in this country on the idea of majority rule. We allow other points of view, but the majority always rules. Do the numbers who hold a certain point of view matter in the way you think about all of this?

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

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V.D.: I think that there has to be some judgment at some time that one way is better than another way. And you have to act on it, otherwise you'd never do anything. Holding room for another point of view doesn't mean that you don't stand by your opinion, but it will stop you from demonizing the other.

What you hope for, in the best of all worlds, is that you would have a conversation about it. And if at the end of the conversation there is no agreement, you would go forward knowing that you are opposing another human being.

J.W.: And not opposing a category or a label?

V.D.: Yes.

J.W.: But often I think that the other person is wrong, and that a majority of those holding the other point of view is wrong. But usually they have the power to change things their way. You've said that you would prefer a system of benevolent dictatorship — is that still true?

V.D.: Yes. Because I think the majority is often wrong! [*laughter*]

J.W.: You'll make room for another point of view, but it is often wrong?

V.D.: What I think that you would do is to know that as far as you can see it now, you stand at a certain place. And you will fight for it. Other opinions might be wrong by every test that you have — that is why you hold your view — but you are not going to kill the other person over it. And if you pay enough attention to it, you may find that in that other position there is some truth.

What the world needs are people who are humble enough to know they are not God and don't have absolute answers and are acceptable even though they don't. There are so many people now whose very being depends on their believing they have the final answer.

J.W.: Isn't what you are talking about, more than anything else, that there is truth out there that gets ignored or that we fail to respect or recognize because we are so busy being right or wrong? We might find that there is quite a different position that everyone could hold.

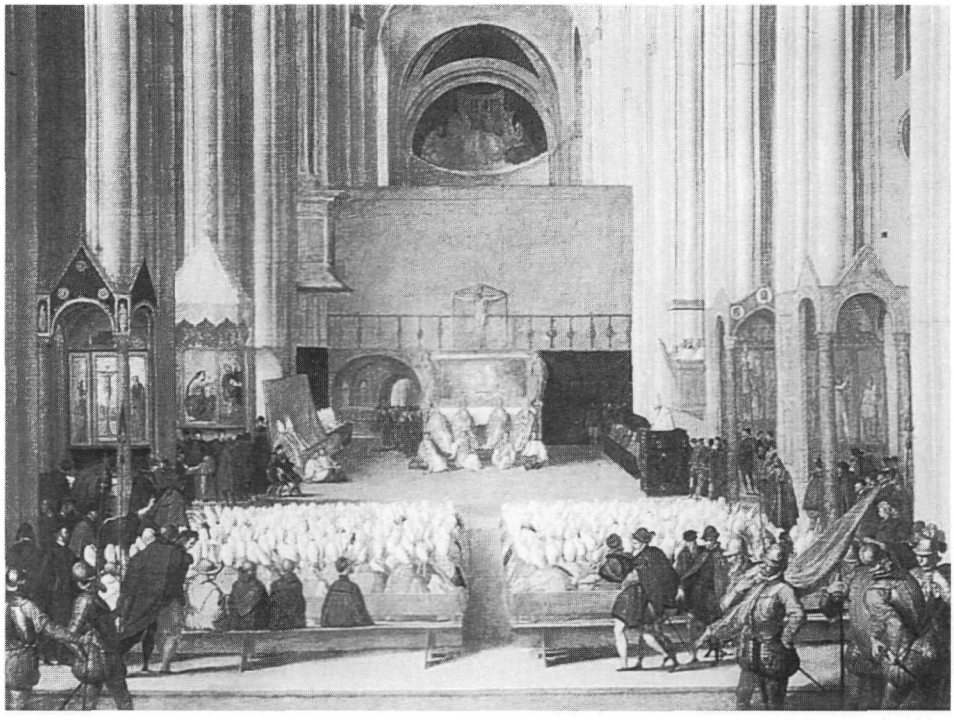
V.D.: That's the search for common ground.

J.W.: Which wouldn't necessarily be a position of compromise, but it would come out of a process of discernment. Perhaps we don't do enough discernment in decision-making?

V.D.: I think that's true. Because we have such a tendency to rush into easy answers. Finding the truth takes time. Maybe if we talk enough we would find we are not so far apart, that there are certain values we do hold in common, but the issue may be how we express those values.

J.W.: What happens so often, though, is that many of the things we debate are life-and-death issues. We see people and creatures dying for the lack of will to stop it. So people become frustrated with too much talk.

V.D.: Yes. One of the things I say to myself in my most cynical moments is that human beings are more likely to be wrong than right. So we needn't be afraid to be wrong because we can be more sure that we're wrong than we're right. So often what human beings need in their contentions is just the hearing of a sane voice. To hear somebody say, "What are we doing to each other?" It is amazing how rarely that is heard when we get so fixed in our positions. This happens in church circles as well as in political circles. What are we doing to each other? We are



***Final session of the Council of Trent*, 1563 (Louvre)** Attributed to Titian

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demonizing each other, surely. Absolutizing our position.

And Christians so often identify their position with Jesus' position — "If Jesus were here," they say, "he would take my position." But identifying ourselves with Jesus is a trap. We are not Jesus. When we disagree with someone we immediately attribute to that person ignorance or evil designs, but I don't think that's like Jesus. To entertain the possibility that we might be wrong, all you have to do is look at history to see all the occasions people fought and died for positions that were wrong.

J.W.: I find it hard to get hold of this idea of ambiguity.

V.D.: It is difficult, but it is a matter of life and death that we get hold of it.

J.W.: Why?

V.D.: Because people are killing each other for the lack of it. I don't think that civilization has progressed very far from a primitive stage as far as ambiguity is concerned — I'm right and you're wrong and I will steal your wife and all that you have.

J.W.: You don't think that we've become any more tolerant?

V.D.: No. I think our intolerance is taking even more terrible forms. What the world needs are people who are humble enough to know they are not God and don't have absolute answers and are acceptable even though they don't. There are so many people now whose very being depends on their believing they have the final answer. That is what religion has degenerated into. There was a time in this country when we had more tolerance. We never got to the point of religious wars. But I think we are headed for that.

J.W.: How would you change the way we operate in the church?

V.D.: We have to face up to the fact that we play power games — power is our god. How we go about doing that, I have no idea. But we have to begin talking about that, preaching about that.

J.W.: Where do you see places where people might be appreciating that ambiguity is the essence of faith?

V.D.: I don't see it. When people speak of "the faith" they speak of it as an absolute.

J.W.: Even your skeptical parish of St. Mark's on Capitol Hill [in Washington, D.C.]?

V.D.: Oh, my skeptical parish has merely established another power base. You get your status by being the most skeptical.

J.W.: So you are saying that as soon as you accord another person a place of validity — accord them standing and dignity — that you have given up your own exclusive claim on the truth. You, by yourself, cannot define it.

V.D.: I suppose that's what I'm saying. You can only define your perception of the truth.

J.W.: If you accord someone's exclusivist position dignity, it is hard to know how to proceed because their terms for inclusion involve someone else's exclusion.

V.D.: I can acknowledge that my truth will not be the whole truth without someone else's piece of the truth. But sometimes the way another person phrases their truth, I am wiped out, I have no standing. And I don't have to accept being wiped out. That's the fine line that I draw. It's not an easy position. It is a tension, because each one of us wants to claim absolute truth.

But both of us have to bow before a greater truth than either of us can verbalize. TW

BACK ISSUES WITH CONNECTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S TOPIC

The following back issues of* The Witness *contain articles which may relate directly to* The church in conflict *or simply to the spirit of this month's topic.

- *Alternative ways of doing church (9/94)*
- *The Christian Right (10/96)*
- *Defying presumptions: gay/lesbian Christians (6/97)*
- *Fasting in Babylon (12/96)*
- *Holy matrimony (12/95)*
- *Staying in my denomination (10/94)*
- *When the church engages rage (12/92)*
- *Women's spirituality (7/94)*

Other available back issues:

- *Africa: Come, spirit, come (6/95)*
- *Allies in Judaism (10/97)*
- *American Faces of Islam (5/96)*
- *Be Ye Perfect (3/93)*
- *Birthing in the face of the dragon (12/91)*
- *Body wisdom (5/95)*
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Anglicanism as an ongoing argument

by Rowan A. Greer, III

[The following is an excerpt from scholar Rowan Greer's analysis of material issued by the American Anglican Council. His paper is titled "Reflections upon 'A Place to Stand: A Call to Mission' and other documents issued by the American Anglican Congress [sic]." From an historical perspective, Greer says, it is impossible to speak of "traditional" or "orthodox" Anglicansim.]

Authority in Anglicanism — or perhaps its apparent absence — has always been a problem. Richard Hooker's Puritan opponents often defied the ecclesiastical law of the land. Indeed, Queen Elizabeth felt obliged to sequester her second Archbishop of Canterbury, Grindall, because he supported the Puritan prophesyings and the *classis* movement. In 1717 Bishop Hoadley preached a sermon on Christ's words "My kingdom is not of this world" in which he denied that Christ had left any vice regents on earth. The controversy that followed was a bitter one, and the impasse in Convocation between the largely Latitudinarian house of bishops and the largely High Church clerical house led to the total collapse of Convocation.

More recently, when the Church Doctrine Commission in 1976 published its report, *Christian Believing,* for the first time there was a public and official admission on the part of the Church of England that contradictory views were being held by members of the church. The report described four attitudes towards the creeds ranging from insisting they must remain "a norm of Christian belief" to regarding "the essence of ... faith ... in a life of discipleship rather than in credal affirmation." And it drew the conclusion: "It is, to say the least, very difficult to explain divergences of this fundamental kind merely as complementary aspects of the many-sided wisdom of God."

Stephen Sykes' book, *The Integrity of Anglicanism,* responded to the report by arguing that the Church of England should take its stand on the basis of the *Book of Common Prayer.* Though such a plea seems sensible to me, I remain doubtful that the Prayer Book can resolve controversy in the church or that it can be treated as a confession. Prayer Book revision has meant that different Anglican churches have very different liturgies. The 1979 American Prayer Book, moreover, has clearly — and perhaps rightly — rejected the older principle of uniformity of public worship, and the options it makes available add to the Latin Western liturgical tradition Eastern elements. In addition, different Eucharistic prayers contain different, if not necessarily contradictory, understandings of salvation.

These ambiguities and others like them seem to me characteristic of Anglicanism. But one other factor may be involved. It is possible to argue that there are two foundational points for the Church of England. The first, of course, is the 16th-century Elizabethan Settlement. The second is the 17th-century Restoration Settlement when the sacraments tend to be emphasized more than justification, the demand for holy living begins to outweigh and alter notions of grace, and what Paul Avis calls the "apostolic paradigm" places central emphasis upon bishops and the threefold ministry. The revival movements of the 18th and 19th centuries appealed to one or the other of these foundational settlements, but not to both (the 18th-century Evangelicals appealed to the 16th-century church with its emphasis upon justification by faith, whereas the 19th-century Oxford Movement quite consciously appealed to 17th-century Arminianism and to the Restoration church). Needless to say, the ambiguity that results runs the risk of becoming an invitation to chaos.

The conclusion of my argument is a simple one. It does not seem likely that we can fully identify Anglicanism, far less speak of a single "orthodox" or "traditional" Anglicanism. All sorts of attempts have been made to define Anglicanism. The three-legged stool of Scripture, tradition, and reason can be thought to define Anglican belief. Or one can appeal to the Lambeth Quadrilateral. But these attempts to define Anglicanism by the content of its faith have probably failed.

It is possible to shift the ground and claim that Anglicanism represents a theological method or an "ordered freedom." Here the problem of defining the ordering principles and the assumptions of the method immediately arises.

More persuasive to me is the idea of Anglicanism as a conversation — or even an argument — with different voices speaking for scripture, for tradition, for reason, and for experience. Or, to put it another way, it seems to me that conflict in the church need not be an evil and that the church needs both those who wish to preserve its heritage and those who are concerned that it move forward. The foot-draggers and the banner-wavers may well both be necessary.

Rowan Greer is scholar-in-residence at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Charlotte, N.C. and former professor of Anglican Studies and Early Church Thought at Yale/Berkeley Divinity School.

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'Emerging Common Ground': a Toronto experiment

by Chris Ambidge

It was, I think, Gandhi who said, "Those who shout hear only their own voices." Shouting is not, ultimately, an approach which works in trying to convince someone else of your own point of view. Too often, though, that is the approach taken by people on both sides as the vexing questions surrounding lesbigays in the church are discussed.

As a gay man who is devoted to the Anglican church, I've been involved in those discussions for a long time; and, quite honestly, I don't have time for the shouting any more. I'm not convinced that repeated assertion by either side of "points where I am right and you are wrong" is getting us anywhere. That shouting is tremendously debilitating, both for the shouters and the shouted at. I consider myself blessed to be part of a dialogue in Toronto that seems to be clearing a different path through the underbrush.

I've been active with Integrity, lesbigay Anglicans and our friends, since the 1980s. In 1994, a group called Fidelity was formed in Toronto. Fidelity felt that the church's traditional teachings around homosexuality were not being heard enough. Initially I was not pleased by their formation, selfishly wanting everything to go my own way. On mature reflection, though, I'm glad that they exist. Fidelity gives people who do not agree with me a locus for their feelings, where that theology and that viewpoint can be spoken.

Chris Ambidge is on the executive committee of Integrity/Toronto and is editor of the group's newsletter, *Integrator*, <ambidge@chem-eng.toronot. edu>.

Over the past few years, Integrity and Fidelity have come together in different ways — ways that I believe are truly advancing the Commonwealth of God.

Terry Finlay, bishop of Toronto, called a group of people together to engage in dialogue around the still-vexing questions. Six people, three from each "side," have been talking with the bishop for nearly three years. At our first meeting, the bishop asked us, "How can we live together in the same church?" Our dialogue has continued with the hope that there is a way. Very early on, we realized that while we have obvious and significant differences, there is a great deal of material on which we agree. That shouldn't be surprising, for the rock on which the church is built is common to all of us.

We spent a lot of time working out a statement of *Emerging Common Ground*, eight points which we could all affirm. We realize that no one individual has all the answers, simply from the limitation of their point of view. This means no one has a monopoly on truth. We agree, among other things, that Scripture is not to be mined for proof-texts to hammer against others; we agree that the Holy Spirit continues to lead the church. We agree that Christian tradition is very important and must be respected, and we agree that it is important to re-examine tradition occasionally, particularly when there is real human pain and anguish. These last two are not new, of course; but they are not often seen in the same document.

The statement was presented to the diocese at our synod last autumn in the form of a pamphlet available at both the Integrity display and the Fidelity display. I think it is highly significant that any statement at all could be made which deals directly with gays and lesbians *and* which would in good conscience be distributed by both these groups. The document has been commented on by several news services, both inside and outside Canada.

The other way that Integrity and Fidelity have come together is at the eucharistic table. Last September, Paul Feheley, vice-president of Fidelity, was the celebrant at Integrity's monthly eucharist. He preached, we prayed together, and all of us passed the peace of the reconciling Christ. Fidelity and Integrity members then circled the altar for the liturgy of the eucharist. "We break this bread to share in the body of Christ / we being many are one body, for we all share in the one bread," we prayed and then administered the elements one to another around the circle.

The dialogue with our bishop is ongoing in areas where we may see things differently, and Paul Feheley will preside again at another Integrity/Fidelity eucharist next September. We're continuing to live together in the same church.

I don't want to sound holier-than-thou, but I really think that is why Integrity and Fidelity appear to be making some progress. Jesus Christ is the rock on whom we *all* stand. As we look at each other during the discussions, we are looking at our beloved's beloved. The discussion table is also a eucharistic table. We must come to that discussion table believing that everyone is there in good faith.

Accepting the bona fides of the others is not enough, though. I believe we have to get rid of the idea of winners and losers, us and them. It's not easy, for that bifurcation is deeply entrenched in our culture, from sports competitions to the law courts to party politics. I remember watching debates in General Synod 1989. Early on there was a vote on some matter where a decision had to be made. When the motion

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passed, there was some applause, which was very quickly stopped by Archbishop Hambidge. "I don't want any of that," he said. "Applause like that after a motion means someone has won, and if there are winners, there are losers. I don't want any losers in this Church, so I don't want any applause."

Ann Carlson of Integrity/Tidewater put it this way: "When we talk of peace and community, we too often assume that they can be achieved only through victory, defeat or compromise. I think we need to expand our definition of peace. I can't be at peace with an enemy. I am not at peace when God is on my side and I view other faith community members as God's opponents. True peace may involve learning to live without God on 'my side,' because God is bigger than that."

Fidelity's Paul Feheley put it this way in his sermon to last year's joint Integrity/Fidelity service: "You and I both know that we are right in our thinking of what the church should do regarding all the questions about homosexuality. I wonder if we have the same conviction to admit that we could be wrong. How far are we prepared to risk our understanding of the truth? How open are we to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to us? Too few of us are prepared to risk. We think our goal is victory, when it must be the pursuit of truth."

I would not want to minimize either the very real concerns of or the differences between Integrity and Fidelity people; but I am advocating moving away from a confrontational "P wins, therefore Q loses" model of debate. It's not helpful. Lesbians and gays in the church raise hard questions, and one joint eucharist and one pamphlet are not going to answer them. But we continue to talk, and we continue to pray together.

It isn't easy. There are people on both sides who say we've sold out. I've been called an Uncle Tom for making nice with my oppressors. That's debilitating. One of the things that keeps me going is the notion, pointed out to me by a wise woman, that God will not allow the church to be destroyed by this one issue. Jesus gave his life for us, the church is his body, so something as relatively minor as this isn't going to cause the church to blow up. That does not mean we won't make mistakes as we journey. But the Body of Christ and its many members will survive.

The idea of "us and them" is pernicious, but very deeply ingrained. Think of the eucharistic prayer: "This is my blood of the new covenant, shed for you and for many." That prayer has been around for centuries, with implicit distinctions between "you" and "the many," between us and them; but that dichotomy is not found in any one of the Gospel narratives. As we said in *Emerging Common Ground*, "It is not given to any of us to know the whole truth, and so we need to learn from each other."

If we ALL commit to more listening and learning, and less shouting, maybe the still, small voice will make itself heard. TW

'Our arguments are not moving people to tears'

Last December the third Burning Issues Conference sponsored by the Diocese of Virginia focused on whether the church's continuing debate over the sinfulness of homosexual relationships is "a gospel opportunity or a gospel threat." Conservative and liberal speakers made presentations before an audience of about 110 Episcopalians.

In an analysis of the event published in the March 1998 issue of *United Voice*, the newspaper of Episcopalians United (see p. 14), *Voice* editor Doug LeBlanc observed that the event "highlighted a pattern evident during open hearings at General Convention: the Right relies on propositional truth and often abstract theological principles, while the Left appeals to people's emotions through powerful storytelling and firsthand experience."

LeBlanc concluded his analysis with this assessment:

"Burning Issues demonstrated that charitable discussion about sexual morality is not only possible but achievable. It also demonstrated that liberals hold a powerful trump card in personal stories that draw on people's empathy.

"Unless North Americans regain an appreciation for propositional truth, or conservatives have more dramatic personal stories to tell, conservative Episcopalians face a daunting challenge.

"Perhaps conservatives need to suffer, truly suffer, for what we believe. Perhaps we need to show the courage and the risk-taking that will lead to suffering.

"[Louie Crew and his partner, Ernest] took risks by living together in rural Georgia. Crew spoke of receiving regular death threats and of teenagers throwing rocks at his apartment. What sort of risks are conservatives willing to take that could lead to similar hostilities, albeit more polite, from their fellow Episcopalians?

"Perhaps conservatives simply must find a way to tell our stories more effectively — a way that is candid but not aggressive, dramatic but not self-pitying, faithful to abstract truth but compelling in its word pictures.

"For now, our arguments are not moving people to tears. This may not be a truth we want to face, but in today's Episcopal Church, that means losing not only hearts, but also the votes at Convention, of our fellow Episcopalians." — *J.W.*

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Seeking 'common ground' in Atlanta

by Emmett Jarrett

Like many in the Episcopal Church, I found the Walter Righter trial of 1996 and its outcome distressing. Trial courts are not good ways to establish doctrine, but the open flouting of General Convention resolutions and House of Bishops statements by a growing number of bishops is not edifying either. When the court's decision left doubt in my mind about whether our church has any doctrine of Christian marriage at all, I spoke out in my congregation on the issues of homosexual marriage and ordination. I argued that the Episcopal Church has a workable and Gospel-based teaching on the subject, if only we would adhere to it faithfully.

There are two parts to this teaching: First, the General Convention of 1976 resolved that "homosexual persons are children of God, who have a full and equal claim with all other persons on the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the Church." Second, the 1979 General Convention affirmed that "the traditional teaching of the Church on marriage, marital fidelity, and sexual chastity [is] the standard of Christian sexual morality. Therefore ... it is not appropriate for this Church to ordain a practicing homosexual, or any person who is engaged in heterosexual relations outside of marriage." This may sound old- fashioned to readers of *The Witness*, but it is still the teaching of the Church and I believe it is true.

Since the Righter court's decision was construed by many to mean that the church had no such teaching, and that doctrine could not be enforced except by canonical process, I joined with some others in proposing that the Diocese of Atlanta include this teaching in its canons at its Annual Council in November 1996. That resolution was defeated, but another resolution was adopted which called for a task force — subsequently appointed by the bishop, Frank K. Allan, and named "Common Ground" — to develop a process for parishes to participate in substantive discussions of these issues. The resolution recognized (1) that there is a teaching about marriage and sexuality in the Episcopal Church; (2) that some want to keep this teaching and others want to change it; and (3) that a substantive discussion of the issues, not just different folks sharing their feelings, was needed to promote ultimate resolution of the questions and (more proximately) reconciliation among those who have different views.

We established a pattern of eating a meal together before getting down to discussion and concluding with corporate worship.

The Common Ground task force met regularly for a year. We shared laughter and tears about what is happening to the church all of us love because of honest differences on important issues. We tried to eschew labels such as "conservative" and "liberal." We were able to recognize, most of the time, that the revisionists on this issue are not arrogant elitists who don't read the Bible or love Jesus, and those who hold the traditional position are not rigid redneck racists or uneducated fundamentalists who never change their minds about anything. At the end of a year of work we reported to the 1997 Annual Council that we had developed a "process for conversation" for parishes in the Diocese of Atlanta and were authorized to facilitate such discussions.

Our process envisions forming groups from different congregations to ensure diversity of membership and perspective. The "pilot group" included my own parish, St. Michael and All Angels, where there is a diversity of opinion on the subject but a general conservative tone, and St. Bartholomew's Church, which has an openly gay assistant rector and a generally liberal position on contemporary issues. Both are "good churches," deeply devoted to Jesus and the Anglican tradition, and committed to effective ministries in their communities and beyond.

At the first meeting of our "Common Ground" group, people introduced themselves. It quickly became apparent that the disagreement is not, strictly speaking, between gay and straight people. Many who are not gay are liberal on the issue, and many who hold more traditional views are neither ignorant of homosexual persons in their own life experience nor personally homophobic. There is a passion on both sides, and the issue is personal for everyone. There is also a genuine desire to seek the truth and to be open to new insight and experience.

We established a pattern of eating a meal together before getting down to discussion and concluding with corporate worship. The Common Ground process assumes that nothing much can happen if people merely talk; they must have fellowship, and they must pray together. At compline at the end of the first night's meeting, I sprinkled each person with baptismal water to remind us of our baptismal connectedness and integrity.

The second meeting was held at St.

Emmett Jarrett is a poet and rector of St. Michael and All Angels Church in Stone Mountain, Ga.,<fremmett@mindspring.com>.

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Bartholomew's, following the same format, and the focus was on Scripture. Presentations were made by facilitators after people had an opportunity to read articles by Victor Furnish and Richard Hays, from Jeffrey S. Siker's book, *Homosexuality in the Church: Both Sides of the Debate* (Louisville:Westminster John Knox Press, 1994). In smaller groups people shared passages in the Bible that were important to each of them and talked about how they use the Bible in everyday life. Differences emerged as some affirmed the primacy of biblical teaching for them and others expressed the view that the Bible is an important source, but not their exclusive basis for moral decisions.

The third meeting introduced the topic of tradition. Everyone agreed that both they and the church have "changed" in the past. The question was whether a particular change with respect to gay marriage and ordination of gay clergy was right. We made two lists: specific issues on which the church has changed, e.g., ordination of women, use of the vernacular in liturgy; and broad areas of continuity, which included the doctrines of the trinity and incarnation, baptism and the eucharist. The broader the perspective the more common ground was apparent; the more narrow the focus, the more sharply disagreement manifested itself.

The fourth session will look at reason and what we know about human sexuality from perspectives other than theological, and the fifth will be a "wrap up" session for people to share what they have learned — about the issues and about one another, about their church and about themselves. All of this will be reported to the Annual Council in November 1998. So far, no one has changed his or her mind on "the issues," but there is increasing understanding of different people and their ideas, and an awareness of the broad areas of agreement that we share as well.

The essence of the Common Ground initiative in Atlanta is recognition that we do have a position in the Episcopal Church on these issues, even though some want to change it, and that changing the position is a serious business. Those who are in favor of the ordination of sexually active homosexual persons and of gay marriages are people who are nourished in their life by the grace of God in Scripture and the sacraments.

***Disputá* (detail), 1509, Vatican** Raphael

Those who are opposed to such changes are also devoted to the Bible and the Episcopal Church's sacramental life, and would not be more at home in fundamentalist sects. They are not homophobic people who will change their convictions when they learn that gay folk are people, too. Our learning leads me to think that we shall have to live with the ambiguity of our present situation for some time and not opt too quickly for excommunicating our opponents whenever we can muster a majority at General Convention. But we have work to do if we are to learn how to live faithfully.

As a priest I have ministered with and to gay people all of my life. I used to be a "liberal" on this issue, because I thought that was "the loving thing." But my experiences in ministry, and my reading of Scripture in light of those experiences, convince me that the church will do no one any favors by abandoning its theology of marriage and its discipline of seeing marriage as the exclusive context for sexual expression. The issue, for me, is not a matter of recognizing gay people but of resisting societal pressure to reduce people from full human status of women and men to a partial identity based on sexual attraction. I believe we have failed to face up to far more basic issues of the relations of women and men. Gay people must be welcome in the church, and, like everyone else, gently invited to repentance and faith, the all-inclusive call of Jesus to sinners. I don't think sexual sins are worse than other sins, but they are sins. And I fear that we are rushing toward an individualist ethic that turns sex into a commodity and sells the illusion of satisfaction to the highest bidder. Families are dearer than that.

A friend in Boston, shortly after the birth of my first child in 1985, said to me angrily: "You see, you get married, and you have a baby, and society says you are all right. They won't do that for me!" I agree that society (and more importantly the church) should affirm marriage and child-rearing in ways both practical and theological. My friend was a baby once, and his mother and father struggled to make a marriage and a family, by God's grace. Society's approval is not what the Gospel is all about. So I said to my friend: "When I wake up in the middle of the night in a cold sweat, society's approval does nothing to allay my anxiety. Only Jesus can do that, and he will do it for you, as well as me."

Then and now, our only true "common ground" is Jesus. TW

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Resolving conflict when no one's in charge

by Carol Bell

The vestry of an Episcopal church votes on a motion about use of the church building. On both sides of the issue, there are strong feelings, but one side carries the majority. Then, those who have won the vote say, "No, we don't want to proceed with this. We don't have consensus yet."

At a diocesan convention, it is impossible to distinguish those who are ordained from those who are not ordained; only the bishop, who is the official presider of the meeting, wears a clerical collar. Even congregational delegations are hard to spot, because there is no formal seating arrangement. Every congregation, regardless of size, has the same number of voting delegates. Ordained persons may or may not have been elected to serve as delegates; there is no voting by orders.

A resident of a small midwestern town asks a friend who is an Episcopalian, "Tell me, who exactly is in charge over there at your church?" The answer, "No one; we all are; all of us are the ministers."

These are snapshots of life in the Diocese of Northern Michigan. For the past 15 years, many of the women and men who make up this small, somewhat isolated, diocese have questioned, debated, changed, and changed again their approach to leadership and to conflict resolution. With the encouragement of our bishop, Thomas K. Ray, a number of congregations have undertaken the difficult task of implementing a circular model of leadership, and that model has had a profound effect upon how these congregations deal with conflict.

Every voice heard

Marion Luckey says of her parish, St. John's, Munising, "Everyone's gift is honored; everyone's voice is heard." In Munising and elsewhere, ministry is neither the job of a stipended priest, nor the full-time vocation of a non-stipended priest ordained under the Canon 9 "local ordination" provision of the Episcopal Church. Ray and others in Northern Michigan would call either of these options a non-circular, hierarchical model of leadership.

Likewise, what happens when decisions are made in Trinity Church, Gladstone, is the antithesis of the top-down model. "Every person's opinion is truly valued," says church member Carol Clark. "We know that not everything can be resolved, and we can live with that. We give each other the freedom to hold different points of view. Because everyone is respected, no one feels he or she has to jockey for position; there's room at the table for all of us."

Clark recalls an occasion when a group of Trinity parishioners tackled an issue that was causing great conflict in the city of Gladstone: the possible construction of a limestone plant. "At Trinity, we chose to have a dialogue about the issue, knowing that it was a very hot topic. Why didn't we avoid such a volatile discussion? Because it was real, because it affected everyone," Carol says. "And it was painful, but we came through it fine. We got our emotions and our opinions out on the table. We knew it wasn't about changing people's opinions; it's always about being honest and respectful of one another."

"We give each other the freedom to hold different points of view. Because everyone is respected, no one feels he or she has to jockey for position; there's room at the table for all of us."

— Carol Clark

Mutual ministry

Clark indicates that the high trust level she and others experience at Trinity has come about as the result of 10 years' intentional work on what the diocese terms "mutual ministry." A church that embarks on this program calls a number of people from its midst to form a covenant group. For about three years, the group studies together, learns about one another, faces conflict, and practices shared leadership.

At the end of the preparation period, with the approval of the bishop and Commission on Ministry, the members of that covenant group are commissioned as a ministry support team, with several of their number ordained as priests and deacons. Others are commissioned to roles such as catechist, stewardship coordinator, priestly ministry coordinator and preacher. But the ministry support team does not now become a team that "does the ministry." Rather, the goal of these men and women is to encourage and enable the ministry of the entire congregation.

If this approach sounds chaotic, it's because, to some extent, it is. If it sounds time-consuming and unwieldy, Jack

Carol Bell is a freelance writer living in St. Ignace, Mich., <cedars1@northernway.net>.

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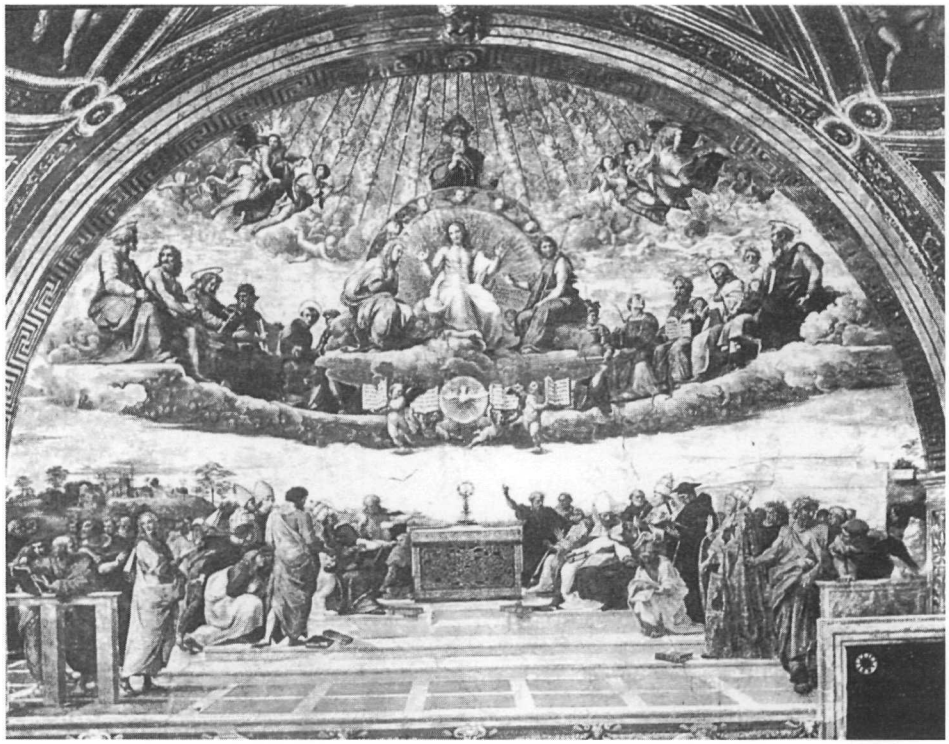
Glascock, a member of the ministry support team at All Saints' Church, Newberry, would agree. "Before we even get to the point of conflict," he says, "we discuss it a long time, and by that, I mean a very long time. Several years ago, our presiders [locally affirmed presbyters] said they would like to have the altar moved out from the back wall; they wanted to face the congregation. It took us a year-and-a-half to two years before anything was moved. We talked about it openly with the entire congregation; everyone's opinion was listened to. One of the [diocesan] missioners, Charlie Piper, came and met with the church for three hours. He gave us some historical background about liturgical space. And when finally we did move the altar, the ministry support team stood ready again to hear people's response, to change our minds. I think, because we took a long time and sought consensus, there was little or no problem; the new arrangement was embraced."

According to Tom Ray, facing conflict in a non-hierarchal structure involves not just patience, but also speaking — and hearing — the truth in love. "It is my experience that the further you ascend in a hierarchy, the less likely you are to hear the truth. When I have a very good idea, I bring it to a group of people and I disclose my emotions and my investment in that idea. Then I marvel at how the idea gets changed, shaped, and improved beyond anything I ever could have devised."

Ray cites an incident that took place when he was rector of St. Luke's Church, Evanston, Ill., as the turning point in his thinking about non-hierarchical decision-making. He had brought a plan to the vestry which received lengthy discussion, but which ended up pretty much the way he, the priest and therefore the authority figure, had hoped it would. Afterwards, a woman commented, "If this is the way we're going to handle things, we don't even have to meet." When Ray became bishop of the Diocese of Northern Michigan, he was determined that no one would feel as this woman did about how the church community makes decisions. He wanted to be ready to hear the truth, to refrain from any and all micromanagement, and to encourage communities of Christians to take adult responsibility for their ministries.



***Disputá*, 1509, Stanza della Segnatura, Vatican** **Raphael**

Non-hierarchical diocesan decision-making

Clark says that in Northern Michigan a non-hierarchical model of decision-making and handling of conflict takes place on the diocesan level, as well as on the parish level. "It is the method employed by Diocesan Council, the Episcopal Churchwomen, and the Ministry Development Strategy Team [an advisory group that assists parishes in discovering how best to engage their unique ministries]". Bonnie Turner, of Grace Church, Menominee, who serves on a number of diocesan committees, adds that the strength of a non-hierarchical, collegial model of leadership is shown particularly in reflecting on issues together and benefiting from everyone's insights and points of view.

"It has become the way we do things," she says. "People are empowered to do what they do best."

Not every parish in the diocese uses the leadership-in-a-circle model. Three parishes have a traditional rector, and there are several other communities that have not embraced the mutual ministry program. Turner comments on her experience of the recently formed Discernment Committee, which brings together representatives of every region as the diocese moves toward selection of a bishop to succeed Ray when he retires in 1999.

"We make decisions by consensus and we take turns facilitating," she says. "Subgroups have tasks to do, but no one person is in charge. People from congregations who approach decision-making in a

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more top-down way express discomfort; the collegial approach seems chaotic. They indicate they are fearful that the sub-groups will not accomplish their tasks and people won't know what is going on."

More communication, not less

For Ray, decision-making and conflict are best handled with more communication rather than less, with more information, not less. In the diocese there are six seminary-educated persons who work with local congregations as missioners; their job is to consult, to assist, to offer education, to facilitate groups when needed, but never to be in charge. They are companions.

"They are part of the group, not leaders of the group," Clark says. One of the missioners, Manuel Padilla, says, "Conflict is not necessarily a bad thing. Differences must be addressed and the process always involves building relationships."

Jim Kelsey, Ministry Development Coordinator for the diocese, has made communication a high priority. With his assistance, dozens of people in the Diocese of Northern Michigan are linked by computer networks. He adds that Roland Allen's insights about the mission field pertain here, too: "Whenever possible, decisions and issues should be discussed openly, in the light of day, with as many of the community gathered as possible. Individuals should not have to grapple with tough decisions. The more input there is from the community, and the more consensus we have, the more prepared the community will be to deal with the conflict that must and will come along."

Parishioners, bishop, and missioners agree that this model of shared leadership requires a great deal of hard work; it involves a lot of pain. Groups have discovered that when they refuse to let decisions be made unilaterally, the immediate result is likely to be ambiguity, unresolved issues.

Practicing on the choice of carpet

Jack Glascock tells of another incident from the life of All Saints', Newberry: New carpet was needed in the nave. Several months ago the debate over what color carpet to install seemed to be polarizing the congregation. Emotions were verbalized, votes were taken. Then the vestry decided the time wasn't yet right to decide.

"We designed a way to avoid a win-lose situation and have a responsible discussion — but, thereby, we also designed a process by which we were able to avoid taking a stand."

— Thomas Ray

"And we still don't have a decision on that. We simply won't go forward until everyone can live with the final choice. No lines are drawn in the sand; rather, we see ever-changing wave-marks that show the ebb and flow of our conversations."

Isn't the color of carpet a not-so-earth-shattering issue?

Glascock agrees. "But what we're doing is practicing. If we can resolve the little things, if we can build community and really listen to each other, then we are likely to be able to deal with the really tough issues. It's good training for us."

Living with ambiguity, speaking the truth in love, disclosing personal agenda and emotional investment, seeing conflict as potentially creative, even bonding — these are the marks of a diocese that daily struggles with great challenges: small numbers, financial difficulties, and geographical isolation. Mutual ministry, at least partially, began as an answer to the question: How can our worshiping communities have a full sacramental life when we are financially unable to hire full-time clergy? According to many of the men and women in the diocese, these practical considerations quickly led to the development of a transforming model of leadership that Carol Clark describes as "exciting, energizing, affirming, and healthy." Jack Glascock says, "This seems to me to fit very well into our Episcopal heritage: praying about the issue, taking time to decide, giving due consideration to different points of view, and — most of all — listening to, and being open to, each other. It may take years to make a decision, but isn't it worth it?"

When justice is the issue

"Worth it, in terms of fostering and maintaining a relatively healthy community, yes," says Martin Bell, missioner in the diocese. "But the thought that we might take years to make decisions about justice issues is not a happy thought; we simply cannot afford to wait years before enacting justice."

Ray references an instance: Diocesan convention in 1996 included a long, open, and honest discussion of whether or not to urge the Standing Liturgical Commission to develop rite(s) for the blessing of committed same-sex unions. "We designed a way to avoid a win-lose situation and have a responsible discussion — but, thereby, we also designed a process by which we were able to avoid taking a stand."

The convention decided not to bring the resolution to a vote. "In issues of conscience, we can't always wait for consensus," Ray points out, "and certainly collegial deliberation does not exonerate the individual." Perhaps in this model of leadership, where conversation is respectful amd compassionate, where diverse viewpoints are welcomed, the individual has a particularly poignant responsibility to call the community to take a stand. TW

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Post-war Guatemala: what does solidarity mean now?

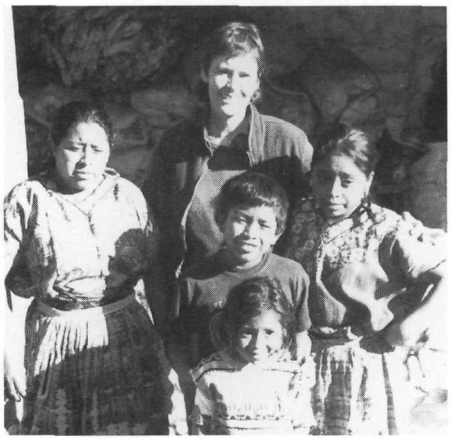
by Nancy Button

Last February I joined a 12-person delegation to Guatemala sponsored by Witness For Peace. All Mainers, we were an ecumenical group that included Episcopalian, Quaker, Catholic, Buddhist, Presbyterian, Mennonite and Jewish perspectives. But we were bound together by a common interest in "post war" Guatemala, the Guatemala which dates from the peace accord signed by the Guatemalan government and guerrilla forces on Dec. 29, 1996.

We were all aware that the U.S. government had been involved in many critical aspects of the 36-year civil war, first through a CIA-staged coup of democratically elected President Jacobo Arbenz in 1954 and then, once fighting broke out six years later, through financial support, training and supplies provided to the Guatemalan military. By 1990 there were an estimated 150,000 dead, 50,000 disappeared and 1 million people internally displaced, this in a country with a population of 10 million.

As U.S. citizens — and persons of faith — we hoped to be part of an alternative diplomacy. We wanted to know if and how an end to the civil war was changing people's lives.

We also hoped to gain a better understanding of our changing role as solidarity workers. The mission of Witness For Peace, "To change U.S. policies which contribute to poverty and oppression in Latin America and the Caribbean and to promote just alternatives," remains the same today as when the group first began responding to the Contra war in Nicaragua in 1983. But at that time this involved the dangerous work of accompaniment of civilian populations living in war zones. With "peaceful" governments reigning in Central America, what are we now to do?



The author with host family in Comalapa

We talked to teachers and health-care providers, widows' groups and promoters of Mayan identity, labor organizers and land reformers. One of our host families in Comalapa was that of Rosalina Tuyuc, a founder and leader of the widows' group, CONAVIGUA. Rosalina lost her father, brother and husband to "the violence" in the early 1980s. She has been targeted with threats and accusations for her leadership and advocacy for indigenous and women's rights. Elected to the country's congress in 1995, she believes the peace accords provide an opportunity for more general participation in government and that this opportunity must be seized.

Every day we met people actively struggling to create better lives for their families and communities with very limited resources. A health care worker we met in Comalapa noted the difficulty of meeting the peoples' basic health-care needs. Although his clinic's care providers are trained in Western-style healing, they have little access to Western medicines. Constantly in financial crisis, the clinic draws on traditional forms of healing to meet the demand for care.

Back in the capital, we met with Rodolfo Robles, a man who has been involved in union organizing at a Coca Cola factory since the early 1970s. When the plant closed down in 1984, the workers occupied the plant for 13 months and, with international union support, negotiated its reopening.

Throughout our travels, we grappled with our shame and sense of responsibility as U.S. citizens, feeling that since our government had facilitated the violence, we should have the power to "fix it." One morning, during one of our daily spiritual reflection periods, a Catholic member of our delegation shared a quote from the Talmud, "It's not your obligation to complete your work, but you are not at liberty to quit."

Economic and political globalization has pushed the Central American solidarity movement to work on international economic, labor and environmental issues, moving well beyond our anti-interventionist and anti-war roots. Participating in this sort of "reality tour" is a life-changing experience and a good way to combat the effects of too little — or overwhelming amounts of — information. With the support of the church community and friends, the trip was financially quite possible, even for those of us with limited incomes.

Witness For Peace also has a call-a-week program through its National Grassroots Response Network. This enables individuals across the country to provide input in a timely way to legislators and decision-makers. To find out how to participate or to obtain more information about reality tours, contact Witness For Peace at 1229 15th St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20005; (202) 588-1471, <witness@w4peace.org>.

Nancy Button is a potter who lives in Warren, Maine, and attends St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Rockland.

Vital Signs

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EUC grapples with racist truths, consequences

by Anne P. Scheibner

In the late 1960s a cartoon appeared in *The New Yorker* showing a middle-aged white couple sitting on their apartment balcony overlooking Harlem from Morningside Heights. The woman is looking troubled and her husband raises his head from his paper to reply with some irritation, "The ghettoes, my dear, are not the problem; they're the solution." As the Episcopal Urban Caucus (EUC) met in Boston for its annual assembly last February, this punchline seemed uncomfortably up-to-date. It became clear that many of the problems faced by urban ministers also seem to represent "solutions" for the emerging global economy in the U.S. The assembly was marked by the attendance of Frank Griswold, the new presiding bishop, and continued the EUC's emphasis on anti-racism work.

In his keynote address, Manning Marable of Columbia University pointed out that racism is neither a problem in the sense of an easily remediable oversight nor even a regrettable accident. "Intolerance is a social consequence of how society is organized," he stated, "and we cannot uproot bigotry unless we are also willing to examine seriously the economic and social environment which fosters and perpetuates social inequality and unfairness." Given the violence underlying racism, Marable was less than sanguine about the prospects for a national conversation about race.

"If the presidential commission truly wants to understand the contemporary dynamics of racism," he commented, "it should go first to the prisons and jails across this country, conversing with black, brown and poor inmates."

He saw the growth of prisons as the "solution" to the problem of what to do with young black and Latino men for whom there are no industrial, corporate or community jobs. Marketing this group as prime "consumers" in this industry is trumpeted nightly in what passes for local evening news. There the latest violent crimes are reported complete with pictures of handcuffed perpetrators, mostly black. In 1983 the prison population of the U.S. numbered some 650,000, second only to South Africa. In 1996 that number was 1.6 million, doubling at a rate of once every seven years.

"What lynching was in the South in the 1920s, the death penalty and life sentences without parole have become in the 1990s." — M. Marable

"The criminal justice system today has become our chief means of regulating and controlling millions of unemployed and under-educated black and Latino young men," observed Marable. "What lynching was in the South in the 1920s, the death penalty and life sentences without parole have become in the 1990s."

At its current level of $14 billion per year, the prison system is one of the biggest industries in the world, with 150 new cells being added every day. "More Americans work full-time for the prison industry than for any Fortune 500 corporation but General Motors," Marable noted.

In the panel discussion following Marable's address, Sandra Peters, consultant for the Episcopal Church's Anti-Racism Dialogue Project, suggested that what she called the "Prison Industrial Complex" is part of the War on Crime, replacing the Cold War and War on Drugs and certainly the War on Poverty.

"The creation of a new 'enemy' is needed to fill a psychic and political void," she declared. "Young black and brown men are prime candidates for this 'enemy' role."

She also observed that the use of prisoners as cheap labor for license plate production and highway maintenance has now expanded through privatization, with at least one major airline using prisoners to answer phones. Phone banks are also being staffed by prisoners for state Medicaid and motor vehicle departments.

"The wealthy and powerful almost never go to prison for the crimes they commit," Manning also pointed out. "For the most oppressed, however, prison is frequently an improvement in their life's circumstances: free health care, three meals a day, shelter, some modest training programs. Today, there are hundreds of thousands more black men in prison or stuck in the criminal justice system than are enrolled in colleges or universities."

Is the Episcopal Church positioned to grapple effectively with this emerging reality? Panelist Barbara Harris, suffragan bishop of Massachusetts, thought not based on her involvement in prison ministry over many years.

"The Episcopal Church has had a 'we-they' attitude towards those in prison and very much a chaplaincy model of prison ministry," she said. "This attitude contrasts markedly with the Muslim approach which sees the prison as an extension of the mosque. Until Christian churches can come to see prisons as an extension of the congregation, there will be no real change in approach."

Assembly participant John Midwood, Archdeacon of the Diocese of Pennsylvania, reported that an exciting alternative to the chaplaincy model is taking place in Philadelphia where there is now a vicar for a prison congregation.

Various forms of the institutional violence connected with racism were highlighted throughout the rest of the assembly. Marable detailed the exposure of three-out-of-five African Americans to toxic waste disposal sites. "U.S. industries today are pumping 2.4 billion pounds of toxic chemicals into our air and billions more into our water supplies," he stated.

Sandra Peters reported that 150-200 black and multiracial churches were burned

Anne Scheibner served as staff to the Urban Bishops Coalition in the late 1970s and was a founding board member of the Episcopal Urban Caucus.

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in 1997, but that the Justice Department is refusing to track these occurrences because it has determined that there is no "racial conspiracy" involved. "How can such a determination be made," she asked, "when there is ongoing evidence that young white men engage in arson and other acts of violence as part of the initiation process into white supremacist organizations?"

"Unequal access to technology will be the next form that racism will take," Marable predicted. "The old forms were those of colonialism and Jim Crow. Twentieth century America developed more subtle, sophisticated ways of defining people as not being worthy — in the instance of redlining that translated as not being credit worthy. Today the question is who will have access to the Internet?"

An assembly participant noted that if 100 people represent the world's population, 57 would be Asian, 21 European, 14 North and South American, 8 African; 70 would be non-white and non-Christian; 70 would be illiterate; 1 would have a college education; not one would own a computer.

Differences between whites and blacks in position and wealth are readily apparent in spite of the gains made since the civil rights movement. "If housing and vehicles owned are included in the definition of 'net wealth,' " stated Marable, "the median middle-class African-American family has only $8,300 in total assets, to $56,000 for a comparable white family."

Affirmative action may have reached the political limit of viability, but not because it achieved its objectives. Marable quoted Jesse Jackson's speech to the National Press Club noting that white males still account for "80 percent of all tenured professors, 92 percent of the Forbes 400 chief executive officers, and 97 percent of all school superintendents."

Declaring that change comes from the margins, Marable gave credit to the work done by the Right wing through think tanks and the mass-based Christian Coalition in remaking basic political assumptions of the mainstream. He recounted a recent conversation he had with Ossie Davis, actor and advocate for progressive causes. "'Every generation needs a moral assignment,' said Davis. We have yet to define that moral assignment for ourselves and in our time." Marable suggested that the task of this generation may be "to speak truth to power."

In a Town Meeting at the end of the assembly participants used a nine-page case study of the City of Anywhere to identify where passion and workable strategies might lie. Each participant chose a group focused on issues including economic and environmental justice, criminal justice, politics and acts of hate and deliberated solutions to the problems facing Anywhere.

Stressing the need to focus on "do-able" solutions, Byron Rushing, moderator and Massachusetts State Assemblyman, reminded participants of the institutional change model represented by Associated Parishes. Associated Parishes began in the 1940s with 12 priests who were willing to do something radical — making the eucharist the central service — by starting with their own parishes and sharing the results of their experiment with each other. "Starting small is not a problem," declared Rushing. "The important thing is never to propose a collective action you wouldn't do yourself."

Participants emerged from their small groups with a variety of possible avenues churches might pursue. Some encouraged parishes and community institutions to make connections with schools and to be open after school hours to make safe and constructive havens for children. Others urged increased numbers of non-white clergy. The Diocese of Massachusetts reported that half their postulants are now people of color and Harris is involved in a series of conferences on the campuses of historically black colleges to encourage vocational exploration. However, they noted that it is still almost impossible to name more than one predominantly white congregation with a black rector.

In his closing remarks to the assembly, Frank Griswold, the church's new presiding bishop, encouraged the EUC to ask the House of Bishops to issue pastoral letters on issues of concern to the Caucus. "The House of Bishops has lost a sense of the larger picture," he said. "The House appears to be obsessed with sexuality."

The Caucus later took action formally to request the House of Bishops to complete their anti-racism training and to address a number of related issues, starting with criminal and economic justice.

In other action, the EUC elected Clara Gillies of Buffalo, N.Y., its new president. The EUC addressed racism on a global level by joining the Jubilee 2000 effort to persuade banks forgive a major part of Third-World debt in the year 2000. Today interest payments prevent the poorest countries from making needed social investments.

Promoting dialogue: Oasis study guides

The Oasis, a ministry with and to gay and lesbian Episcopalians based in Newark, N.J., now has available two new study programs concerning homosexulaity. *All Love is of God*, a program created by The Oasis, encourages congregations to use dialogue to explore faith issues surrounding homosexuality. *Claiming the Promise*, a project developed by an ecumenical team under the direction of the Reconciling Congregations Program, focuses specifically on the study of biblical references on homosexuality.

Each teaching series comes with an individual Leader's Guide and Participant's Manual. Leadership training is also avilable to familiarize the leader with the content of the programs as well as provide helpful resources for group facilitation of what can sometimes be a difficult topic of discussion.

For more information or to place an order call Oasis education coordinator Barbara Davis at 973-430-9909; <TheOasisNJ@aol.com>.

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Peace in Israel/Palestine: Now is the time

by Joseph H. Summers

This year is the 50th anniversary of the war of 1948. The Israeli government has proclaimed this year to be a Jubilee celebration to mark the founding of the State of Israel. For Palestinians, the year of 1948 is remembered as "Al Nakba," Arabic for "the catastrophe," the time when Zionist forces drove three-quarters of the Palestinian population out of their homes and lands. In the context of Israeli policies that are clearly leading to the creation of permanent "bantustans" for Palestinians and of a Palestinian executive authority which has shown itself to be anti-democratic politically and morally bankrupt, God's liberating word was heard and proclaimed in Bethlehem.

Sabeel, which in Arabic means "the way" or "a channel of life-giving water," is an ecumenical, grassroots, Palestinian liberation theology movement whose conference this year focused on "The Challenge of the Jubilee: What Does God require of us?" As described in the 25th chapter of Leviticus, the Jubilee is the time designated for the restoration of the people and the land through the redistribution of land, the forgiveness of debts and the freeing of captives. Eight hundred and fifty people from around the world, representing a wide variety of Christian denominations, gathered to reflect on the challenge of this vision and how it could become a reality in Israel/Palestine. Much of the conference focused on what the Palestinians need to do to lay the ground work for a diverse and healthy democratic society. In this article, however, I am going to focus on what Palestinian Christians told us about their situation and what its implications are for me as a Christian from North America concerned about the well-being of all the people in the area, including Jews, Christians and Muslims .

The victims of the victims

It was European anti-semitism and ultimately the holocaust which gave birth to the reality of the State of Israel. It has been guilt over the Holocaust and our legacy of anti-semitism which has kept most Western Christians from being willing to listen to the plight of the Palestinian people.

Few in America understand that the Israeli state that was created on the lands seized in 1948 was in essence an apartheid state. It had two principles. The first, that Jews anywhere in the world, no matter what their circumstances, would be welcome to come and reside in this new land. (This was done at the same time Palestinians were not allowed to return to their homes.) And the second, the recognition of the Jewish National Fund as a private entity which would own the land seized by the state and which would then lease these lands only to Jews. The whole political legal framework that has subsequently been established maintains this legal apartheid.

To compound matters, Israel has permanently occupied the western half of Palestine since the 1967 war. The evidence of this occupation is graphically evident, with soldiers and checkpoints at regular intervals. Security forces can detain people for two years without even bringing charges. Amnesty International has found that the Israeli forces routinely torture Palestinian prisoners and the Israeli government has justified these practices. In the midst of this military occupation the same pattern of land displacement has continued. There is not enough space here to describe all the methods used to do this, but the results are that Palestinians are forced to leave their homeland daily. Palestinian attempts to challenge their treatment go nowhere in Israeli courts, for such matters are viewed as security matters.

In the process of the Sabeel conference all these realities were brought home by visiting various parts of the country and talking with the people living in the midst of these realities. We heard from Palestinians who spoke of what it is like to grow up near the lands one's ancestors cultivated, to hold the title to the land and still have the keys to your house, but not to be able to live in it. We met with the Mayor of Beit Sahour (Shepherd's Field), one of many whose lands were seized to build Har Homa, a new Jewish settlement in the midst of the Palestinian lands around Bethlehem, which is being built to house 50,000 people. (Israeli law allows 40% of any individual's lands to be seized without compensation.)

We met with a family whose 12-year-old son died in his mothers arms, shot by a settler firing into Palestinian houses. We traveled past the shrine erected to honor Bernard Goldstein, the young man who massacred dozens of Muslim worshipers in the mosque in Hebron, who is now viewed as a saint by people in the settler movement. We met with a Muslim grandfather who had recently built a house for his children only to have it bulldozed down because it did not have the proper setback from the roadway. He currently has 37 family members living in his small house. We heard from a young Jewish woman who told of learning one day that the home she had grown up in had been seized from a Palestinian family and her courageous journey of opening her life up to them and dealing with the ethical imperatives of that situation.

Oslo and the betrayal of peace

The good news is that, despite 50 years of displacement and domination, the Palestinian people have survived. Further, that despite their treatment they are willing to embark on an inclusive future—a future in which both Jews and Palestinians are respected and affirmed so long as there is some basic degree of justice. In a gesture that one can scarcely conceive of for a people rooted in the land, the Palestinian

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Joseph H. Summers, vicar of Incarnation Church in Pittsfield township, Mich., recommends that all denominations work in partnership with Sabeel to help promote the justice that will yield peace. Photographer **Herb Gunn** is editor of *The Record* in the Diocese of Michigan.

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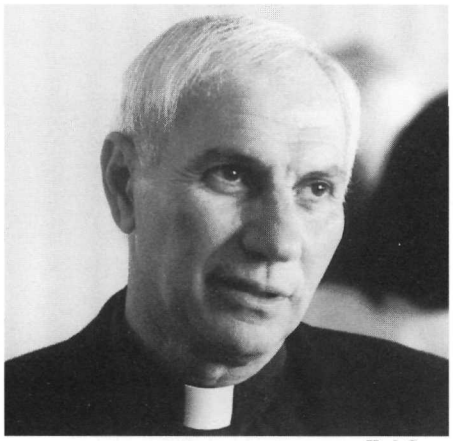
people came to the point of deciding they would give up their claims to the lands seized in 1948 in exchange for Israel's acceptance of a Palestinian state in the occupied territories. (This means settling for 23% of what was once their land.) This is the position they took in the Oslo peace talks. The bad news is that Israeli leaders have clearly rejected this offer and have instead used the peace process to push things closer to what they see as the ultimate solution: the creation of *bantustans* — small isolated areas, often immensely overcrowded, in which Palestinians can exercise some limited degree of self-governance. Many of us had the sense that the hardships imposed by the Israeli government — the new travel restrictions, the economic strangulation of Palestinian areas (the already low per capita income of Palestinians has declined 30 percent in the five years since Oslo), the ongoing process of land seizures and house demolitions — are designed to push the Palestinian population into a new war which can then be used as the pretext for justifying this solution.

What can be done?

First, it is clear that no political solution will emerge in this situation unless the U.S. begins to pressure Israel to make peace. The estimated 10 billion dollars in aid the U.S. annually sends to Israel through donations and tax write-offs has been what's sustained the Israeli government in its intransigence. Israel's current GNP is around 90 billion dollars, so this aid is no small factor in their economic success. Though no major leader in our political establishment is currently willing to go this way, Americans need to insist that our government's aid be linked to respect for human rights and international law. (Instead the U.S. has vetoed a wide variety of U.N. Resolutions that have called on Israel to adhere to international law.) We also need to insist IRS tax deductions should not be given for projects or organizations whose work would be illegal here in the U.S., such as the purchase of lands that only one particular ethnic group can live on or be employed on, or of settlements, which represent one of the biggest obstacles to peace. There seems little question that Israel would begin to negotiate seriously if aid were cut off. Given the disparity of power between Israel and the Palestinians, there is little likelihood of any resolution to this crisis without such leverage being exercised.

For this to happen, Americans need to come to know the Palestinian people and their story so they will no longer be invisible to us or demonized by politicians. Just as Americans of good will have committed themselves to hearing the story of the Jewish people and the Holocaust and letting that story transform them, so too, we now need to hear the story of the Palestinian people. There is a powerful photo exhibit on the story of the Palestinian people since the turn of the century which was put together for the conference and which is now available in this country. The Palestinians we heard understand that if they are going to be successful in overthrowing the policies of those who are willing to maintain a state of permanent war, and find their way to peace, it will have to be a peace built not only on justice and human rights but also on a willingness to accept and affirm those they have struggled with. In our approach to this issue in this country we can do no less. We must come to understand the way the tragedies of these two peoples are interrelated so that we will show understanding and compassion towards both parties and not fall into the trap of projecting innocence onto either. We can no longer afford to let an open and honest dialogue about these issues be silenced by those who fear that it will perpetuate anti-semitism. Given the history of anti-semitism in this country, this is an understandable fear, but at a time in which politically reactionary forces in Israel have made common cause with some of the most anti-semitic Christians in this country, mainstream Christians and Jews must step forward to confront those in their respective communities who are laying the groundwork for disaster.

In the Sabeel conference keynote speech, Edward Said called for a new politics based on integrity and inclusiveness for Jews and Arabs. He stressed that though the challenges ahead are immense, such a politics can win. To settle for anything less is to settle for what we have now, a situation which is sowing the seeds of tragedy for generations to come.



Naim Ateek

Herb Gunn

"Those people who are supporting Israel's intransigence and arrogance, do not love Israel," says Naim Ateek, director of Sabeel, a center devoted to peace in the Middle East. "If Israel continues in the way it is in today, I believe it will destroy itself." During a recent U.S. tour, Ateek said that no one in Israel or in Gaza has the power to force Israel to comply with the documents signed in the peace process which the U.S. witnessed; the U.S. must insist on Israeli compliance. Ateek thanked the former presiding bishop, Edmond Browning, for "turning the attitude" of the Episcopal Church toward an understanding of the justice issues involved. Ateek served as canon of St. George's Cathedral in Jerusalem before devoting himself to working for Sabeel full time.

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Keeping watch

In memory of the martyrs of Acteal

[The following statement, released March 24, was signed by 338 religious leaders around the world, and sent to President Clinton and President Zedillo of Mexico.]

When all the prisoners of the land are crushed under foot, when human rights are perverted in the presence of the Most High, when one's case is subverted — does the Lord not see it? ... All our enemies have opened their mouths against us; panic and pitfall have come upon us, devastation and destruction. My eyes flow with tears because of the destruction of my people.

— Lamentations 3:34-36, 46-48

WE CRY OUT IN GRIEF, joining our voices to the worldwide clamor prompted by the December 22 massacre in Acteal, Chiapas, Mexico. The 45 victims, mostly women and children murdered in the very act of praying for peace, were members of a Christian group, *Las Abejas* (The Bees). They had chosen the path of nonviolent love in their unceasing struggle for justice, a commitment for which they paid the ultimate price.

We call on the governments of Mexico and the U.S. to examine official policies that have resulted in stalled peace talks and repeated explosions of violence in Chiapas. Resolute action is urgently needed to demilitarize the conflict and achieve a negotiated resolution.

The Mexican government has recognized repeatedly that the intolerable situation of indigenous peoples in Chiapas is rooted in centuries of oppression and discrimination. Recent years have seen the rise of organized opposition, including everything from political parties to nongovernmental organizations to an armed insurgency. As representatives of the religious community, we lament that historic injustices have at times been exacerbated by the intolerance of various religious communities. We deplore the rise of paramilitary groups in this conflictive context and the enormous cost in human suffering — hundreds of deaths, thousands displaced, untold deprivation and disease.

We are encouraged that the Mexican government reacted to the massacre and resulting outcry by arresting members of a paramilitary group, including the local ruling-party mayor. In addition, the governor of Chiapas and the federal Interior Minister were replaced. However, there is evidence of a pattern of government tolerance — and even support — for such paramilitary groups:

* Recent media reports revealed an October 1994 Mexican Army document calling for "the advising and support of the self-defense forces or other paramilitary groups" in order "to break the support relationship that exists between the population and the [Zapatista Army]."

* Mexican and international human rights groups have documented the growing number of paramilitary groups operating with impunity in Chiapas since 1995.

* In July 1997, the Chiapas state government provided the notorious paramilitary group *"Paz y Justicia"* with $580,000 in assistance, ostensibly for agricultural projects.

* Raul Vera, coadjutor bishop in San Cristobal de las Casas, wrote to the Mexican Interior Minister in October 1997: "We have information that ... ruling party congressmen are sponsoring the sale and the trafficking of weapons, acting as protectors and coordinators of the various paramilitary groups." He received no reply.

We are further troubled that after the massacre, the military increased its presence in Chiapas by 5,000 troops and staged aggressive maneuvers in Zapatista areas.

The U.S. must also examine its role in the increasing militarization of the conflict. Key military officials in Chiapas responsible for counter–insurgency strategy have been trained at the U.S. School of the Americas. Most of the Mexican Army's weapons come from the U.S.

Any attempt at a military solution in Chiapas will only lead to more bloodshed and unrest, a loss of credibility for the Mexican government and strained U.S.-Mexico relations.

WE CALL FOR PEACE, pledging our solidarity with the suffering people of Chiapas. We call upon the U.S. government to re-examine the appropriateness and legality of further U.S. military assistance and training in light of the widespread human rights abuses attributed to the Mexican Army by Amnesty International and other human rights groups and in light of the Army's reported ties with paramilitary groups.

We call on the Zedillo administration in Mexico to act decisively to achieve a negotiated solution and specifically: to take immediate steps to disarm completely the paramilitary groups in Chiapas; to implement the February 1996 San Andres Accords on Indigenous Rights and Culture without further delay as a necessary prelude to renewed peace talks; to refrain from any military action that might threaten peace talks.

Inspired and challenged by the witness of the martyrs of Acteal, we commit ourselves to: continuous prayer and effective advocacy for a just and lasting peace; support for existing ecumenical dialogue initiatives in an effort to create a positive environment for trust and cooperation among the indigenous people of Chiapas.

May the sacrifice of the many martyrs of Chiapas be the last shedding of innocent blood in that suffering region. May their vision and their commitment to nonviolence be an inspiration that spurs renewed efforts in the search for a community of peace on earth. TW

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The apostle

by Bill Wylie-Kellermann

***The Apostle* (1997), written and directed by Robert Duvall. Starring Robert Duvall, Farrah Fawcett, Miranda Richardson, and John Beasley.**

It is a church schism which sets in motion the narrative plotline of Robert Duvall's Oscar-nominated film, *The Apostle*. Sonny Dewey returns from a whirlwind evangelistic tour, a montage of diverse settings with genuine pentecostals playing the extras, to find himself legally ousted from his Texas pastorate. The stage is set for a fight, with congregational factions aligning, not along doctrinal lines, but over personality allegiances.

The faultline runs down his marriage as well. He has discovered his wife in bed with the rival minister. For a time Sonny holds himself in agitated restraint, shouting prayers to Jesus through the night. Eventually, drunk at his kids' little league game, he erupts in violence and flees for his life.

In Duvall's honest and loving portrayal of this pentecostal preacher, there is a level of violence acknowledged just below the surface throughout the film. Both a gun and a Bible may be found in his car glove compartment. When he confronts his wife Jessie, played well by Farrah Fawcett, her wary recoil makes clear that she's been hit before—her firm exit now from the marriage may truly be the sane step of self-preservation.

In the conviction that God is hovering just beyond the frame, it seems Sonny always finds that the doors of providence swing open. In flight, he circles his car uncertainly at an intersection, stops an instant to kneel and pray, then rushes off headlong toward he knows not what. After ditching the automobile in a river, he begins again empty-handed, rebaptizing himself in those same waters, rededicating and rechristening himself "The Apostle E.F."

The charismatic pastor, suddenly locked out of his church and barred from his flock, simply begins again in irrepressible perseverance — schism and evangelism being two sides of the same coin.

His steps lead to a small backwater town in the Louisiana bayou. There he covenants with a retired and skeptical black pastor, Brother Blackwell, to start a new congregation in the weathered shell of an abandoned church. In so many respects this is a version of the old pentecostal story: The charismatic pastor, suddenly locked out of his church and barred from his flock, simply begins again in irrepressible perseverance, schism and evangelism being two sides of the same coin.

With a little yellow school bus and some radio preaching spots, the "One Way to Heaven" Church flourishes. And, lo and behold, without demographic design, a cross-racial congregation, with cross-racial leadership, emerges.

Is this realistic and true? It's certainly true to the original Pentecost, where language and race and culture, prove no barrier whatsoever to Spirit and Word. And it's true to the origins of modern pentecostalism at the turn of the century on Azuza Street in Los Angeles. But it's by no means certain. There are racist varieties of pentecostalism, which is to say it may be wildly subversive in its freedom, or thoroughly conformed to structures of oppression. As William Stringfellow put it with respect to the charismatic and the demonic; it is commonplace for the one to be mistaken for the other. But in "The Apostle," the Spirit witnesses to racial reconciliation. And even non-violence of a sort.

In a remarkable scene with an unexpected twist, a racist redneck (Billy Bob Thornton) whom the Apostle has previously pummelled in a fistfight, returns with a bulldozer to level the church. The congregation stands its ground before him and when Duvall lays down the Bible, daring him to risk the judgement by rolling over it, Thornton breaks down and virtually suffers a conversion surrounded by the congregation's embrace.

In a strange parallelism to the film, Duvall struggled in isolation to make what he has called "the most important project of my life." Abandoned, at least in this regard, by friends and backers and, needless to say, the major studios, he labored long and hard to bring it to reality. His own performance is nuanced and stunning.

As the credits roll, the Apostle has begun yet again in prison. Swinging his scythe with the road gang, he leads the rhythmic chant song, an endless flow of questions. In unison they offer over and over their answer: "Jesus!" TW

review

Bill Wylie-Kellermann is director of the M.Div. Program for the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education in Chicago.

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Embracing controversy as God's will

by Julie A. Wortman

Reflecting on the current threat of schism posed by conservative forces in the Episcopal Church, Robert DeWitt, 86, says he's never thought the Episcopal Church was likely to split — not now, and not during his tenure as bishop of Pennsylvania during the volatile 1960s and 1970s, a period when racial divisions, the Vietnam war and feminist struggles brought into question every cultural assumption of mainline society.

"I think it is awfully tough to split something as amorphous as the Episcopal Church," he says with a wry laugh. "If it were brittle it would split much easier, but Anglicanism is so much more a habit than a doctrine."

He doesn't underestimate the depth of passion behind today's church debates, but believes they are part of an old pattern.

"The gay issue feels like a lot of other things we've had to face up to over the years," he says. "And we're still fighting the demon of ignorance and the demon of fearfulness."

DeWitt's introduction to deeply divisive controversy occurred toward the end of his 12-year tenure as rector of Christ Church Cranbrook, then a large and very lively congregation in a well-heeled suburb of Detroit.

The issue?

"R-A-C-E," he says bluntly.

DeWitt had come to Michigan in 1940 following undergraduate work at Amherst College and seminary at the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, Mass., where he "lapped up" the day's cutting-edge theology.

"It was a period of intense theological excitement," he recalls with relish. "And there was a great resurgence of interest in religion" that swelled congregations.

But by the late 1950s awareness of racial injustice pressed in on the consciences of liberal Christians.

"I joined with some local clergy in putting an ad opposing racial discrimination in the local newspaper," he recalls. "It stirred up quite a hornet's nest."

Having been at Christ Church for so long — he had also served there as curate from 1940 until 1944 — DeWitt defused his congregation's surprise and agitation by capitalizing on his "insider" status.

"We had the congregation broken up into 50 neighborhood groups that met regularly to discuss the lectionary and study current issues," he says. "So I just went around to each of the groups and talked to church members face-to-face."

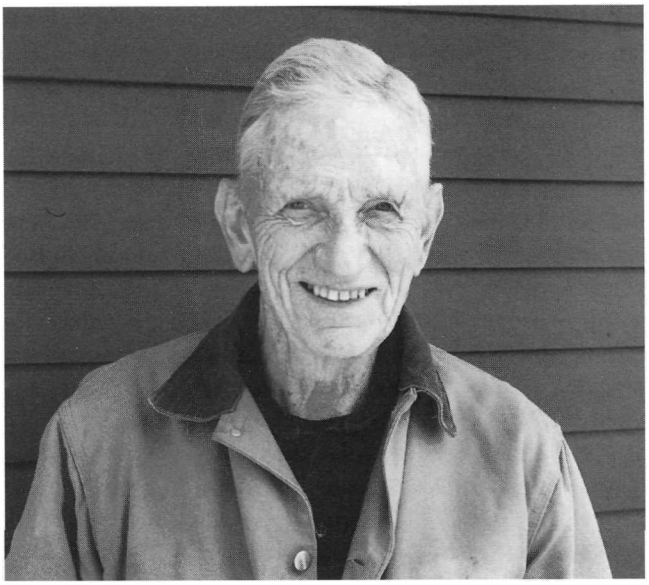
Soon after, DeWitt was elected suffragan bishop of Michigan, a position that placed him squarely in the midst of the social upheaval that had begun to tear Detroit apart. Then, in 1964, he was elected Bishop of Pennsylvania. Immediately, he was swept up in the civil rights furor gripping Philadelphia.

"I arrived to find four of our priests in jail!" he recalls. Siding with the priests, who were protesting Girard College's discrimination against blacks, DeWitt became a controversial public figure over night. DeWitt, his wife Barbara and their five children were subjected to bomb threats and menacing phone calls and their home was placed under police protection.

Within the diocese, criticism of his civil rights stands were nonviolent, but strong and bitter.

"As the world goes, so goes the church," DeWitt shrugs. "The issues are

"I think it is awfully tough to split something as amorphous as the Episcopal Church."



Robert DeWitt

Witnesses, the quick and the dead

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

the same for the church and for the world and this was a great issue for our country at that time. So it is not surprising that it impinged upon the life of the sleepy old traditional Diocese of Pennsylvania."

As the years passed, the focus shifted from civil rights to Vietnam — and the divisions in the church increased. But DeWitt did not see his role as institutional peacemaker.

"The Vietnam War was a big issue that was very divisive," he says. "But so many of those things are categorical to me. And you don't hedge on a clear decision about right and wrong. You know, 'one with God is a majority,' which can be very seductive and self-deluding — but still compelling."

He tells a favorite story to illustrate his point — and his own fallibility: "On the night before the ordination of the women in Philadelphia we were working on a press release. The other ordaining bishops had asked me to draft something for them to look over. And I had something in there like '*clearly the will of God*,' and Dan Corrigan said, 'I think that sounds just a *little* presumptuous. Why don't we say something like, *It seems to us a clear issue of justice?*' I was John Brown and he was ... well, he was Dan Corrigan!"

The 1974 ordinations of the first women priests, in which DeWitt, freshly resigned as Pennsylvania's bishop, was joined by Edward Welles and Daniel Corrigan as ordaining bishops, rocked the church. Some celebrated the renegade action while others decried its defiance of church law. Pressure to bring DeWitt and the others to trial was great, but the Board of Inquiry responsible for looking into the charges refused jurisdiction. Their brother bishops, however, censured DeWitt and the others — and proclaimed the women's ordinations "invalid."

He admits that the church would probably eventually have gone ahead with women's ordination if the 1974 ordinations had not taken place, but believes they did the right thing in forcing the issue.

"Justice deferred is justice denied," he points out. "A majority of the house of deputies and a majority of the house of bishops had gone on record as being in favor of women's ordination [even though a vote "by orders" prevented the measure being passed]. The mind of the church was very clear. The decision could have been stretched out for another two or three conventions. How many women would have been demeaned in the process? I saw this as a pastoral problem."

"I'm willing to abide by majority rule, but not if those voting don't understand what they are doing!"

DeWitt says he prizes the Episcopal Church's democratic process "in which you allow an issue to be settled by a vote, knowing some people will go down voting against it." But, he stresses, there is a difference between counting and weighing votes.

"The spirit of the Episcopal Church is to be democratic, which sounds like majority rule. But majority rule can be a very dangerous thing because you have a lot of people voting who are ignorant of the issues or have distorted perspectives. Some votes make more sense than others. I'm willing to abide by majority rule, but not if those voting don't understand what they are doing!"

Throughout his life, DeWitt has shown a passion for education. Casting about for something to do after resigning as bishop ("I had always said I wouldn't stay in that position longer than 10 years — you get set in your ways while the world changes around you"), he went to a vocational counselor. "He had me write down all the things I love doing and the skills I displayed while doing them. Then he had me write a description of my ideal job."

He said he wanted to publish "a newsletter for the bishops of the church on the issues of the day." Shortly after, he was offered the job of editing *The Witness*, a position he held until 1981.

His new role did little to remove him from controversy, as when in January 1980 he decided to run William Stringfellow's famous "open letter" to Presiding Bishop John Allin calling for Allin's resignation.

"When you were elected at the Louisville general convention a void opened in the leadership of the Episcopal Church, which has been filled by management," Stringfellow wrote. "To management, substantive controversy is perceived as threatening *per se*, rather than as a sign of vitality."

These days, living on Isle Au Haut, Maine, in a community of about 60 families, DeWitt is seemingly removed from the "big issues" which once had him making headlines. But he continues to satisfy his passion for education via the internet. Right now he is taking a class in Latin — keeping one step ahead of an island teen whom he is tutoring in the subject.

As always, too, he maintains a keen interest in the politics of his community. He says the island's lobstermen's association, which he helped form, is now hotly debating issues of marine ecology.

"When I say 'ecology,' I don't mean these guys are tree huggers," DeWitt stresses. "They are interested in marine ecology because it's their livelihood. There's an authenticity to their concern that I appreciate."

With a note of pleasure he adds, "The will of God so often is in accord with the welfare of people!"

It's a theology that has guided him for decades. TW

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in the Nov./Dec. 1997 and Jan./Feb. 1998 issues of PRRAC's bimonthly newsletter journal *Poverty & Race*. You must provide a large, self-addressed, stamped envelope (with $1.47 postage).

The essays depart from the Initiative's shallow "dialogue/racial harmony" approach, urging an analysis and set of recommendations that stress institutional racism and the theme of racial justice.

Among the authors are Julian Bond, Frances Piven, Peter Edelman, Jonathon Kozol, Karen Narasaki, Herbert Gans, Leon Higginbotham, Sam Husseine, Fred Harris, Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich, The National Council of La Raza, David Shipler, Benjamin DeMott, Manning Marable, Howard Zinn and Hugh Price.

If you prefer to have it on a disc or on e-mail, let us know — our email address is <prrac@aol.com>.

Chester Hartman
Washington, D.C.

Renewals

SORRY I LOST TRACK OF THE renewal date — life would be diminished without *The Witness* arriving at my door!

Barbara Cheney
New Haven, CT

Irreverence

THANKS FOR THE TWO ISSUES that have arrived in my letterbox recently as a bit of a taste of the magazine. So far the views expressed in the articles fit well into the description of the magazine outlined in the promotional material. I would perhaps add only one comment — I was particularly attracted to the word *irreverent*, a left-leaning magazine that doesn't take itself or life too seriously — that I wanted to see. Perhaps it is just the difference that comes from seeing things from the other side of the world, but I'm still hoping to see a glimpse of the lighter side. Then again, maybe my distance means I misunderstand a more subtle form of irreverence. Either way, it isn't a gripe. I'm looking forward to reading over the next year.

Mark Finley
Westbourne Park, Australia

Spirit of the revolution

I RECENTLY AGREED TO TAKE ON the responsibility of coordinating the *Spirit of the Revolution* column that appears in the *Peoples Tribune*. I am writing to introduce myself to you and solicit your readers' ongoing suggestions, ideas, and contributions for this column. I currently live in San Jose, Calif., with my wife and 13-year-old daughter. I work for a commercial roofing company by day and volunteer with Community Homeless Alliance Ministry and other community groups.

I believe our society today is disintegrating. New means of production and old forms of distribution are clashing on a world scale. Polarization of wealth is accelerating so sharply, it is unleashing a plague of poverty and desolation.

The task ahead of us is too great for any one church or political organization. We have to engage the least among us, those who are being cast aside by capitalism. They are the stone which the builder rejected. We have to unite them with everyone else who is hard-pressed and becoming disillusioned with the system. Together we can isolate the purveyors of profit, strip them of their power, and build a cooperative society, based on the abundance made possible by modern technology. Many millions in America and throughout the world share this aspiration deep in our hearts.

The time has come to unite all who love justice and truth, be they Muslims or Jews, Christians or atheists. We cannot afford to exclude anyone. The time has come to fight for clarity of purpose. It is my goal to see the *Spirit of the Revolution* column further this process.

Sandy Perry
San Jose, CA
<PerrySandy@aol.com>

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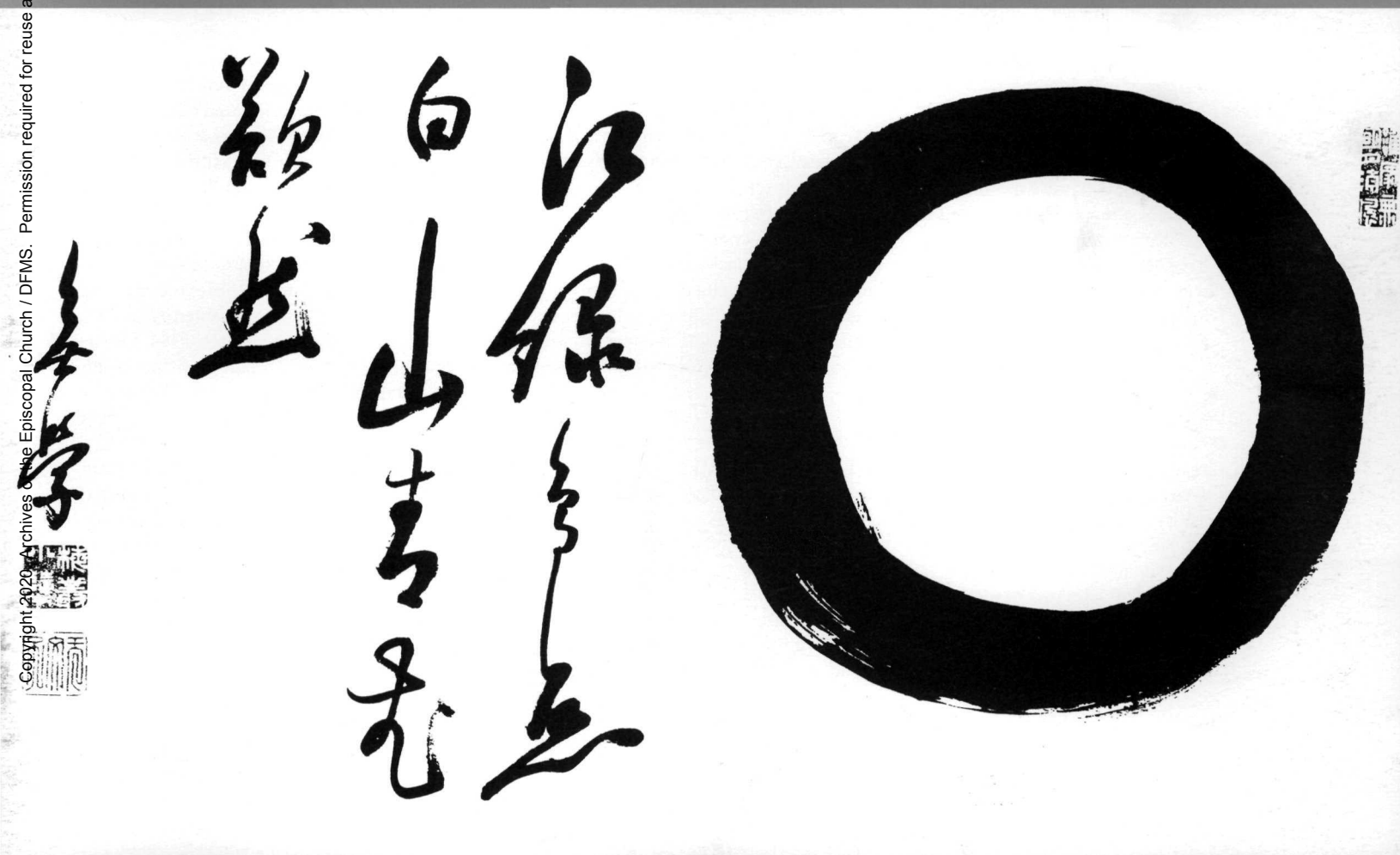


Christians and Buddhist wisdom

Struggling with exile

I'VE BEEN SUBSCRIBING to *The Witness* for a long time now and I am continually impressed by the scope and depth of your articles. I just read your April issue, "What do you do with what you don't believe?" and was really struck with the honesty and compassion with which you delved into a subject that is current, critical and very close to the heart of the Christian community of faith. That so many churches, publications and individuals are in denial about the health of our belief system is to me a strong indication that we need to be talking and writing more about our ambivalent feelings and finding ways to discuss them with one another. I applaud your decision to devote a whole issue to this and thank you for the breadth of the coverage.

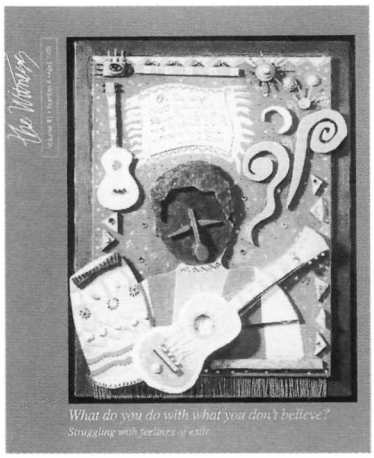
I have a group of friends with whom I used to meet regularly for prayer and theological reflection. I think it's significant that every single one of us has been experiencing our own struggles with feelings of exile in the past five years. I am sure each of these fellow searchers would find your April issue as helpful as I have. Please do me the favor of sending them a copy. I enclose a check. Thank you and do keep up the great work.

Sallie Shippen
Ashland, OR

JULIE WORTMAN'S INTERVIEW WITH Verna Dozier was a wonderful reminder of Verna's great gifts and wisdom. The first time I heard Verna was at a conference in the Diocese of Virginia in the 1970s. She walked with us through the roles of "the Christian educator" and she took me into the first real step I had taken on my own path of formation. Her words are balms to my Gilead!

Betsy Willis
Zionville, NC

IN RESPONSE TO YOUR INTERVIEW with Walter Brueggemann [4/98]:



I feel the confession is necessary in the liturgy before coming to the eucharistic table. I do not see it as an enforced guilt trip, rather a gift. I am freed from my humanness in confessing my errors, my omissions, and my excursions away from rather than toward God. I can be rid of all the burdens I carry, including the exhaustion from living amongst those who do not follow the same vision. I need to be cleansed not only of sin, but worry, doubt, and sometimes lack of faith. Then I am ready to receive the bread and wine which nourishes me and gives me the strength to continue the battle, to keep on with the race, to press on toward that final victory we know awaits us.

Mary Carter
Selinsgrove, PA

I LOVE BRUEGGEMANN — and I am using the part about the complaining Psalms in liturgy Sunday.

However the other part of the interview had me thinking that Bill Stringfellow would be chiding. The saints will lose — we're to be fools for Christ — it's still about doing quality work of advocacy and resistance — efforts so good that they should change the world — and sometimes winning — but most times seeming the fool.

Our new pastor believes the 20-40s are going to be the prophetic voice for 2000. Surely the Korean theologian and Charleston are tuning into something. Stringfellow would say "Come Lord Jesus." Are we prone to want to be effective, or right or even ready? Or to be sure we're being faithful?

I like the Iced Tea commercial — the person just falls back into the water.

Maybe there's still a role for confrontational politics and mystical experience. Hang with it. We need you.

Wilma Righter
Dayton, OH

[Ed. Note: More on this in July!]

CIA cover-up

AS I MENTIONED IN MY ARTICLE, "CIA Role in Priest's Disappearance" [*TW* 1-2/98], on March 4, 1997 the CIA and Defense Department released 75 pages of declassified (and heavily expurgated) documents concerning James Carney, the U.S. citizen who "was disappeared" in 1983 after entering Honduras as a chaplain to a revolutionary group.

Heavy use of the black marker is evident in the documents released by the CIA. One page, bearing the date of June 3, 1988 and showing several lines blacked out, discusses a *New York Times Magazine* article (June 5, 1988) by James LeMoyne entitled "The Honduran Army's Death Squad: How Much Did the U.S. Know?" The CIA states that Florencio Caballero, a former Honduran sergeant who was the source of much of LeMoyne's information, received human resource training (debriefing techniques) sponsored by the CIA during 8 February - 13 March 1984. Caballero, a resident of Toronto until his death several months ago, admitted that he participated in many human rights violations as a member of the official death squad.

He testified before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in Costa Rica on Oct. 6, 1987 concerning an American advisor known as "Mr. Mike" who "had access to us" and was closely associated with interrogations.

"Mr. Mike" is linked to the Carney case. Caballero told Carney's relatives that the priest had been captured and thrown to his death from a helicopter by Honduran troops [BBC-TV documentary Nov. 22, 1987 as reported in *The Nation* Jan. 23, 1988]. He added that previously Gen. Alvarez Martinez, head of the Honduran armed forces, had told Caballero and other officers in a planning meeting: "When you capture Guadalupe [Carney], kill him after interrogation." Also present at the meeting, Caballero said, was a U.S. agent known as "Mr. Mike."

Has the CIA Inspector General, who as the

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Washington Post reported (Dec. 23, 1996) has "reopened an investigation into the failure of agency clandestine officers to report allegations of torture by a CIA-supported Honduran military intelligence unit," questioned "Mr. Mike" concerning his alleged association with the still-unsolved disappearance of Carney?

A curious omission in the CIA report on the LeMoyne article, possibly part of the blacked out material, is its failure to note that LeMoyne cited Caballero as saying that he personally interrogated Carney after the priest's capture: "Caballero said he interrogated an American priest, Father James Carney...." Caballero's account that "Father Carney and nearly 70 of the captured guerrillas were executed" was "seconded by a Honduran officer."

Why doesn't the CIA's summary of its documents take note of an extremely significant statement in the article cited in one of the documents—namely, Caballero's report to LeMoyne that he personally questioned Carney? What is the CIA's assessment of that statement (which, it must be noted, Caballero never repeated in subsequent testimony)?

Concerned readers may wish to bring the Carney case, and these questions in particular, to the attention of their U.S. Senators and Representatives and ask their assistance in the search for truth and justice. People desiring more information may contact me.

Joseph E. Mulligan
Managua, Nicaragua
<guvols@nicarao.org.ni>

Welfare reform

I'M A NEW SUBSCRIBER. The March 1998 issue on welfare reform was great — hoping others are as good.

Noella Poinsette, OSF
Danville, KY

Witness praise

FINALLY! A PUBLICATION which communicates to those who are not irreligious or on the political Right. Thank you!

Loren R. Strait
Goodland, KS

Letters continued on back cover

Classifieds

Working for peace in Ireland

Corrymeela is a Christian Community working for peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Corrymeela works with Youth, School, Church and Community groups bringing people of all ages and traditions together. For information contact: Corrymeela Community, 8 Upper Crescent, Belfast, N. Ireland, BT7 1NT. Phone 011 44 1232 325008. Fax 011 44 1232 315385. <belfast@corrymeela.org.uk>.

Episcopal Urban Intern Program

Work in social service, live in Christian community in Los Angeles. For adults 21-30. Apply now for the 1998-99 year. Contact: The Rev. Gary Commins, 260 N. Locust St., Inglewood, CA 90301. 310-674-7700.

Vocations

Contemplating religious life? Members of the Brotherhood and the Companion Sisterhood of Saint Gregory are Episcopalians, clergy and lay, married and single. To explore a contemporary Rule of Life, contact: The Director of Vocations, Brotherhood of St. Gregory, Dept. W, Saint Bartholomew's Church, 82 Prospect Street, White Plains, NY 10606-3499.

Arun Gandhi at Kanuga

Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mohandas K. Mahatma Gandhi, will lead a conference entitled "A Garland Instead of Ashes: Nonviolence in the Midst of Violence," September 14-17 at Kanuga. Explore the secrets and successes of nonviolence in workshops led by experienced staff. Kanuga Conferences, PO Box 250, Hendersonville NC 28793; 828-692-9136; e-mail <kanuga@ecunet.org>; website: <www.kanuga.org>.

New Lentz distributor

The icons of Robert Lentz, which have often been featured in *The Witness,* are now available through a new distributor: Natural Bridges, P.O. Box 91204, Albuquerque, NM 87199-1204; 800-699-4482.

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The Witness

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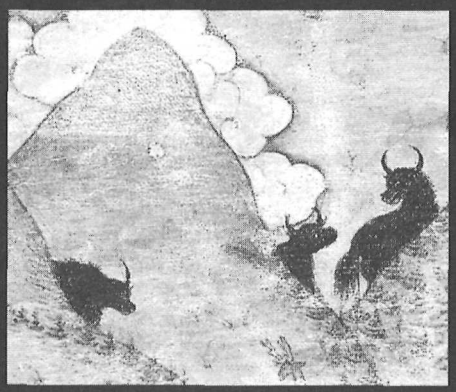
8 Borrowing from Buddhism: an interview with Ninian Smart
by Scott London
Comparative religions scholar Ninian Smart, who calls himself a "Buddhist-Episcopalian," reflects on the increasing cross-fertilization of religions in today's world.

12 Trusting in silence: Christians doing Buddhist meditation
Christians who practice Buddhist forms of meditation describe what led them to it and how it relates to their Christian faith.

18 Emptying Jesus
by John Keenan
Episcopal theologian John Keenan explains his reasons for adopting Mahayana Buddhist thought as the philosophical basis for his reflection on Christian faith, and describes how this model could affect the current debate on the "historical Jesus."

20 Realigning the wheel: an interview with Ruben Habito
by Marianne Arbogast
Ruben Habito addresses the relationship between Zen and engagement in the struggle for social and ecological liberation.



22 Speaking up for Tibet by Natasha Ma
A teacher who spent two years in Tibet reports on the current state of affairs and the increasing international advocacy for the Tibetan people.

The Witness offers a fresh and sometimes irreverent view of our world, illuminated by faith, Scripture and experience. Since 1917, *The Witness* has been advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those people who have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." We push boundaries, err on the side of inclusion and enjoy bringing our views into tension with orthodox Christianity. *The Witness'* roots are Episcopalian, but our readership is ecumenical. For simplicity, we place news specific to Episcopalians in our Vital Signs section. *The Witness* is committed to brevity for the sake of readers who find little time to read, but can enjoy an idea, a poem or a piece of art.

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

The editor whose editorial appears on page 5 crafted this issue.

Cover: Ensō (Zen circle) by the 19th-century Japanese Zen monk Mugaku Bunikei.

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E-mail: <[first name]@thewitness.org>.
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A larger silence

by Marianne Arbogast

Not long ago, I noticed a bumper sticker which read, "My karma ran over my dogma." Though I'm usually given to more nuance in expressing it, the slogan resonates with my experience — and, I believe, with the experience of growing numbers of Christians who find that elements of Buddhism are running into, if not over, their faith in significant ways. Scan publishers' catalogues, retreat listings or religious studies course offerings, and you can't help but be struck by the explosion of interest in Buddhist-Christian spirituality and dialogue.

For many, the seeds of this flowering were sown several decades ago, when Thomas Merton was recording his explorations into Asian spirituality along with his clear-eyed condemnation of the carnage in Vietnam, and the roots of faith-based resistance were fed by a contemplative sensitivity that spanned traditions in the persons of Thich Nhat Hanh, Daniel Berrigan and others. While yet in high school, I read and reread Berrigan's *The Dark Night of Resistance,* which chronicles his time underground, on the run from the FBI, in the light of John of the Cross and Zen teachers.

Contemplation, more than anything else, is the gift that today's Christians seem to seek from Buddhism. Many find that Buddhist meditation practice enables a depth of silence that they have not tasted in Christian settings. They cite the careful attention paid to the body and the radical trust that enjoins the practitioner to let go, completely, of everything, even (perhaps especially) God. As John Healey puts it [p. 14], Zen offers a way to go into silence "without the clutter of Christian presuppositions." Without the dogma.

It is not that dogma has no place, but that we tend to worship it idolatrously. Jay McDaniel connects fundamentalism (which, he points out, can take liberal as well as conservative forms) with living in our heads, inordinately attached to correct belief [p. 12].

As John Healey puts it, Zen offers a way to go into silence "without the clutter of Christian presuppositions." Without the dogma.

In his recent book, *Zen Spirit, Christian Spirit* (Continuum, 1997), Robert Kennedy, a Jesuit Zen master, quotes a poem by Wallace Stevens:

It was when I said
"There is no such thing as the truth,"
That the grapes seemed fatter,
The fox ran out of his hole. ...

It was when you said,
"The idols have seen lots of poverty,
Snakes and gold and lice,
But not the truth";
It was at that time, that the silence was largest

And longest, the night was roundest,
The fragrance of the autumn warmest,
Closest and strongest.

"To insist on one truth that we do see is to block other truths from coming into focus," Kennedy comments. "There are many truths in every human being, but to steer toward one truth can block our undeveloped side from rising forever. If we grasp the rudder too tightly, we become predictable and repetitious, flat characters in a play who only read one line."

If meditation can loosen our grip on "the truth," allowing us to honor dogma while holding it more lightly, Buddhist philosophy also tips the scales away from an inflated confidence in language and thought. John Keenan, an Episcopal scholar engaged in the groundbreaking work of viewing the Christian gospel through a Buddhist philosophical lens, explains that "Mahayana Buddhist thinkers reject a metaphysics that would define the essences of things in final and irreversible philosophic visions" [p. 18]. In this issue of *The Witness,* he describes how this approach could alter the terms of a controversy such as the much publicized historical-Jesus debate.

For me, this perspective echoes the insistence of Verna Dozier [*TW*, 4-5/98] that we embrace ambiguity, let go of our exclusive claims on the truth and learn to base our commitments on something other than the identification of our views with God's.

In addition to freeing us from overattachment to correct belief, Jay McDaniel suggests that meditation practice can also offer a corrective to the activist pitfalls of burnout — "inordinate attachment to correct action" — and the "will to mastery" [p. 12]. Ruben Habito also cites meditation as an antidote for burnout [p. 20]. Paradoxically, what looks like withdrawal can be a healthy instinct to sink deeper roots.

Buddhist teachers do warn about escapism — though, I confess, it's hard for me to see how anyone who has ever experienced a Zen *sesshin*, for instance, could imagine it an attractive escape. I remember coming

editor's note

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

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to a week-long insight meditation retreat with the arrogant confidence of one who had made quite a few eight-day Ignatian-style retreats — a context in which I had found silence restful and enjoyable. By the end of the first evening, I knew I was in new territory — silent, but not restful. Much as I longed for deeper prayer, dry as the well of my own thoughts had become, I found it excruciating to have no mental escape from the silence. (The American Zen teacher Charlotte Joko Beck calls *sesshin* "a prolonged experience of 'It's not the way I want it!'").

Ninian Smart reminds us that we live in a world where the free flow of ideas is engendering more religious cross-pollination than ever before. All of us are probably more influenced by Buddhism than we know. An idea like "interconnectedness," for instance — so prevalent in contemporary thinking about ecology and justice — while not exclusively Buddhist, is front and center in the Buddhist worldview.

Many insights connected with ecology and earth-consciousness are, in fact, thoroughly Buddhist. Perhaps no other tradition has emphasized so clearly the interdependence of all life, or held non-human creation in as deep a respect. Many years ago, I remember reading that an obstacle at a dialogue between American Christians and Asian Buddhists was the incredulity of the Buddhists at the Christian tendency to discount all but human life. I've delighted in the instructions on observing the precepts mailed out before some Buddhist meditation retreats, which include the injunction to kill nothing, not even a bug; and in Torei Zenji's Boddhisattva Vow, recited during Zen *sesshins*:

When I look at the real form of the universe,

all is the never-failing manifestation of the mysterious truth of Tathagata.

In any event, in any moment, and in any place,

none can be other than the marvelous revelation of its glorious light.

This realization made our founding teachers and virtuous Zen leaders extend tender care, with the heart of worshiping, to animals and birds, and indeed to all beings. ...

At the end of *sesshin*, a dedication is offered "for the enlightenment of bushes and grasses and all the many beings of the world." *Vipassana* retreats also have participants offering prayers for the freedom and happiness of all beings — human and non-human, visible and invisible.

Ama Samy, an Indian Jesuit Zen master who has led Zen sesshins *in the U.S., warns against "colonizing" Zen by absorbing it into Christianity or translating too quickly into Christian terms.*

In light of this understanding, the suffering of the people, the animals and the land of Tibet — long a center of devout Buddhist practice — seems all the more grievous [see p. 22 and review, p. 29]. Jim Perkinson rightly warns against a romanticized spiritual identification with "the east" that avoids engagement in real suffering and struggle; Natasha Ma points to ways in which the international community — including the Christian churches — is beginning to respond to the crisis.

There are numerous issues involved in Buddhist-Christian dialogue and in the grassroots interfaith practice that is flourishing in many places. Is there a common experience, for instance, at the heart of both religious traditions, or is experience itself too culturally conditioned to make such an affirmation? There are some who readily identify themselves as "Buddhist-Christians" and others — equally respectful of both traditions — who are troubled by such fusing. Ama Samy, an Indian Jesuit Zen master who has led Zen *sesshins* in the U.S., warns against "colonizing" Zen by absorbing it into Christianity or translating too quickly into Christian terms. "When you do Zen, do Zen," he advises. "When you practice Christianity, practice Christianity." Nevertheless, he suggests that there may be great benefit in "passing over" for those who feel called to experience both traditions from within.

In this issue of *The Witness,* we have not attempted to address — or even identify — all of these questions. We have tried, rather, to simply relate the experience of some of the many Christians who are finding their faith broadened and enriched by Buddhist thought and practice. The long-term impact on Christian thought and practice remains to be seen. TW

BACK ISSUES WITH CONNECTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S TOPIC

The following back issues of **The Witness** *contain articles which may relate directly to* **Christians and Buddhist Practice** *or simply to the spirit of this month's topic.*

- *Silence (1-2/96)*
- *When the church engages rage (12/92)*
- *Alternative ways of doing church (9/94)*
- *Women's spirituality (7/94)*
- *American Faces of Islam (5/96)*
- *Staying in my denomination (10/94)*

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Hakuin Zenji: Song of Zazen

by Hakuin Ekaku

All beings by nature are Buddha,
as ice by nature is water;
apart from water there is no ice,
apart from beings no Buddha.
How sad that people ignore the near
and search for truth afar,
like someone in the midst of water
crying out in thirst,
like a child of a wealthy home
wandering among the poor.
Lost on dark paths of ignorance
we wander through the six worlds;
from dark path to dark path we wander,
when shall we be freed from birth and death?
For this the zazen of the Mahayana
deserves the highest praise:
offerings, Precepts, Paramitas,
Nembutsu, atonement, practice
the many other virtues
all rise within zazen.
Those who try zazen even once
wipe away immeasurable crimes
where are all the dark paths then?
the Pure Land itself is near.
Those who hear this truth even once
and listen with a grateful heart,
treasuring it, revering it,
gain blessings without end.
Much more, if you turn yourself about,
and confirm your own self-nature
self-nature that is no nature
you are far beyond mere argument.
The oneness of cause and effect is clear,
not two, not three, the path is straight;
with form that is no form,
going and coming never astray;
with thought that is no thought
singing and dancing is the voice of the Law.
Boundless and free is the sky of Samadhi,
bright the full moon of wisdom,
truly is anything missing now?
Nirvana is right here, before our eyes,
this very place is the Lotus Land,
this very body the Buddha.

Hakuin Ekaku was a Japanese monk (1685-1768). "Zazen" is formal meditation practice; "paramitas" are ideals or virtues; "Nembutsu" is the practice of calling on the Amida Buddha; "samadhi" is meditative concentration. This poem, frequently recited during Zen sesshins, is reprinted with permission from *Encouraging Words: Zen Buddhist Teachings for Western Students*, © 1993 by Robert Aitken, Pantheon Books, N.Y.

Poetry

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Borrowing from Buddhism:
an interview with Ninian Smart
by Scott London

Ninian Smart is a scholar of comparative religions, the author of more than 30 books, and the founder of the first religious studies department in England, at the University of Lancaster. Smart is a faculty research lecturer at University of California, Santa Barbara and serves on the board of the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies.

Scott London: Someone once quipped that the study of comparative religion can make one "comparatively religious." Have you found that to be true?

Ninian Smart: No, I don't think that's true. Exploring the world's various religions can certainly change your outlook and may push aside some of the narrower views that are found in every religious tradition. But on the other hand it may deepen your religious experience. It depends on what sort of person you are.

S.L.: In your case, you belong to the Episcopal Church but have come into contact with and learned from many of the world's great religions.

N.S.: Yes. I came in on this in a very unusual way. I was drafted into the British Army at the end of World War II and was put into the so-called Intelligence Corps. The first thing I did was spend a year and a half learning Chinese. That completely took me out of my original world view. We studied Confucian texts and so on. Then, the army being what it was, I was sent to Sri Lanka (or Ceylon, as it was then called). The dominant religion there is Buddhism. We were training local soldiers there. We decided that it was ridiculous to have a Christian chaplain for a unit that was predominantly Buddhist and some Hindu. So we invited the monk who was in charge of the neighboring temple to become our chaplain. I think we were the only unit in the British Army that had a Buddhist chaplain. I was 18 when I went into the military so I became acquainted with other religious views at a very early age.

S.L.: How would you describe your own faith today?

N.S.: I often say that I'm a Buddhist-Episcopalian. I say that partly to annoy people. [laughs]

The Buddhist notion is that our chief problems are greed, hatred and delusion.

S.L.: How do you mean?

N.S.: I like to annoy people who think that a religion can contain the whole truth. No religion, it seems to me, contains the whole truth. I think it's mad to think that there is nothing to learn from other traditions and civilizations. If you accept that other religions have something to offer and you learn from them, that is what you become: a Buddhist-Episcopalian or a Hindu-Muslim or whatever.

S.L.: How does Buddhism complement your Christian beliefs?

N.S.: I think the Buddhist ethic is clearer and more systematic in some ways. The Buddhist notion is that our chief problems are greed, hatred and delusion. Well, delusion is not much mentioned in the Christian tradition. In the West, we have underplayed the idea that our moral and spiritual troubles have to do with a lack of clarity or insight because original sin has dominated so much of our thinking. We tend to think that our troubles are caused by insufficient will power. There are merits in thinking that, of course, but I think you can learn something too from Buddhism. In that respect, Buddhism is complementary to Christianity.

S.L.: Perhaps this is one reason why Buddhism is being embraced by so many Americans today.

N.S.: I think the attractiveness of Buddhism is that it doesn't involve a belief in God. That appeals to a lot of people — intellectuals and well-educated people in particular. It is also a very practical religion that offers techniques such as meditation. Also, there is the more peripheral fact that Buddhism has a very good spokesman — the Dalai Lama— who has had a lot of impact, and quite rightly so.

S.L.: You wrote a book a few years ago in which you spoke of Buddhism and Christianity as "rivals and allies."

N.S.: Yes. In a sense, they are incompatible because there is no God in Buddhism — particularly in Theravada Buddhism. But they are also allies because their values and practices are compatible and they can work together — indeed, they would benefit greatly from doing so. But the fact of the matter is that Buddhism has changed a lot. In Mahayana and Tibetan Buddhism, for example, you do get something like God or Christ. In fact, when St. Francis Xavier arrived in Japan, he wrote back to the Vatican and made a joke. "It is unfortunate," he said, "that the Lutherans were here before me." By this he meant that Pure Land Buddhism was so much like Lutheranism.

S.L.: Pure Land Buddhism?

Scott London hosts "Insight & Outlook," a weekly National Public Radio program. He lives in Santa Barbara, Calif., <insight@west.net>.

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N.S.: Yes, it is a form of Buddhism in which if you call on the name of the Amida Buddha in faith (or Anitabha in the Indian context), you will be reborn in the Pure Land, which is like heaven. One of their saints said, "If a good person can be saved, how much more can a bad person be saved?" Luther could have written that. So there are forms of Buddhism which are very much like Christianity.

S.L.: The Dalai Lama has been very outspoken about the need for mutual understanding between religions. Do you see any signs of progress on that front?

N.S.: Certainly the understandings have advanced tremendously in the last 50 years, even if it is primarily through religious education and interfaith dialogues and things of that sort.

S.L.: Some critics feel that interfaith dialogues tend to be rather wishy-washy — mostly polite conversation.

N.S.: That's partly true. I don't go for dialogues greatly (though, in fact, tomorrow I'm going to Rome to participate in one). People say that it's mere conversation but, first of all, what's wrong with conversation? What would people otherwise be doing? They could be fighting each other. Secondly, who is going to decide what is wishy-washy? Suppose I would say, "I don't believe in hell," and somebody turns around and says that I'm a wishy-washy character because I don't believe in hell. Am I supposed to believe in hell to escape the disaster of being wishy-washy? What if two denominations, or two groups of people, decide they are going to do some work building houses in Tijuana to help the poor — is that wishy-washy?

S.L.: There is a striking passage in your book, *Choosing a Faith,* where you describe the great number of West African Yorubas in Los Angeles today, the number of Sikhs in Birmingham, England, the Mormons in the Fiji Islands, the Tibetan Buddhists in Scotland, the Hindus in South Africa, and the Confucians in Berkeley, Calif. How will all these different traditions manage to coexist in the future?

N.S.: Not just in the future — they are coexisting now. They are getting on together, despite the clashes and bitter warfare that we notice in places like Bosnia and Sri Lanka. This has come about partly through peaceful migration. For example, many doctors from Asia migrate to Britain or the U.S. to practice medicine. But a lot of it is also a result of unpeaceful migration. World War II left behind 300,000 Poles in Britain. There are Palestinians all over the Middle East. One could go on and on. The net result is that we have never had such a mingled population as we do now. There is not a big city in the world (except perhaps in Japan and one or two other places) where there are not sizeable numbers of whoever you care to mention. The second largest Greek city today is Melbourne, Australia. The largest Polynesian city is Auckland, New Zealand. And so on.

S.L.: What will be the fate of religion in this new global village?

N.S.: Well, one result of all these migrations is the emergence of new forms of religion. For example, some Hindus are building temples in Malibu now. They may have been educated in the West and know very little about Hinduism. So they have to invent it from scratch because they want their children to be Hindus. And this is happening not just for Hindus, but for Muslims, Confucians, and so on all over America and Europe. That's a hopeful sign. One of the effects of religions getting together is that they borrow from one another. For example, I remember going into a town in the south of Sri Lanka and one of the first buildings I saw was the YMBA — the Young Men's Buddhist Association. It was a young men's organization modeled on the YMCA. They were borrowing a Christian organizational item. Another example is the growing number of Catholics who

Buddhist Cambodian family in N.Y. observing a religious service for the dead
Kathleen Foster/Impact Visuals

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are practicing yoga and meditation techniques borrowed from Buddhism and Hinduism. So there are these borrowings which I think fertilize the religions.

S.L.: Syncretism, the word usually invoked to describe this kind of cross-pollination, tends to have negative connotations.

N.S.: Yes, this can be disturbing to people. They have often been taught, "You have to have solid faith and must be sure of your religion." They fear that they might be threatened by these new developments and mergings. So you get a backlash against it. I believe that if you wanted to, you could work out a few equations. What happens when Religion A meets Religion B? Well, A becomes a little B-ified, and B becomes a little A-ified. Then people in A don't like the B-ification, so they become AA types. And the same goes for B. So there is always that dynamic going on when religions meet. Now, for the first time in history, all religions are meeting. So they are bound to interact in some alarming ways.

S.L.: Do you think the spread of democracy around the world today is having an effect on how and what people believe?

N.S.: Yes, I think so, partly because it removes the pressures to believe in any particular way. People have access to other ideas and ways of doing things that they never had before. And they have new freedoms. To put it a little crudely, these days nobody is afraid of excommunication. The churches no longer have the disciplinary powers to keep their followers in check.

I think there is a certain inevitability about these trends. For example, the government of Iran has been trying to ban satellite dishes because they worry that Western ideas will come in and corrupt Islam. Well, whether they corrupt Islam or not, satellite dishes are going to win out in the long run. One of the causes of the collapse of the Soviet Union was that they were unable to insulate their people, as they had done in the past, from fax machines, television, radio and all that. So people inevitably get new ideas.

S.L.: Do you subscribe to the idea, expressed by some scholars of religion — most notably Huston Smith — that there is a core wisdom at the heart of the world's great religions?

N.S.: No, I don't, because I don't think it can be shown or specified. I believe strongly that the mysticism of all the religions is just about the same. But that is not the only core. Anyway, why should they have a core? Wouldn't it be more interesting if they didn't? Or if they had several cores?

S.L.: Perhaps we are evolving toward a time when there will be a single world religion composed of different tenets of the various world faiths?

N.S.: I don't think religions will merge into a great global faith. But I do believe we are moving toward a global ideology that has a place for religion and recognizes the contributions of the different traditions. Hopefully, it will have an overarching view as to how we can work together for the promotion of human values and spirituality. I would like to see an agreement that recognizes that we live on the same planet and that some interests (such as human rights) must be universal and that all religions must be respected.

S.L.: A universal ethic based on tolerance?

N.S.: Yes. Tolerance implies more than saying, "Well, let the Muslims go on with what they are doing." It also means trying to learn something from them and adding that to your own tradition. That is the attitude I think needs to inform the global citizen of the future. TW

Books on Buddhist-Christian thought and spirituality

Gentling the Heart: Buddhist Loving-Kindness Practice for Christians by Mary Jo Meadow, Crossroad, 1994.

The Gethsemani Encounter: A Dialogue on the Spiritual Life by Buddhist and Christian Monastics, ed. Donald W. Mitchell and James Wiseman, Continuum, 1997.

The Good Heart: A Buddhist Perspective on the Teachings of Jesus, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Wisdom Publications, 1996.

The Gospel of Mark: A Mahayana Reading, John P. Keenan, Orbis, 1995

The Ground We Share: Everyday Practice, Buddhist and Christian by Robert Aitken and David Steindl-Rast, Shambhala, 1994.

Healing Breath: Zen Spirituality for a Wounded Earth by Ruben L.F. Habito, Orbis, 1993.

Light Sitting in Light by Elaine MacInnes, Harper-Collins, 1996.

Living Buddha, Living Christ by Thich Nhat Hanh, Riverhead, 1995.

The Meaning of Christ: A Mahayana Theology by John P. Keenan, Orbis, 1989.

The Mirror Mind: Zen-Christian Dialogue by William Johnston, Fordham, 1990.

Purifying the Heart: Buddhist Insight Meditation for Christians by Kevin Culligan, Mary Jo Meadow and Daniel Chowning, Crossroad, 1994.

Total Liberation: Zen Spirituality and the Social Dimension by Ruben L.F. Habito, Orbis, 1989.

With Roots and Wings: Christianity in an Age of Ecology and Dialogue by Jay B. McDaniel, Orbis, 1995.

Zen Spirit, Christian Spirit by Robert E. Kennedy, Continuum, 1997.

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'I fear they are Pagans'

Pagan originally meant "country dweller," anyone who was attached to the land. (The word "peace," as a "binding together," shares the same root.) Country people had rites and ceremonies in keeping with the seasons and honoring the earth upon which they depended.

As Christianity spread through the cities of the Roman Empire, "pagan" began to equal non-Christian. Then it was expanded to mean all non-Christians, including city-dwelling Jews, Muslims and Buddhists. The sense of "pagan" as religious practice bound to the earth, however, was never lost.

Terry Tempest Williams points out that when then-Secretary of the Interior James Watts was asked what he feared most about the ecology movement he replied, "I fear they are Pagans." Williams says that he was right to be afraid. Are today's Pagans Pan-demonic Earth ecstatics? Perhaps, depending on who's talking. Pagans as a strong force of activist rage? I don't think so. Not yet, anyway. They're too busy enjoying themselves and Great Nature.

Even if practitioners do not conform to outside expectations, Neo-Pagan-Wiccan Earth-based religions exhibit the potential to be among the greatest inspirations for ecological action and social change.

—Robin Leveque, *Whole Earth*, Winter 1997

Veggie libel laws

The food industry began pushing for veggie libel laws following the uproar over Alar in 1989. Washington State growers said that media depictions of the chemical as a cancer threat — most famously in a *60 Minutes* episode — caused sales of apples that were treated with Alar to plummet. The growers sued CBS News but lost when the court held that the exposé should be judged by standards established by the Supreme Court beginning with its 1964 decision in *New York Times v. Sullivan.* Under those standards, meant to foster debate about topics of public import, libel plaintiffs must demonstrate that defendants made statements with "knowledge or 'reckless disregard' of their falsity."

Angered by this defeat — and despite the federal E.P.A.'s subsequent decision to ban Alar as a carcinogen — the food industry prodded various state legislatures to pass veggie libel laws. Under such statutes, the onus is on defendants, who must prove that their statements are based on "reasonable and reliable scientific inquiry, facts or data." Because agricultural corporations produce and control much of the information available about food science, the companies themselves are in a particularly strong position to influence what is considered "reasonable and reliable."

Some veggie libel laws also provide legal fees for plaintiffs, but not for defendants, who prevail in court. Since even victory can therefore lead to bankruptcy for defendants, cash-rich corporations have every incentive to file frivolous lawsuits in order to harass and intimidate their critics.

For example, in response to its efforts to stop Hawaii from irradiating exotic tropical fruits, the Vermont-based public interest group Food & Water received a threatening letter last year from attorneys hired by the United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association. The letter pointedly noted the emergence of food-disparagement laws and warned that "Food & Water's actions will be closely scrutinized. ... We strongly advise you to cease and desist from these irresponsible actions immediately." This crude tactic failed when Food & Water gleefully reported the action in its newsletter and said it looked forward to filing a countersuit over the threat to its right to free speech.

But David Bederman, a law professor at Emory University in Atlanta who is serving as a consultant to several defendants in food libel cases, says the possibility of being sued has many food safety advocates and journalists running scared. "News stories on food safety issues are being subjected to a very high level of libel screening and pre-clearance," he says. "I'm hearing about cases where stories are being spiked by lawyers."

—Ken Silverstein, *The Nation,* 4/20/98

Ground Zero at 21

The Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action will celebrate 21 years of nonviolent witness and resistance to the Trident nuclear weapons system August 6-8, 1998 at its home next to the Bangor Trident submarine base in Kitsap County, Wash.

Ground Zero was formed in 1977 in response to the arrival of the Trident nuclear submarine, USS OHIO. Eight of these Trident subs, along with their 24 Trident I (C4) nuclear missiles, are now based at Bangor. Ground Zero, which sits on three wooded acres next to the Bangor base, was formed to offer a continuous nonviolent presence right next to the heart of the world's most violent and destructive weapons system ever built.

The August gathering, which falls on the 53rd anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, will feature talks by Ground Zero co-founders, Jim and Shelley Douglass, longtime anti-nuclear activists Joe and Jean Gump and Pam Meidell, Director of The Atomic Mirror/Earth Ways Foundation/Abolition 2000.

On August 9, participants will go to Bangor's gates to act on the moral imperative to abolish all nuclear weapons by engaging in, supporting, or witnessing nonviolent resistance. The "Raging Grannies" will be on hand to entertain and educate with their unique brand of musical satire.

For information call 360-377-2586; e-mail <jackisue@ix.netcom.com>; or write Ground Zero at 16159 Clear Creek Rd. NW, Poulsbo, WA 98370.

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Trusting in silence:
Christians doing Buddhist meditation

Jay McDaniel: Breath as icon

I call myself a "recovering fundamentalist." Twenty-five years ago, I was seeking a way of moving past a form of Christian thought that, to my mind, was making me not a more loving person but a more narrow person. I turned to the writings of Thomas Merton, and his interest in Buddhism prompted my own — yet with fear and trembling, because I was enough of a fundamentalist that I didn't know if I wanted to turn to such an alien source.

I went to Methodist seminary about that time, and was asked to be the English teacher for a Zen Buddhist monk from Japan, who is now a Zen master. A year's worth of every day being one-on-one with him gave me a taste for living Buddhism in a way that books could never do. He introduced me to Zen meditation, and ever since then, off and on, I've been doing it, but for the past 10 years in a much more serious way.

We Methodists, our cardinal belief is that God is really nice. Also, we have a great social conscience, so we're very activist. But Methodism lacks the contemplative dimension, and I've found for a full Christian life, you need not only belief and action, but you also need prayer — and not just verbal prayer, something more than words.

I've not found a more helpful way than Zen to find quietness. It's basically very practical, because it takes the body so seriously. I think a lot of western spiritual disciplines have not remembered the importance of the body as a means to quiet the mind.

When Christianity is reduced to applied belief — believing the right things and putting them into action —three problems emerge. One is fundamentalism, which is an inordinate attachment to correct belief. But another is burnout, which is inordinate attachment to correct action — pouring yourself into trying to make the world a better place, but lacking the inner animation to keep on going — and probably being too much attached to the fruits of your action. And if all your stakes are in social action, then it easily seeps into the will to mastery. You call it helping the world for God's sake, but it can be a kind of remolding the world into your own image.

If the person is going to be transformed by Christ, there has to be some way to do it. Most preaching has tended toward the intellectual, and using the will to overcome our sin — which doesn't really work.

— Anna-Louise Reynolds-Pagano

Prayer loosens you from so much attachment to verbal belief, and it gives you a source of animation for creative healing action in the world. And it chastens your tendency to be so attached to results that you can't let the Spirit operate in other, more mysterious ways.

Many years ago, I accepted Jesus as my personal Lord and savior in exactly the way born-again Christians do. And I've not rejected that invitation, I still want that rich connection with the living Christ. But what happened was that that commitment, that entrusting of my heart to Christ, became boxed in with a real conservative theology. I needed to be certain, and I needed for everybody to agree with me so that I was certain I was certain. You can be a liberal fundamentalist as well as a conservative fundamentalist. I know a lot of liberals who also live in their heads, but they live in terms of liberal ideas rather than conservative ideas. Buddhism, I think, can help free us from casting so many stakes in right belief and thus living in our head.

I lead a prayer and meditation group at the local Episcopal church called Journey into Silence, co-sponsored by the Ecumenical Buddhist Society of Little Rock, Ark. and St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Conway, Ark. Every Monday evening, 10 to 20 of us meet in the beautiful, old sanctuary and we do quiet sitting in Zen style. Some of us are Buddhist, some are Christian and some are none of the above. We just say, if you need an hour of your life in which you try to trust in silence, this can be that hour. It's complemented by a commitment to a daily discipline of quiet sitting in Zen style. My morning practice is about 30 to 45 minutes of Zen meditation, and then I do the daily readings from the Book of Common Prayer. So it feeds into *lectio divina* and intercessory prayer.

For the Buddhists, it's awakening to the Buddha-mind.

For Christians, the breath is their holy icon. Breathing is a portable icon, you can take it wherever you go, and

Artist **Anna Oneglia** lives in Santa Cruz, Calif.

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your relaxing into your breathing would be understood as contemplative prayer. It's a living icon, because breathing has a kind of rhythm to it. And you can never be attached to your breathing, but at every moment of our lives we trust and depend on our breathing. It is probably connected with the primal experiences of Spirit that are part of the biblical tradition, because *ruah*, the Hebrew word for Spirit, is etymologically connected to breathing. The immediate experiences of breath and wind and fire were contexts through which early Christians and Jews found God. We feel like we're reclaiming that.

— Jay McDaniel is a theologian, writer and professor of religion at Hendrix College in Arkansas.

Mary Jo Meadow: "That which leads us home"

I was reared Catholic, and for about 12 years I had practiced a Christian devotional meditation. Then I wound up with some of the problems that many people had in the 1960s in the Catholic Church, and I took a 12-year sabbatical. During that time I found Hindu yoga and practiced it.

In 1985, when my last child left home, I took a year's leave of absence from the university, and went looking for the longest, hardest, most intense spiritual retreat that I could find. I did three months of *vipassana* meditation at the Insight Meditation Center in Barre, Mass.

Vipassana is a very precise, disciplined method of being 100 percent present. It has no specifically religious content. It's simply being attentive to what goes on in one's own body and mind, and leads to the kind of self-knowledge that John of the Cross said is the only way to God. It's just being there and attentive.

Vipassana meditation is part of the early Buddhism of southeast Asia. It's just the core teachings of the Buddha, who considered himself an ordinary human being who found a method for healing the human heart. It's an enormously profound psychology. When I started traveling to teach this practice, I closed down my psychotherapy practice, because I truly believed — and I have not been altered in that opinion — that I have a more profound psychology to offer people. I've quit drawing the line between the psychological and the spiritual. We're unified beings and we function as unified beings, and healing is healing. The words "health" and

Meditation **Anna Oneglia**

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"holy" come from the same root, which has to do with wholeness.

The method opens us up in such a way that the necessary work starts getting done in us. It heals unhealed emotional wounds, brings up all our unfinished emotional business, and we just sit and look at it and let it be lifted off. It starts opening up understanding of things like the impermanence of all things, which sets one quite squarely on the spiritual path, when you start realizing the pointlessness of grasping after anything, because it's all going to go eventually. And you see it in a way that's not an intellectual grasping — it's a realization. *Vipassana* is sometimes translated "insight meditation."

Vipassana has the capacity to get people working beneath the surface — instead of just saying prayers or singing songs or listening to words, to get to the still places behind the words, where one can listen very deeply and start to hear and see. There are no shortcuts and no magic — you have to do your own work. And it's by doing your own work that you leave yourself open to what Christians would call grace.

There are analogous concepts in Buddhism — for example, a concept called *dhammoja*, the heart of *dhamma. Dhamma* is the Truth with a capital T, Reality with a capital R — that which supports and upholds us, the basis for all realities, that which leads us home. And the heart or essence of *dhamma, dhammoja*, is that within our heart that, as we become increasingly docile to it, guides us more and more, and takes over guidance of our lives — rather a notion like the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, really.

I also found in Buddhism a broad kind of tolerance that accepts people where they are and doesn't insist that, if you're a member of our club, you can't be a member of someone else's. The key virtue that the Buddhist would be encouraged to develop would be tolerance, probably, not drawing lines between people in any way.

After I found the Buddhist practice, I came back to some sort of working arrangement with the Catholic Church. I'm a Catholic in that it's the family I was born into and I honor my roots; I'm a Buddhist in that it has been the form of practice that has given me more than any other; and I'm a Hindu in that some of my most important spiritual teachers have been Hindu.

— Mary Jo Meadow is a clinical psychologist and professor of religious studies at Mankato State University in Minnesota, who teaches and writes on insight meditation.

Ignatius' notion of finding God in all things is what I think the experience of satori, *or enlightenment, is about.*

— Dan Roche

John Healey: "Decentering"

I was really aware of the need for some kind of contemplative practice in my life, and I knew of a Buddhist group that was meeting in an ecumenical setting. As soon as I went there, the first feeling I had was, I was coming home again.

It was a way to go into silence without having what I'd call the clutter of Christian presuppositions. In the type of Zen that we do, you set aside all thoughts. I found out that as I started sitting in total silence, I was able to hear my own Christian tradition in a new way and really respond to it more. It was like the gospel scene of the Samaritan woman, where the people of the town say, "You told us, but now we hear it for ourselves." All of a sudden I began to hear the Scripture differently. I think it's because we usually bring to the Scriptures all kinds of inherited notions and presuppositions, and this allows us to hear it with a new freshness.

So much of centering prayer — which certainly is a good Christian practice — is trying to grasp the tradition. You might take a phrase from the New Testament, for example, and become centered on that. The difficulty that I find with that is that it feels a little bit like just trying to bring myself in line. In the Buddhist tradition, I think it would be more accurate to say that we seek to become "decentered," less concerned with ourselves and with the judgments, convictions, illusions and prejudices that we use to prop up those "selves." With decentering, you're letting go of your presuppositions and your conceptual framework — and then somehow you're open in a new way to the tradition.

I find that some of the emptying that takes place is very close to a Christian experience of self-emptying — it's a getting out of the way of grace. I think it gets close to justification by faith. It's not your works that are going to save you. You just have to empty yourself, and — as a lot of the Protestant reformers said — let God be God. But that means getting even thought out of the way. It means that you're not going to manage God.

I think that there's a vast gap between a lot of the preaching of the church and the complexity of our own tradition. There's a loss of the mystical dimension — especially in an emphasis on believing rather than experiencing. And when that happens, people fall into a fundamentalism, where a literalism with regard to the Bible takes over. It's when people aren't aware of the complexity of the tradition that they feel that this is going into heresy.

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There's such an enormous gap between the theologians who are trying to work out the relationship of Christianity to the non- Christian religions, and those in the pews. In India, for instance, where they are a minority, both Anglicans and Romans have had to come to terms with other religious traditions. And that's happening more and more in this country. We're going to have to come to terms with Islam, and we're going to have an increasing Buddhist community in the U.S. as the Asian community grows.

I feel a responsibility to carry the Christian story — my story is a story of God's action in the world. But I have to be able to speak about God in a way that doesn't turn God into an idol or into some construction of my own. The Buddhist reluctance to talk about God should make us more cautious in talking about God, and make us speak with more sense of God's mystery.

— John Healey is director of the Archbishop Hughes Institute on Religion and Culture at Fordham University.

Anna-Louise Reynolds-Pagano: Coming into spaciousness

I had been teaching prayer in my parish, and one of the people in my prayer group had experienced some Buddhist meditation, and she encouraged me to do this. I didn't really have time, and I was quite leery — I didn't understand how it would benefit my Christian practice. But eventually, at a very low point in my life, between jobs, I had time to go to a 10-day *vipassana* meditation retreat, led by an Indian Buddhist living in Burma. It was absolutely transformative.

I went through these funny stages while I was there. I got really worried that my bishop would find out and put me up for trial or something. I also felt a strong urge to stand up in the meditation hall, denounce the teacher, and tell these people that the answer was not Buddhism, it was Christ! You're in a cauldron situation where there's no talking, no eye contact, you're simply put back on yourself. So you face yourself and everything comes up.

Meditation at the Zen Mountain Monastery in Mt. Tremper, N.Y. Jack Kurtz/Impact Visuals

The method was breathing and body-scanning — you just go through the body, and feel everything in the body. There's a lot of theory behind it about how the body actually stores griefs and injuries in the cells, and we begin to react out of those rather than out of what's in the present. The idea is to let those pieces dissolve, kind of like air bubbles, as you sit.

The Christian meditation teaching that I've encountered didn't go as far into the psychology of the person, and I think it's very important. If the person is going to be transformed by Christ, there has to be some way to do it. Most preaching has tended toward the intellectual, and using the will to overcome our sin — which doesn't really work — and then kind of making a mystical leap. I noticed that in my sermons I'd describe our human situation, "Here's what the Gospel says we do in our sinfulness ..." and then make sort of a leap: "But when we rely on the power of Christ ..." What is that power and how do we get to it?

At the end of this first Buddhist retreat, I experienced such a diminution of the conflict I've always had with my mother — without any thinking about it. I didn't think about my mother at all, I was concerned about present-day issues that were hounding me as I sat. On the last day, I had this sort of vision, in a metaphorical scene, of my relationship with my mother. She had tried to make me into her image, and I realized that she didn't do it, so I didn't have to fight any more. I don't have to bristle if someone thinks I'm a nice lady; I don't have to show them that I'm really a tough person. To me, it was worth 10 years of psychotherapy.

I was just reading in the daily office from 1 Corinthians 10:13: "God will see to it that every temptation has a way out, so that it will never be impossible for you to bear it." This practice,

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for me, provides the way out. For example, if I'm angry — if anger arises, as the Buddhists say — the practice teaches me to observe the anger in my body, not to repress the feelings and not to act them out, but to go through them. Anger is painful, and if I shout or yell at somebody, or deck them, it's because I'm trying to get rid of that feeling. If I just go through it and experience it, then it dissipates.

In meditation, the small self — the ego, who always wants to be in charge — gets softened, and we become aware of this larger self. That's what Jesus is saying: You must lose your life in order to find it. You must give up your rigidity, your hard edge, your thinking you're right, your wanting to be right. There's much more space in the self — it becomes more open and spacious and larger. I've noticed that a lot, just with noise around my house — some truck backing up and beeping — which has the potential to fill my whole consciousness and really make me mad and say, "I can't work here, there's noise!" In meditation I've learned to take those things and kind of put them somewhere off at the edge. It's there, but it's not knocking me over.

My practice is to sit for an hour every morning, then I read the daily office and go to mass. On Sundays, I go to a local Zen center and sit with them from 9 until 10:30, and then I go to mass, and I find that a great preparation. There is chanting and prostrations. Somebody said that Buddhism is learning to bow, learning to be respectful and compassionate to whatever is.

To me, religions are like wells. They look different on top, everyone has their own little structure, but they all go down to the same water. I don't think they're totally homogenous, but somewhere in this universe, this reality that we're living in, they meet. The Buddhists are great at "both-and." I think the western mind always wants to go "either-or." Is this right or is that right? The Buddhists say, yes!

—Anna-Louise Reynolds-Pagano is an Episcopal priest in the Diocese of North Carolina.

Dan Roche: Just plain "paining"

I had worked with Saul Alinsky and done some fairly radical community organizing in the black community in Chicago, and then I worked in India for an ecumenical foundation for roughly five years. I was pretty much fried after that experience. I had been deported from Hong Kong, I had been beat up a couple of times in India by some paid thugs, I'd been trailed by the KCIA in Korea. I'd been chain-smoking and there was a period of my life in Asia when I was living a very unwholesome, unhealthy life. I wanted to just clean out before coming back to the U.S.

It's profoundly moving to me how much falls away when you really attend to the moment you're in.

— Rosanna Kazanjiaan

I ended up spending about nine months of intensive practice, doing some yoga as well as some intensive Buddhist meditation. After spending some time in an ashram where I stopped smoking, I really began to calm down in terms of my anger level around some of the social justice issues that I'd been working with. Ironically, my way of getting back to my own Christian, Catholic roots was through Buddhist meditation practice.

In order to listen to God, you have to be quiet and aware and attentive. Those are key words in Buddhism as well as in Ignatian practice. It's about being aware of those patterns of behavior that condition me and make me unfree and present obstacles to God flowing through me.

Part of my own practice is being aware of everything in the present moment, whatever is the dominant sensation. If the dominant sensation is pain, then being present to the pain, and seeing what my behavioristic response is to that — fear, aversion, acceptance.

On one retreat, we sat for two hours without moving in a lotus or half-lotus posture. You go through agonizing pain. You can wallow in your pain, and identify with this pain as my pain, with the emphasis on "my" instead of just plain "paining," but if you can let go, a change occurs. The pain becomes more intense, it becomes less intense, it changes to other parts of your body, and, in fact, it can really open up the blocks in your own body. It's just part of the ebb and flow, and you break through these kinds of thresholds. But the key is to dissociate yourself from this "my," this identification and possession.

The Buddha speaks of the source of suffering as people holding onto things as being permanent. This whole notion of detachment is so present in Ignatius of Loyola, and is certainly present in the teaching of Jesus.

The Buddha never affirmed or denied God. Basically the question was, if there's a God, we should go within and experience that awareness ourselves. The experience of the holy people from all mystical traditions is a oneness with all that is — and that oneness with all that is, is God, for me. Ignatius' notion of finding God in all things is what I think the experience of *satori*, or enlightenment, is about.

Ignatius was detached from the monastery, just as the Buddhist would say that the ultimate goal is not to with-

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draw from the world, but to forsake that security in the life of the *bodhisattva* [an enlightened being who is dedicated to helping all living beings reach enlightenment]. The experience is in the marketplace, not in withdrawal but in presence in the world.

Both in Buddhism and Christianity, the point of meditation practice is to foster compassion. What Gandhi and Martin Luther King were speaking to — compassion for the oppressor as well as the oppressed — is a profound kind of spiritual experience. When that infuses social justice work, it is significantly different from a kind of Machiavellian control or power model. In my own experience, there was a need for balance, for a practice of holistic compassion for self, as well as others.

— Dan Roche is a former Jesuit who also spent time as a Trappist novice under the direction of Thomas Merton. He is currently director of the Milford Spiritual Center, a Jesuit retreat house in Ohio.

Meditation at the Zen Mountain Monastery in Mt. Tremper, N.Y. Jack Kurtz/Impact Visuals

Rosanna Kazanjiaan: "Kitchen Buddhism"

What wore me out, to some extent, about Christianity is the incredible number of words that we use. At this stage of my life, I've moved to silence as a kind of blessed relief. Some of the language that is traditional and old and beautiful certainly conjures up images that deepen the spirit, but there wasn't enough silence for me in my own church setting.

I have a dear friend who is a Buddhist, and about six or seven years ago I said to her, "I need some good books about Buddhism and I need to learn how to meditate better." And she said, "Just do it." So I began to sit for short periods of time. Now my practice is to sit each morning for about an hour. Then, in our Greenfire community, we have silent meditation in the evening.

A year ago, I went to Green Gulch, a Zen center in California, and spent 10 days there in fairly disciplined practice, and this year I went to Barre, an Insight Meditation center, for a week.

I'm slowly trying to give myself the gift of silence and coming to stillness. I've found that by making time and space inside myself, I lessen the spaces between myself and others, because I'm making a place from which to come to relationships or to compassion.

The longer I live as a Christian and as a priest, the simpler my faith gets. I'm not as excited by dogma and theological premises as I am about the basic personhood of Jesus as both a compassionate human being and a man of justice. And I think I'm more drawn to the Jesus of the desert and of the quiet times than I am to the theology that has grown up around him.

I find some aspects of Buddhism really useful, because it is so practical. I can call on it for everyday, practical interactions in my life, and ways of living more compassionately and in the moment. It's profoundly moving to me how much falls away when you really attend to the moment you're in — and that doesn't mean not being involved in justice issues — it means being engaged with what is right at hand and what you can actually do something about.

I'm mostly interested in western interpretation of Buddhism through women who are Buddhists and long-time practitioners. I like what they're doing, which is to include the body and the more ordinary things of life — a kind of "kitchen Buddhism."

I live in the country and I have chickens and I do a lot of gardening. I'm the cook here, and I feed the guests in the summertime from the garden. There's something about being just present to those very ordinary things that Buddhism seems friendly with.

And because the Christian way is my way — it's in my bones and my soul — I find that another language that speaks of some similar things makes the landscape a lot larger and richer. I think I needed a freshening up of the language of the spirit.

— Rosanna Kazanjiaan is an Episcopal priest living and working at Greenfire, a retreat center for women in Tenants Harbor, Maine. TW

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Emptying Jesus

by John Keenan

These days, an Episcopalian or Presbyterian may well tell you about her Zen master. And Roman Catholic nuns and priests travel about teaching Zen meditation. I would honor the openness of these seekers, Christians who are willing to recognize wisdom in this practice of the great Buddhist tradition.

For myself, I have been content to carry on with the various traditional forms of Christian contemplation that I learned in a Roman Catholic seminary in the late 1950s. The gift that I seek from the Buddhist tradition is of another shape altogether. That is the gift of philosophy.

I believe that Buddhism can make a contribution to Christianity precisely because of the "otherness" of its language — because it brings to speech very different approaches to philosophical issues, enabling one to pose new questions and thus come to new insights. For this reason, I have chosen to base my attempts at Christian theologizing upon the Mahayana philosophy of emptiness, which teaches that all views are empty of any unchanging core content. Any view, religious or otherwise, is necessarily conditioned by the multitude of historical and cultural factors that are entailed in human living.

Mahayana Buddhist thinkers reject a metaphysics that would define the essences of things in final and irreversible philosophic visions, but they do not thereby banish philosophy or negate the value of human thinking. Paradoxically, by demoting human thinking to a human, conventional status, they affirm its validity as a human construct.

In no wise is emptiness the debunking of meaning in a "that's-all-there-is, Virginia" fashion: No Santa, no magic, just the boredom of everyday life. No. To affirm that everything is "only" dependently co-arisen from a host of different causes is to affirm that — if one could but see with the eyes of awakened wisdom — these everyday experiences are replete with profound significance.

The alternative is to cling each to our own images and ideas as if somehow they could actually capture reality and express it in clear and unambiguous language. Indeed, this clinging to imagined realities is the very meaning of delusion and primal ignorance. And it can be the source of arrogant and intolerant religious certitude.

Mahayana Buddhist philosophies can offer Christians new philosophical models through which to think about the faith without succumbing to traditional metaphysical arrogance. When these models are applied, the Gospel can indeed become diverse to diverse people, can be preached to those who have no understanding of — or who reject — the familiar metaphysical models of the West. We can demonstrate that the faith is capable of being articulated in as many tongues as there are languages.

Mahayana philosophy can, for example, offer an altogether new framework in which to consider the current dispute about the historical Jesus. Opposing views in these debates have become clearer, starker and more denunciatory in recent months. To sketch the positions of one pair of opponents in these discussions: In one corner we have Robert W. Funk with his *Honest to Jesus,* concluding that we have "only the story about Jesus," with no supernatural realities anywhere, no self-serving theological ideologies, no comforting guarantees. Echoing Ernest Renan's *Vie de Jesus,* Funk proclaims that Jesus is a poet who had a glimpse of God's imperial domain, not the theological "heavy" of later Christians. In the other corner we have Luke Timothy Johnson, arguing in *The Real Jesus* that the truly real Jesus is not the construct of Funk's Jesus Seminar, with its debunking approach, but rather the Jesus of the gospels, who is encountered by practitioners as the risen Jesus who lives today.

From a Mahayana philosophical perspective the framework of this "historical Jesus" debate is far too narrow. Each side makes assumptions that would be negated in a Mahayana approach. Each makes claims that, if emptied, would be affirmed in a Mahayana approach.

Funk definitively rejects the overlay of later Christian theory, for in his view this is precisely what Jesus needs to be liberated from. Jesus, the divine son coeternal with the Father, "deserves a demotion," he writes. To achieve this demotion, we are to go on a "theological diet" anchored in the historical Jesus, the sage teacher and poet of God's domain. To this end, Funk attempts to uncover the "specific difference" of Jesus' visage from the general crowd. In a Mahayana context, Funk is indeed engaging in emptying traditional Christological views, presenting us with "just Jesus," in all his historical bareness and power. So far, so good, for no view can represent the final state of anything.

Yet Funk fails to empty emptiness — and thus he fails to recover a sense of the historical reality and significance of early Christian faith experiences and confes-

John Keenan is professor of religious studies at Middlebury College and an Episcopal priest. He is the author of *The Meaning of Christ: A Mahayana Theology* and *The Gospel of Mark: A Mahayana Reading.*

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sions. The point of a metaphysically empty Christ is not to have an essential definition of Jesus arrived at via a historical method driven by a positivistic agenda, which allows us only scanty glimpses of the earliest, pre-gospel figure of Jesus. It is not enough merely to empty views. The view of emptiness itself must be emptied, and this is done by reclaiming the dependently co-arisen truth of the tradition. Indeed, why should we privilege the image of Jesus at one particular point in history — a reconstructed, pre-gospel view of Jesus — over depictions of Jesus in the gospels, or over other views of him throughout the long history of the later faith?

Luke Timothy Johnson in his *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* presents a trenchant and apposite critique of the procedures and protocols of Funk and the Jesus Seminar. He is especially critical of the "creeping certitude" that extrapolates from first instance probabilities to second instance certitudes. Indeed, one often does wonder how Funk or any scholar can be so confident of opinions that seem to admit only of greater or lesser probability. Johnson's critique is a liberating breeze that whisks away those overwrought historical certitudes.

Johnson, however, goes on to assert that there does exist in the gospels a constant, normative and true pattern of Jesus, a pattern that presents a core experience of Jesus as risen, a pattern that is expressed from a post-resurrection perspective. Johnson seems to recommend a new version of the kerygmatic theology so in vogue a few decades ago, a theology in which one can clearly identify the core meaning of the gospels as the real canon within the canon, with little regard for — or need of — historical research into the actual conditions of the times and texts. Johnson rightly critiques Funk's approach as making an unfounded assumption that "the recovery of origins means the recovery of essence." Quite the contrary, he argues, only through a "post-resurrection perspective" can one encounter the real Jesus, the risen Jesus who lives today. "The significance of Jesus is not determined by his ministry alone, but above all and essentially by the mystery of his death and resurrection." Again the intrusion of essentialist categories, as if Nietzsche had never lived and no postmodern ever critiqued anything. More history is needed, not less!

Having declared the emptiness of all ideas and words, the awakened person is liberated to engage in ideas and words with passion and commitment.

If we divorce our awareness of Jesus from critical historical study, then might not the image of a risen Christ become just another frozen paradigm for a self-defined religious life, without in any significant way challenging the very identity of the Christian? Might not a risen Christ serve simply as a support for one's cherished cultural identity? If we can safely ignore the history of Jesus, why can we not ignore the history of later traditions? Furthermore, who says that there is a univocal, core experience of the risen Lord? An "experience" can be just as "essential" as a cherished doctrine.

Johnson's argument for a core experience and a normative perspective parallels the metaphysical approach of traditional Christology. It too would be negated by the Mahayana philosophy of emptiness, but not in the sense of debunking the faith experience or perspective. All core experiences and all perspectives are declared to be empty of inner essence, and thereby we are freed to cultivate and proclaim experiences of the risen Lord and to develop perspectives that bring those experiences to speech, as in the four gospels.

The Mahayanists encountered a parallel problem long ago — they too had to come to terms with an awareness that all meanings, even those associated with the Buddha, were language constructs and empty of any final referent. They too had a metaphysical tradition that claimed to provide the final and absolutely true viewpoint and they too had docetic tendencies that depicted a scarcely human, supernatural Buddha. Thus, Mahayana thinkers declared that words and stories — *a fortiori* historical words and stories — get at nothing core and central, no final, absolute viewpoint, because whatever is contained in a viewpoint is language-formed and humanly constructed. And yet those words and stories are still words and stories, patterning our reading of life, inscribing themselves upon our minds and constructing our identities. Their not being absolute does not mean that they are not true. The patterns, conventional though they be, can nevertheless be powerful and true. True insofar as not absolute. True insofar as producing good fruit, insofar as fostering engagement in compassionate activity.

Zen Buddhism teaches that there is nothing special, no special realm of ontologically true being, no special realm of privileged history, whether early or late. Having declared the emptiness of all ideas and words, the awakened person is liberated to engage in ideas and words with passion and commitment. Precisely because nothing is guaranteed by supernatural status claims, human effort is crucial and indispensable. TW

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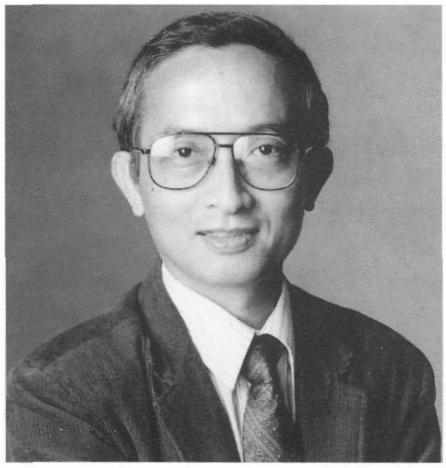
Realigning the wheel: an interview with Ruben Habito

by Marianne Arbogast

Born in the Philippines, Ruben Habito spent nearly two decades in Japan, where he completed Zen koan training. Habito is the author of Total Liberation: Zen Spirituality and the Social Dimension *(Orbis, 1989) and* Healing Breath: Zen Spirituality for a Wounded Earth *(Orbis, 1993). Habito is currently residing in Japan, on leave from his duties as resident teacher at Maria Kannon Zen Center in Dallas, Tex.*



Ruben Habito

Marianne Arbogast: You have written about the growth of Zen in the Philippines among Christians who were deeply committed to social and political change. How did this develop?

Ruben Habito: There was a Roman Catholic sister from Canada — Elaine MacInnes — who had lived in Japan and practiced Zen for many years, and was reassigned to the Philippines in the late 1970s. She began sitting with a group in the Philippines and little by little the group began to grow. They were coming together to sit in Zen meditation and deriving not only new spiritual energy but also a vision for social transformation.

During the days of the Marcos dictatorship, many of them were working in human rights and in rural or urban action. Elaine herself was going to the political prisoners' detention camp, and she was given permission by the military authorities to teach Zen to the political prisoners.

In 1986, during the time of the famous February revolution in the Philippines, many of them were right there in the middle of the action, in front of the tanks and so on. There was even a prominent doctor who was a Zen practitioner who later became a cabinet minister of the Aquino government.

M.A.: Is there still a community like that in the Philippines today, of people who are sitting together and also actively engaged in work for social change?

R.H.: Yes. Maybe they are not engaged in social action as a Zen community, but groups of them or individual members certainly are. The Zen Center for Oriental Spirituality in Manila is now being directed by three persons. One of them is a Catholic sister, Rosario Battung, who was authorized to teach Zen by a Japanese Zen Buddhist master. She is a very good model of that kind of social engagement, having worked in peoples' movements in many rural and urban contexts.

There are more and more persons from the grassroots sectors, even from urban poor areas, who are learning to sit in Zen. I recall one sitting session I attended mainly for a group of about 40 people from a poor district in Manila held at a retreat house run by Catholic sisters. After the sitting session and the shared lunch, they all joined the rally of the farmers in front of the Presidential Palace in Malacanang, demanding land reform and basic changes in society.

M.A.: It sounds like a kind of engaged Christian Zen. Are there other places where that is happening?

R.H.: Well, it need not be just Christians. I have visited Buddhist countries — Sri Lanka and Thailand — where there was a very obvious gap between the rich and the poor, and a structure of power that was not benefitting the poor. And I knew some monks whose task it was to introduce meditation to those engaged in social transformation and vice versa, to introduce the monks to situations of poverty and oppression. And they were in alliance with Christians who were engaged in social transformation, and also learning about meditation.

M.A.: What can Zen offer to Christians who are committed to working for social change?

R.H.: It can offer a recovery of the contemplative dimension of the Christian faith, which tends to get submerged in a lot of do-goodism. There are many Christians who are already engaged in works of social and ecological justice. The meditative or contemplative practice that Zen can offer gives a sense of grounding — not so much in an ideological or even theological view of things, but on a more deeply spiritual level, as they find themselves connected with the community of fellow creatures who are in situations of suffering.

Socially active Christians might tend to say, "Don't just sit there, do something." But then the Buddhists would say,

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

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"Don't just do something, sit there." It's not that one has to choose — they need one another. Sitting there is what grounds people in their connectedness with everyone else, and that very direct and very tangible sense of connectedness with one's fellow beings can empower one to the kinds of social and ecological action that are so much needed in today's world. If their suffering or pain is embraced as one's own, then one cannot but do something about it.

M.A.: Are there differences between a Christian and a Buddhist view of suffering?

R.H.: The Buddhist way of looking at suffering is based on the Sanskrit and thereby Pali-translated word which is *duhkha*. The word *duhkha* literally means that the wheel is misplaced or misaligned. The human situation, then, is seen as dysfunctional because it's not what it's meant to be. That's just a phenomenological observation, that the Buddha noted as his First Noble Truth. The human situation as we know it, based on pursuing egoistic desires and cravings, tends to this kind of dislocation within oneself, with one's fellow human beings and with the natural world. Many Buddhists have taken that mainly on an individual plane, but now there are groups that are calling themselves "socially engaged Buddhists" who are also applying this notion of *duhkha* on a social/ecological plane. All these levels — personal, social and ecological — are characterized by *duhkha*. From the Buddhist view, in the sense that there is dislocation, it needs to be corrected.

Of course in the Christian tradition, liberation theology has called us to a renewed understanding of sin no longer as just an individual act but as something that is also institutionalized and structuralized. What we mean when we say *metanoia*, a total turning back to God, is not something we can confine to an individual personal plane, but it involves all of the implications of our dislocated being.

There is a tendency among some Buddhist communities to see a situation of poverty or of discrimination, for example, as the result of evil actions of the people involved in their past lives. And so they would say, if they are able to bear this faithfully they will gather merit for the next life and they will be reborn in a better state. That's one kind of view from a Buddhist perspective that would be against the liberative vision of Buddhism as such. So it's a task Buddhists have to address.

Zen can offer a recovery of the contemplative dimension of the Christian faith, which tends to get submerged in a lot of do-goodism.

In the same way, many Christians have called our attention to the fact that the cross can be used as a justification or rationalization of situations of suffering — "It's your cross, so you should bear it." But that is certainly a gross misunderstanding of the mystery of the cross — one could even say a blasphemous way of understanding, if it is meant to condone victimization of persons or of other creatures. So we in the Christian tradition need to clarify for ourselves a theology of the cross that is liberative.

M.A.: What is your impression of the trend in this country, where it seems many fewer books are being published now on liberation theology, but more on spirituality? I have heard that meditation retreats often fill up very quickly, whereas seminars on social justice issues don't.

R.H.: It's a swing of the pendulum. Perhaps many of those who were socially and/or ecologically engaged in the 1960s and 1970s find that after all these years, there's nothing that's really changed, and so they're turning to other sources of spiritual nourishment. Or perhaps it's a kind of a long-phase burnout.

There is a sense of hopelessness that can overcome one after years of expending one's efforts, and it can cause a state of numbness. This kind of sitting is a very nourishing practice for people in that situation. They can derive a sense of hope and confidence that one need not tie the worth of what of one is engaged in with the external results. There is a sense of engaging in actions for social/ecological transformation as the path itself.

In the New Testament, the disciples were often given the advice to go to the desert before going out again to proclaim the word. I would liken this to the two phases of breathing — the in-breath and the out-breath. We can't be exhaling all the time.

M.A.: How would you evaluate what seems to be a waning of interest today in being part of big movements for change?

R.H. Perhaps there is a disillusionment with large institutionalized structures. Even though they may start out with an admirable motivation, somehow as a movement grows larger, it tends to get caught up in power plays or ways of action that are motivated more by the desire to preserve the institution. Small communities, where one can truly relate with others and be responsible to the group, seem to be the kind of matrices for social change that we can place our hope in. Community-based groups can be empowered by one another and learn about what others are doing, but without having to be subsumed under a structure whereby there's somebody who calls the shots from the top and then everybody moves based on that. This kind of a vision can be empowered by the practice of contemplation, and Zen is a way that can build community. TW

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Speaking up for Tibet

by Natasha Ma

Last July 25, the 72nd General Convention of the Episcopal Church in the U.S. passed a resolution affirming the importance of Tibetan culture and religion, which teaches nonviolence and peacemaking as a way of life, expressing "concern for the safety and future" of the Tibetan people and urging "direct dialogue" between the Chinese leadership and the Dalai Lama.

Prior to the Chinese invasion of 1950, religion permeated the Tibetans' daily lives. But in 1960, the International Commission of Jurists found "that the Chinese will not permit adherence to and practice of Buddhism in Tibet." All but 13 of Tibet's 6,254 monasteries were mostly destroyed during the Cultural Revolution.

China has bragged, since 1982 when it lifted a ban on religious practices, of allowing its Tibetan captives religious freedom. But today it maintains strict control over religious institutions and practices. In 1993, Asia Watch reported a sharp increase in the number of political arrests of Tibetan nuns. Reports of gender-specific torture, such as rape by electric cattle prods, became numerous. In 1995 two nuns, Gyaltsen Kelsang and Phuntsog Yangkyi, died from injuries sustained in prison shortly after they were released from custody.

Freedom House, in its 1995 survey of political rights and civil liberties in the world, listed Tibet among the worst rated territories, citing China's interference in imposing its own choice for Tibet's second most important religious figure, the Panchen Lama. Gedhun Choekyi Nyima (chosen for this role by the Dalai Lama) has been held under house arrest in Beijing since May 1995. The world's youngest prisoner of conscience (nine years old on April 25, 1998) may become a life-long charge of China's Public Security Bureau. After denouncing the Dalai Lama's choice, Beijing chose Gyaltsen Norbu, a boy of the same age, whose upbringing and education the Chinese leaders will control. When the Dalai Lama dies, they will use their puppet Panchen Lama to force a successor upon the Tibetan people.

In February 1996, orders were issued to close all "politically active" monasteries. Repression, imprisonment, and abuse or torture of monks and nuns accused of political activism have increased.

Since 1995, the New York-based Human Rights Watch/Asia has reported China's steps toward curtailing religious activity in Tibet: forbidding the reconstruction of monasteries destroyed during the Cultural Revolution; limiting the number of monks and nuns allowed in monasteries; prohibiting the building of new monasteries; prohibiting Tibetan State employees and Communist Party members from practicing religion; and strengthening control of the government over each monastery through "Democratic Management Committees" (composed of Chinese soldiers).

In April 1996, the government banned photographs of the Dalai Lama in monasteries and private homes. Police conducted house-to-house searches to enforce the ban. In May 1996, the

Action for Tibet

• Encourage your representatives to push for immediate sanctions on China, as they did on Sudan, until religious persecution has ceased (as pursuant the Freedom from Religious Persecution Act, H.R. 2531/H.R. 1685).

• Adopt a prisoner of conscience through International Campaign for Tibet, 1825 K Street, NW, Suite 250, Washington D.C. 20006; phone: 202-785-1515 and contact the People's Republic of China continuously on his or her behalf. Also write frequently to the prisoner.

• Urge religious leaders to pressure China for permission to visit Tibet.

• Urge your representatives to press China to engage in dialogue with the Dalai Lama concerning Tibet's future.

• Boycott China's products, and inform companies (such as REI) and stores why you are not buying their products.

For further information contact International Committee of Lawyers for Tibet, 2288 Fulton Street, Suite 312, Berkeley, CA, 94704, tel-(510)466-0586; and Amnesty International USA, 500 Sansome Street, #615, San Francisco, CA 94111.

Natasha Ma is a freelance writer living in Texas, who taught English in Tibet for two years (1991-92). She uses a pen name when writing about Tibet, so as not to jeopardize her chance of obtaining permission to return there.

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government began "registering" and "reeducating" dissident monks at Tibet's three main monasteries. "Patriotic reeducation" is now carried out even at remote monasteries. Monks are coerced to sign statements criticizing the Dalai Lama. Those performing in an "unsatisfactory" manner must leave the monastery. Hundreds have been forced out in recent years. Some monasteries have been closed, police stations permanently constructed in others. Every monastery visited by Virginia Congressman Frank Wolf in August 1997 was controlled by resident Chinese overseers.

Last November, Communist party members indicated that the "reeducation" campaign would be extended to schools and villages. Under the pretext that religion would have a negative influence on Tibet's economic development, the new policy aims to undermine and destroy the distinct cultural and national identity of the Tibetan people. The official Chinese newspaper, *Tibet Daily*, has called on Tibetans to embrace atheism.

The continuing exodus of Tibetan refugees into India and Nepal now includes many monks and nuns who report increasingly harsh restrictions on religious freedom and brutalities inflicted on those refusing to comply with the Chinese government directives. Yet corporate interests in the U.S. are pressuring the Clinton administration — in the interest of profit — to turn a blind eye to human rights abuses in Tibet. For over 40 years, Tibet has been abandoned by the world because Beijing threatened to reduce or eliminate trade with any country supporting human rights or freedom for Tibetans. Finally, however, people are speaking up.

In 1996, the International Campaign for Tibet launched an Interfaith Network for Tibet. Last April 24 the Dalai Lama, religious and moral leaders from all faiths, and thousands of Americans gathered at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. to rededicate themselves to securing for all the world's

Milarepa, the laughing Dorje

people the right to worship.

In September 1997, the U.S. House of Representatives International Relations Committee held hearings on religious persecution around the world. Legislation has been introduced by Sen. Arlen Specter (R., Pa.) and Rep. Frank Wolf (R., Va.) that would create a White House position to monitor religious persecution and have the power to impose sanctions against offending countries.

And last October, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright appointed Gregory Craig as Special Coordinator for Tibetan issues — a unique, first-of-its-kind-in-the-world position. Craig's task is to promote human rights and the preservation of the unique religious, cultural and linguistic heritage of the Tibetans, and to encourage dialogue between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama.

The Clinton administration claims to stand up for Tibet's religious freedom, although it will not support self-determination for Tibet. But the two will always be intertwined: Freedom for the Tibetan people will come only when authoritarian rule ends. TW

Tibet's ecological crisis

Before the Chinese invasion, Tibet had the world's most successful system of environmental protection — Tibetan Buddhist compassion. Children were taught that life is to be taken when necessary for survival: Wolves could be killed only because they killed goats, for example, or rats because they devoured crops.

Today, most Tibetans are still gentle and compassionate, but as endangered as their fragile, high-altitude ecosystem. Until the last few years, the true situation was kept secret. Even U.S. wildlife groups funding research in China wouldn't risk their relationships with Beijing. But the truth gradually leaked out: The Chinese are abusing Tibet's natural resources so much that the region may never recover.

At the 1996 World Conservation Congress in Montreal, the International Committee of Lawyers for Tibet, the UK's Free Tibet Campaign, international sponsors including the World Conservation Union, and China's delegation negotiated the first resolution adopted by an international body on Tibet's environment. It supports cooperation, specifically citing concerns over the hydroelectric project at Yamdrok Tso, Tibet's most sacred lake.

But Yamdrok Tso isn't the only body of water in peril. China plans dozens of hydro-electric dams on Tibet's rivers, for the export of electricity to Chinese cities. Tibet lies on a vast plateau rising four kilometers in the Himalayas' shadow. Since all of Asia's major rivers, including the Yellow and Yangtse, begin there, the implications for the entire continent are enormous.

The Tibetan Information Network estimates that a quarter of the accessible forests in both China and Tibet have fallen. Reforestation is neglected, leaving hillsides vulnerable to erosion. Clear-cutting threatens the habitat of the endangered giant panda and golden monkey, as well as over 5,000 plant species, including the native rhododendrons that bloom on the east side of Mt. Everest in the legendary Valley of Flowers.

Tibet's sacred sites are mined for uranium. Nuclear testing continues, and there are reports of nuclear waste dumping on plains where Tibetan nomads suffer illness and death from mysterious diseases consistent with radiation exposure. At least 17 secret radar stations and 14 military airfields are established, as well as at least five bases for ICBMs and intermediate-range nuclear missiles. About 300,000 troops and a quarter of China's 350 nuclear missiles are based in Tibet.

Agricultural development, combined with Chinese migration, is disrupting traditional practices and the ecological balance maintained by Tibetan farmers for centuries.

For Tibetans, wild animals are symbols of freedom. For 1,300 years of Buddhist rule, they were protected. Today, as a result of unrestricted Chinese hunting, wild animals exist only in the most remote areas, and many species are near extinction.

When the 14th Dalai Lama received the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize, it was the first time a citation made specific reference to this ecological crisis. Still in exile, Tibet's spiritual and temporal leader dreams of his home's transformation into a free refuge where humanity and nature can live in peaceful, harmonious balance.

— N.M. [Excerpted from a longer report first published in Toward Freedom, *11/97]*

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Lambeth to examine international debt and economic justice

[The following is excerpted from the study document issued by the planners of Section One of the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops, which is scheduled to meet this summer in Canterbury, England. This section of the conference is to examine the theme, "Called to Full Humanity."]

The measure of the economic crisis that engulfs many developing and underdeveloped countries of the world on the eve of a new millennium can be judged by the fact that all the provinces of the Anglican Communion placed the issue of International Debt as a matter for urgent discussion at the Lambeth Conference 1998. The reason is not difficult to understand. A recent World Bank Report states that in 1995, 1.3 billion people in the developing world still struggle to survive on less than $1 per day and the number continually increases. Every year 8 million children die of diseases linked to impure water and air pollution; 50 million children are mentally and physically damaged because of poor nutrition and 130 million children, 80 percent of them girls, are denied the chance to go to school. At the same time, one-fifth of the world's population enjoys 85 percent of the world's income.

The alarming fact is that despite higher levels of international co-operation since the establishment of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund 50 years ago, populations of the developing world are sliding into a spiral of increasing poverty. For example, World Bank figures show that the gap between the rich and poor is widening; the richest fifth of the world's people had 60 times more income than the poorest fifth in 1991, up from 30 times in 1960. Oxfam is one among many voices of development agencies who maintain that debt repayments contribute heavily to this tragedy of escalating poverty. A 1996 Oxfam Briefing Report states that it would be possible by the year 2000 to make social investments which would save the lives of around 21 million African children and provide 90 million girls with primary education, for less than is currently being spent on servicing international debt.

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The trigger for the current debt crisis was the increase of oil prices by OPEC countries. Some of the new oil income was lent to developing countries, with little attention paid to how viable the loan was. The borrowing governments used the loans for varying purposes, depending on the nature of those governments. Then world interest rates rose dramatically and prices of developing countries' exports fell. The debt became unpayable. Accordingly, the debt is further impoverishing the poorest countries' citizens. The debt servicing bill of many poor nations is often the highest budget item, several times more than is spent on basic needs like health care and education. In reality, the debt payments now being paid by the poor countries of the world are usurious interest repayments which have escalated well beyond what could have been anticipated at the time when the loan agreement was entered into. The amount of the original capital loan, in most instances, was paid off. But interest payments have accumulated, and the sum still owed has risen. In order to keep paying interest, debtor nations find they have to borrow more. It is a vicious spiral which, critics have noted, amounts to a new form of slavery.

A recent World Bank forecast on African economies has encouraging news. It reports that half sub-Saharan African countries have had economic growth of at least 5 percent in the past two years. And that overall economic growth in Africa is forecast at 3.8 percent over the next decade. The report, however, insists that such growth will not benefit the people of Africa unless Africa is relieved of crippling debts.

The debt crisis is a symptom of a breakdown of the management systems of the global economy. First among the causes of this breakdown is globalisation that undermines power of national governments. National economies are now inter-linked as they have never been before. Flows of money, technology and trade make nations more and more inter-dependent. A trillion dollars cross national boundaries through electronic transactions every day. Trading nations are now grouping together into economic and trading blocks to effect ease of movement of goods and capital across boundaries and also to protect themselves against competitors. On this

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basis, the world economy is being dominated by a few countries, mainly the Group of Seven, the most successful trading nations of the world. These are the creditor nations and, as they have an interest in the economies of the poorer nations of the world, they also have power to dictate how those economies are managed. Australia and New Zealand, for example, have suffered from the consequences of the formation of the European Union as tariff increases mean that their agricultural produce is no longer competitive. Ironically, globalisation is designed to achieve exactly the opposite result.

Favouring globalisation is the argument that consumers now have the possibility of choice and, through greater competition, market factors maintain lower prices. It is also argued that globalisation makes possible the development of a mechanism for regulating the markets, thus ensuring stability. For the poor nations of the world, however, globalisation means deregulation which can lead to cheap imports being dumped in their markets to the detriment of the domestic producers, with the consequent loss of jobs. In practice, the "hidden hand" of macro-economic markets was intended to benefit the lowest strata of society by a process known as "trickle down", but this has not materialised. Instead it maintains a vice-like grip over the destinies of ordinary people.

The other factors lying at the root of the critical state of the global economy are corruption and militarism. Some national credit agreements are made available to finance the purchasing of goods and services from particular creditor nations. This arrangement was not totally innocent. It also provided a facility for corrupt and despotic leaders to trade in arms from Western arms manufacturers in order to engage in wars they cannot afford, thereby disturbing the peace of neighbouring nations and oppressing opposition within their own countries. In situations of conflict, the military expenditure bills, the loss of lives and skills, the direct damage to property and production facilities, disruption to education, all have a devastating effect on the economy and life itself. A military culture inevitably breeds corruption and abuse of power and the violation of human rights. It is an excuse for suspending democratic rights and civil liberties and it makes government unaccountable to the people.

Theological Reflection

Economics is a matter of life. The Greek etymology of the word can be broken down as *oikos* and *nomos*, meaning the law of the household. It is the management of the household that ensures that "the mountains yield prosperity for the people and the hills, in righteousness" (Psalm 72:3). Christians cannot avoid engagement with economic issues. The World Council of Churches Study on Economic Life, Christian Faith and the World Economy (1992: 4/15) makes an impregnable case that Christian people and churches must be critically involved in the economic debate and in the formation of economic policy.

Christians have a duty to steward the resources of Creation, preserve their renewable capacity, meet the requirements of life for those in need and share with the destitute and poor. Stewardship is a fundamental obligation for Christians. The health of the natural order must be preserved and the environment sustained. In order to maintain this eco-balance, it is essential that rampant consumerism be restrained and production kept at sustainable levels. Christians must question price manipulation arrangements whereby production is curtailed in order to decrease supply and increase demand and schemes that promote production of cash crops in a way which limits food production for primary consumption. Good stewardship demands that banks and donors take corrective steps when their use of resources lead directly or indirectly to poverty.

Economic theory and practice are morally sustainable only if they promote the justice of God and the well-being of humanity. God, in Christ, came to live among us and took our nature upon himself, calling humankind to care for one another and to bear one another's burdens.

The call for the remission of debt has strong biblical authority. The Book of Leviticus requires that, in the promised land, the abode of those who are called to holiness because the Lord their God is holy, inhabitants must regularly order their society afresh, in keeping with the holiness of God. God's holiness mandated the people to set limits on the gains of the rich, to minimise hardship on the poor and indebted. During the Jubilee Year balances in nature and in human relations had to be restored. There is no evidence that this ideal society was ever achieved, though the practices of returning land and cancelling debt were widespread at the time. The devastation and human breakdown we are experiencing from the magnitude of world debt merits our advocacy of the application of these biblical values to the present circumstances.

Economic theory and practice are morally sustainable only if they promote the justice of God and the well-being of humanity.

As we approach the end of the millennium, it is fitting that the church challenges the developed world to the remission of debt. Debt remission means that the poor nations of the world can make a fresh start. This is the Year of Jubilee. For those in debt, this would

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be an occasion to experience the redeeming love offered by Jesus on the Cross as he personally, spiritually and physically embodied the values of mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation, recognised in the Jubilee tradition. Creditors of the world would experience the offering of sacrificial love in the true unity of humanity, thereby being liberated from the weight of the burden of guilt from the oppression and poverty they helped foster.

Putting into context

It is demonstrable that the present arrangements of the global economic system are not sustainable. Restructuring the world's economy presents the greatest challenge before us, our Church and our nations. Debt results in a spiral of poverty. The international banking system and modern technology makes for ease of speculative currency dealing and can lead to bankruptcies like the one of the London-based Barings Bank. The laws of the modern market economy stimulate individualism and greed. Two-thirds of the world must not be condemned to a life of debilitating poverty without hope of relief. The church must address the underlying immorality that has rendered all of this both possible and desirable for many.

Recognising that its own policies to date have made only marginal impact on reducing world poverty, the World Bank had reassessed its strategies and begun to take its own measure to address the situation. The Bank has devised a new strategy based on promoting broad-based economic growth, developing human capital and providing safety nets for vulnerable groups. The vehicle for this strategy is the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). The report states that "this learning process must involve the participation of the poor themselves so that they can better understand and have input into the government's programme to generate growth and reduce poverty." SAP, which goes under the slogan, "short-term pain for long-term gain," has been subject to severe criticism, for example, for failing to create jobs or promote processing of raw materials at the point of production. Neither has it dealt with the problem of corruption. As a result, critics say, commodity prices have continued to fall. However, a new and welcome debt-relief programme has been introduced, but it is insufficient and its implementation has been sluggish. Its first beneficiary is Uganda, but observers point out the arrangement will make only a minimal contribution to relieving Uganda of its debt. Unfortunately, its spending on debt repayments remains twice its health spending.

The laws of the modern market economy stimulate individualism and greed.

Ultimately, we must return to the proposal to cancel international debt. It can be argued that there are three compelling reasons for doing so. First is a moral imperative, recognising that no community that claims to be civilised should tolerate a world situation where unpayable debt burden fosters the evils of mass malnutrition, disease and illiteracy. By making basic human rights and opportunities available to poor people, debt relief would encourage human dignity at the close of the 20th century. Second, is the economic argument. Debt reduction will release the productive potential of marginalised communities and help create a framework for more self-reliant growth. Third, is the argument of prudence. It is not in the long-term interests of the world, and certainly not of the richer countries, that so many people be pauperised.

Proposals to cancel debt must also address how to prevent the problems recurring. The Archbishop of Cape Town has put forward proposals for both lenders and borrowers, limiting the extent and use of loans and increasing the influence of the general public in the borrowing country.

In conclusion, it must be noted that economics should never disregard its impact on the lives of people or theological and ethical considerations. Neither should those who manage the economy on our behalf be left unaccountable. The economic system must always be alive to public criticism and be ready to reshape itself to meet the needs of the people. Economics is not independent of the laws of nature or ethical responsibility. Basic economic literacy will help the church to address these issues.

Openly gay candidate in June 6 episcopal election

The upcoming election of a bishop to succeed John Shelby Spong of Newark may intensify debate over the status of homosexual clergy living in committed relationships — both in this country and at the Lambeth conference of Anglican bishops this summer. Among the five candidates for the Newark post is Gene Robinson, the canon to the ordinary in the Diocese of New Hampshire and an openly gay man living in a committed relationship. As with any episcopal election, a majority of the church's diocesan standing committees and a majority of the bishops with jurisdiction would have to ratify the election results. The other candidates on the slate are Jack Croneberger of Tenafly, N.J., Rosemari Sullivan of Alexandria, Va., Gray Temple, Jr., of Atlanta, Ga.,,Will Wauters, of Lawrenceville, N.J, and Jack McKelvey, the diocese's suffragan bishop.

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'Injustice does not go away because of time'

On June 18, 1925, Robert Marshall, a black coal miner who was suspected of killing a white law enforcement officer, was lynched before a crowd of 1,000 people just outside of Price, Utah. C. Matthew Gilmour has never forgotten. He was 15 years old at the time, and saw the man who bought the rope. This past April Gilmour, now 88, invited religious and political leaders to join him in publicly acknowledging the injustice that had occurred — and in seeking reconciliation.

"Injustice does not go away because of time," said Gilmour, a retired lawyer and active Episcopalian. "It is important that injustice is acknowledged. Because of [this service] we have a new beginning coming. We can realize that all of us are members of one another."

Participants included Carolyn Irish, Episcopal bishop of Utah, Metropolitan Isaiah of the Greek Orthodox Church, George Niederauer, bishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Utah, France Davis, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Salt Lake City and Ben Banks, elder of the Utah South area of the Mormon Church.

Utah's governor, Mike Leavitt officially declared the day Racial Diversity Day and in his proclamation spoke of the service of reconciliation as an important step in overcoming racial divisions. A letter from President Bill Clinton said, "Racial diversity has contributed to the strength of our country," but "we must recognize that hatred and prejudice sometimes have separated us. ... Such community action as yours will help to bridge the gap."

Marshall had been apprehended outside of Price after a nearly three-day manhunt. Following his capture, sheriff's deputies transported him to jail in Price. Marshall was left unattended in a car outside the jail while the deputies were inside. An angry crowd reportedly took the car with Marshall in it and headed south to a hanging tree outside of town. The deputies caught up with the crowd 10 minutes after Marshall was hanged. They cut him down. Discovering that Marshall was still alive, the crowd overpowered the deputies and rehanged him.

Marshall's body was photographed while hanging from the tree and then placed on display at the local funeral parlor. Pictures of the hanging were sold to townspeople for 25 cents.

Eleven men were arrested for Marshall's death. The Grand Jury convened to investigate the matter called 120 witnesses, but not one would give evidence against the accused. One story describes the atmosphere in the jail as much like a party, with cold drinks for all the prisoners. One person reported at the time, " Why make waves with these boys now? The deed is done. It saved the town a bunch of money. They would have hung him anyway."

A *Salt Lake Tribune* story of the time reported, "Vengeance was claimed."

"Robert Marshall was lynched because he was an itinerant black man," said historian Larry Gerlach, who has extensively researched the Marshall lynching. "Community solidarity kept the 11 accused of lynching him from coming to trial. This was certainly an act of racism."

Noting that the Marshall lynching was not the only lynching in Utah at the time — there were 17 others that year — Gerlach said it "illustrates both the thin veil of civility under which we live and the deep tragedy that resulted when the rule of law was ignored."

"Robert Marshall was lynched because he was an itinerant black man. Community solidarity kept the 11 accused of lynching him from coming to trial. This was certainly an act of racism." — Larry Gerlach

Bernie Morris of Price donated and inscribed the gravestone placed to mark Marshall's previously unmarked grave. The inscription reads, "Robert Marshall. Lynched June 18, 1925. A Victim of Intolerance. May God Forgive."

— based on a report by Jeff Sells in *Diocesan Dialogue*, the newspaper of the Episcopal Diocese of Utah

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Buddha lite

by Jim Perkinson

***Seven Years in Tibet,* film directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud, 1997.**

Seven Years in Tibet has come and gone, giving North Americans the latest popular culture version of "redemption from without" — in this case, by way of the Dalai Lama as "saving sage of the east." Such a salvation packaged in stunning cinematography enters the hungry Western eye all too easily. But beneath the alluring visual surface there is a useful rebuff at work for the eye alert to irony. Buddhism is uncompromising in the seriousness with which it takes the idea that redemption begins and ends in the here and now and makes use of anything to hand (including movies).

At first blush, *Seven Years* incarnates nothing so much as the typical Western fantasy of redemption on the run. All the requisite signifiers are there: Brad Pitt as blond "hero-bad boy" giving us the first-person narration of Heinrich Harrer's autobiographical account; Tibetan ochre and maroon garb, snoring trumpets, scintillating cymbals, and guttural male chant providing the sensible intrigue; smoky dark of monastic inner sanctums leveraging mystery; even a Yoko Ono look-alike with braided hair subtly suggesting the "erotic exotic." The plot is patent: disaffected virile conqueror nearly self-destructs at the far end of his arrogance, descends into his "dark heart" in the chaos of a colonial war situation, begins to find redemption in small "revelations" of friendship and meaning at the bottom of fortunes, is embraced by the "penetrated" other culture and honored for his Western know-how, exchanges expertise for wisdom in his intimacies with the "saving other" (the then adolescent Dalai Lama, in this case). By movie's end, he has come full circle, owned the integral connection with the son he ran away from fathering, returns to Austria and teaches his "salvation child" mountain climbing under the flag of Tibetan independence. Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is here stripped of horror, recycled through Kevin Costner's "going-native-redemption" in *Dances with Wolves,* and updated for a Richard Gere kind of activism that is sincerely, but naively, concerned for imperial destruction "over there."

At first blush, Seven Years *incarnates nothing so much as the typical Western fantasy of redemption on the run.*

None of this is wrong as far as it goes. But the ironies abound. That the lesson of simplicity should require such a complicated adventure, that healing of the powerful comes from the "grace" of the violated, that redemption is finally a matter of return to the embrace of a father-son relationship visualized in terms of sitting alone atop a mountain in Europe, is nowhere queried. The citation of statistics related to the real-life destruction of the Tibetan people and culture by China since the 1950s at the movie's conclusion is in no way linked up to the reality of ongoing struggle against such—or to larger-scale analysis of the global patterns of imperial takeovers that render all of us complicit in "the problem."

The right of the Tibetans to maintain their borders and manage their treasures against the illegal ingress and imperial appropriation of European "adventurers" like Harrer and Aufschnieter is exactly what is at stake in their resistance to Chinese takeover. And European images of redemption that locate such in a panoramic vision of "father" and "son" one more time conquering the heights and sitting alone looking down on "the cosmos" comes all-too-uncomfortably close to the imperial Christian vision of God-Father as King and Savior-Son as Judge dominating human destiny from on high.

More to the point for a Christian conversation about the kind of redemption contemporary Tibetan suffering may represent is the Dalai Lama's gentle rebuke of Harrer's expressed desire to remain with "His Holiness" near the story's end. The boy-king simply repeats Buddha's own refusal to be cultically domesticated: "Salvation does not come from the sight of me. It demands strenuous effort and practice. So work hard and seek your own salvation diligently." What such could mean must begin with the question of why we would rather have our salvation offered from the cloud-plateaus of Northern India (or a tranquil hill next to the Sea of Galilee) than find it in the struggle against our own demons organized in transnational practices and congressional policies.

Seven Years in Tibet is good entertainment; but it is precisely a capitulation to the Powers we should be challenging to mistake romanticizing Tibetan culture for actual engagement with our own spiritual agenda. Hollywood can never offer more than Buddha lite. The real thing will taste of sweat and may require blood. TW

Jim Perkinson is a member of The Episcopal Church of the Messiah, Detroit, and director of the D.Min. Program at Ecumenical Theological Seminary in Detroit.

review

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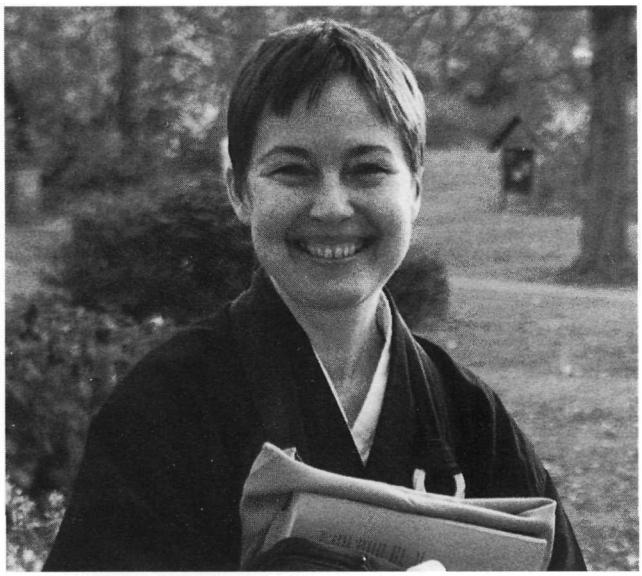

Susan Jion Postal

Suddenly, out of some part of my viscera, came this sentence, "Would you baptize me?"

Sitting with Christ

by Marianne Arbogast

In a small, wood-frame church in Rye, N.Y., silence is doubly honored — on Sundays, by a community of Quakers who gather there for weekly meeting, and on week nights, by Zen students who sit together under the guidance of Zen teacher Susan Jion Postal. The two streams of tradition — Buddhist and Christian — that flow together in the Rye Meeting House/Empty Hand Zendo merge also in Postal herself.

"It's like two lineages," Postal says. "In Buddhism, they talk about the line of transmission, and I think of it as intravenous— I've got two i.v.s going, and they mix in the heart."

For Postal — in contrast to many westerners who come to Zen from a Christian background — Buddhism came first.

The daughter of European immigrants who had rebelled against a strict Lutheran upbringing, Postal grew up in a "very freethinking but spiritually inclined atmosphere." From an early age, she sought out quiet times and places, but her contacts with Christian churches left her unsatisfied.

"What was taught there had these boxes around it," she explains. "We were told, anyone outside this little box isn't saved."

At Stanford in the late 1950s, Postal attended a lecture by Alan Watts. "I was very excited," she recalls. "I understood there was a teaching that was about breaking these very boxes that had so bothered me and expanding everything into wide open possibilities." Years later — after a graduate degree from Harvard in anthropology, two semesters of teaching and marriage — Postal discovered a form for her inquiry. She met a Tibetan Buddhist teacher, the first person she'd encountered who "offered a teaching that wasn't just in books, that had to do with transforming one's being, becoming awakened."

Devoting herself to meditation practice, Postal soon realized that "something was happening, a cleansing and a purifying. After a few years, I knew for myself that something was possible, that there is such a thing as transformation."

After 10 years, Postal moved on to study Zen. At this point divorced and the mother of two children, she struggled between work and family responsibilities and "an almost driving aspiration to break through and somehow be not bound by this self which I began to know so well."

Her breakthrough came with koan practice, which she took up at her teacher's insistence. Postal was given the "mu koan": "A monk asked Joshu, 'Does a dog have buddha-nature?' And Joshu answered, 'Mu.'"

"A koan is a question which can't be answered with the conceptual mind," Postal explains. "One is asked to bring one's entire being into becoming the question. You have to sound this 'mu' out loud with your teacher. I was far away from my voice. I was self-conscious, critical, skeptical, and certainly wasn't manifesting as the sound of 'mu.' I decided I was hopeless, just a failure. But I kept sitting — there was this tiny voice, saying that's what you're supposed to be seeing, this is your self operating, this is up against the wall."

After a few months, Postal says, her teacher "heard that something had shifted,

Witnesses, the quick and the dead

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

that I wasn't so far away from that sound."

Soon afterwards, she found that "a loosening was happening. I would sit and cry and shake. It felt like the house of cards on which Skeptical Sue and the whole structure was built began to crumble. The last three months were a little scary, but in the end it was tremendously joy-filled."

Yet soon afterwards,a serious impasse with her teacher plunged Postal into severe depression. "It was very dark, I was scared that I was just going to die, and if I hadn't had my son home I wonder if I wouldn't have harmed myself. I did go for some short-term counseling, and the person I went to was very wise — a devout Christian psychiatrist well-versed in Zen. He said, 'I see something much bigger than this problem with your teacher. You're just getting ready to turn your whole life over.'"

What neither anticipated was the setting where this would occur.

"Somehow my feet walked into the local Episcopal church," Postal says. "I went every single evening for vespers, and the psalms spoke to my heart. I just sat and cried and prayed.

"The priest there hardly talked to me. I said, 'Do you mind if a Zen person comes? I'm going to be ordained as a Zen priest.' He kind of looked at me funny, but he said, 'Sure, everybody's welcome here.'

"One day after vespers I couldn't get out of my chair. The priest said, 'Would you like to talk?' and we went into his study next door. I really had nothing to say, I couldn't talk. And he started talking about what was coming up in his church, and how he was going to do baptisms, and suddenly, out of some part of my viscera, came this sentence, 'Would you baptize me?' He looked at me and said, 'Now?!' and I said, 'I don't know.'

The priest invited Postal to go back into the chapel and showed her the rite of Baptism.

"He said, 'Are you comfortable with these words?' and I said, 'I translate very well.' So he got out this little tin cup and this bowl, and proceeded with the sacrament of Baptism. And I can only say that it was like a huge match came and lit up my heart. And that huge ignition was definitely from Christ. It was Jesus' forgiveness of the cause of the pain I'd been in, and therefore my ability to finally forgive, complete peace with the whole woundedness that I'd been through. I felt such joy!

To be truly compassionate is to give with no giver.

"The next day I woke up, and my heart was still on fire. I went to the zendo, which was my custom that night of the week. I could talk to my heart — which is a strange way to put it — but I could ask, 'What do I do with this?' And I got a clear, almost verbal answer, 'Sit here. Just keep on sitting here with Christ.'"

For some time after her baptism in 1985, Postal expected that she would take some role in the Episcopal Church "because I thought that's how you express gratitude," she says. Instead, she came to realize "that my work to do in this life is very much involved with Zen. But I do it with these flames in my heart that are always there."

Postal, who was later ordained a Zen priest by a different teacher, feels that interfaith work gives her the opportunity to honor her baptism. In Buddhist-Christian dialogue and retreat settings, she participates "as a Buddhist teacher, but acknowledging the truth and the power of the Christian experience in my own body.

"I can call on each tradition separately, but often I choose not to," Postal reflects. "It's like there's this field of emptiness or openness or peacefulness that doesn't have to do with any tradition, that feels like home. And then there is this heart flame. I notice for myself, in times of sorrow or trouble I call on it."

Now 58, Postal works as an activities director at a nursing home, a field she entered after being diagnosed with systemic lupus in the mid-1970s. The progression of her illness, which causes fatigue and severe headaches, is stretching her capability to continue that along with her Zen teaching schedule.

"It's an edge in my practice," she acknowledges. "I think that's one of the basic teachings in Zen — being okay with what we don't like."

On the altar in the Empty Hand Zendo is a statue of Kwan Yin, the *boddhisattva* of compassion.

"Kwan Yin is the representation of the awakened, compassionate heart," Postal explains. "In Japanese it's called Kanzeon, which means the one who hears the cries of the world.

"Compassion is basic to Buddhism. To be truly compassionate is to give with no giver, because the notion of self has been dissolved and we're able to respond to a situation appropriately and freely. Zen is very much about how you live and not about some self-absorbed thing.

"In this country Buddhist communities have done some wonderful hospice work with AIDS patients and all kinds of peace work. But Thich Nhat Hanh and other leaders in the activist realm all say you have to keep on sitting, because as long as your motivation is a kind of do-gooder thing where you're getting self-inflated, that's a real limitation on the amount of good you can do. So much more can happen if we can really give with no giver, no notion of 'I'm giving to you,' no I and other. Your neighbor isn't separate. You reach out to others because it's your own life." TW

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Letters,

continued from page 3

HERE'S MY RENEWAL of my many-years subscription. *The Witness* is a most important part of my regular reading schedule. Retired for a dozen years, I find it a refreshing alternative to all the other "church periodicals" I read on a regular basis. My sincerest thanks to the entire *Witness* staff for a continually superb job!

Josiah O. Hoffman, Jr.
Sacramento, CA

YOUR ARTICLES ARE WELCOME FOOD for this feminist soul starving to stay spiritually alive in our patriarchal culture.

Patricia Roop Robinson
Westminster, MD

I'M LOOKING FORWARD to receiving my new subscription. SE Kansas is a very conservative area and I feel *The Witness* will be a welcome addition to my home and my liberal viewpoints.

Buddy D. Bailer
Iola, KS

Defining the issues

I DIRECT MY COMMENTS to the letter in the March 1998 *Witness* by Zabeth Adams. She wrote to say she'll not renew her subscription to *TW* because, among other reasons, she prefers that you seek common ground "rather than polarization." I suggest that unless both sides are very clear on where they stand, seeking common ground is not possible. The issues first have to be defined.

Obviously, the editors of *TW* see their mission to state their views as succinctly as possible. It is for others to establish common ground between the two sides of any issue.

Adams' statement reminds me of some of Mother Teresa's critics, who said she should have sought ways to change the social structures that caused poverty. Her response (paraphrased): "It is my job to minister to poverty's victims. God calls others to change the structures that cause it."

TW is doing its job. Perhaps Adams (or someone like her) will establish a magazine that "seeks common ground." Meanwhile, I believe you do seek unity and communication. Keep up the good work!

Donna Acquaviva
Gerrardstown, WV

Gun control

I FEEL LIKE A LONE VOICE regarding activism to support gun control and the ultimate disarmament of the general population. I am a donor to Handgun Control, Inc. and the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence. Their role is vital and has met measured success, but no movement is successful without grass root activism.

I protested a local gun show in Phoenix, Ariz., by myself. It was my first attempt at a protest. I received some support from passersby, but, not surprisingly, was mostly subjected to vehement antagonism. I feel uncomfortable repeating this by myself and seek an organization or a group of like-minded individuals.

Do you know of any organizations or individuals who are active in anti-gun demonstrations or have any advice on how I can begin such an organization? I am most interested in my local Phoenix area, but would be willing to travel up to 500 miles away to make contacts.

Gerry Theisman
Phoenix, AZ

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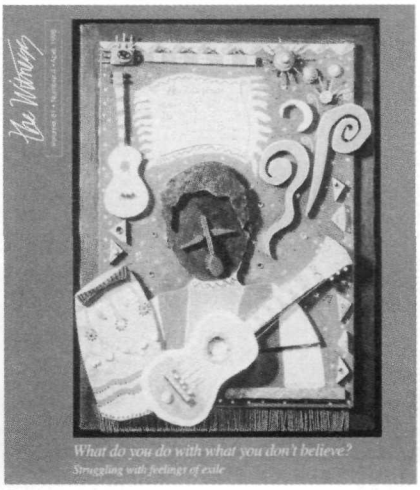
Trickster spirit:
a paradigm for social action?

The Witness

Volume 81 • Number 7/8 • July/August, 1998

What do you do with what you don't believe?

THE APRIL ISSUE of *The Witness* is wonderful. I did not have a lot of time when I picked it up to start reading so I started at the back where the shorter items are. I was hooked by the time I finished reading the interview with Verna Dozier. The whole issue is bold, courageous and much needed for the Episcopal Church at this time. I love the concept of ambiguity being the essence of Faith! Right on!



I don't want to give up my issue — which I usually take to our parish library to be read by others. So I will buy another.

Thanks for keeping our minds open.

Judy Yeakel
Langley, WA

Letters

AS AN ATHEIST, I have subscribed to *The Witness* because of its position on peace and justice issues, and its articles in these areas that are hard to find elsewhere. I was particularly pleased to find an interview with one of my favorite authors and co-anarchists, Ursula LeGuin.

Jane Slaughter did an excellent job of

Classifieds

Working for peace in Ireland

Corrymeela is a Christian Community working for peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Founded in 1965, Corrymeela works with Youth, School, Church and Community groups bringing people of all ages and traditions together. To become a "Friend of Corrymeela" or for information contact: Corrymeela Community, 8 Upper Crescent, Belfast, N. Ireland, BT7 1NT. Phone 011 44 1232 325008. Fax 011 44 1232 315385. E-mail <belfast@corrymeela.org.uk> Web site www.corrymeela.org.uk.

Episcopal Urban Intern Program

Work in social service, live in Christian community in Los Angeles. For adults 21-30. Apply now for the 1998-99 year. Contact: The Rev. Gary Commins, 260 N. Locust St., Inglewood, CA 90301. 310-674-7700.

Vocations

Contemplating religious life? Members of the Brotherhood and the Companion Sisterhood of Saint Gregory are Episcopalians, clergy and lay, married and single. To explore a contemporary Rule of Life, contact: The Director of Vocations, Brotherhood of St. Gregory, Dept. W, Saint Bartholomew's Church, 82 Prospect Street, White Plains, NY 10606-3499.

AFSC staff openings

The American Friends Service Committee maintains a list of current staff openings on its home page: <http://www.afsc.org.

Arun Gandhi at Kanuga

Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mohandas K. Mahatma Gandhi, will lead a conference entitled A Garland Instead of Ashes: Nonviolence in the Midst of Violence, September 14-17 at Kanuga. Explore the secrets and successes of nonviolence in workshops led by experienced staff. Kanuga Conferences, PO Box 250, Hendersonville NC 28793; 828-692-9136; kanuga@ecunet.org; www.kanuga.org

N. Michigan bishop search

The Discernment Committee for the election of the Bishop of the Diocese of Northern Michigan will be accepting candidates' names for the position of bishop between June 15 and August 15, 1998. Nominations must be submitted on a prescribed form which may be obtained by calling the Diocesan Office (800-236-0087). Names may be submitted by the candidates themselves or by others. Persons submitting the names of others must confirm their willingness to be candidates. All candidates who enter the process will be asked at a later date to submit resumes and DCO profiles and to complete a questionnaire. To assure all candidates are treated equitably, no nominations will be accepted after August 15.

The Diocese of Northern Michigan has been on the forefront of ministry development, attracting the attention of the Anglican Communion. We are a rural diocese of 30 congregations in the beautiful Upper Peninsula of Michigan. We seek candidates who will understand, accept, and respect the diversity of congregations in Northern Michigan in their development of baptismal ministry and will provide visionary leadership embracing mutual ministry (total ministry). All baptized Episcopalians are encouraged to apply.

Copies of the Diocesan Profile are available from the Diocesan Office. To request a copy, call or write. All correspondence should be addressed to: Discernment Committee to Elect a Bishop, Diocese of Northern Michigan, 131 E. Ridge St.; Marquette, MI 49855.

Classifieds

Witness classifieds cost 75 cents a word or $30 an inch, whichever is less. Due 15th of month, two months prior to publication.

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drawing out Ms. LeGuin and her credo. The result is a well-rounded portrait of a humanitarian, a thinker and a strong advocate for equality and justice. Her book, *The Dispossessed*, a science-fiction model of anarchism, remains one of my all-time favorites.

Thank you. It proves once again that my subscription money and my reading time are well-spent.

Suzanne Astisdel
Detroit, MI

THE LATEST ISSUE (April) alone was worth a year's subscription.

It was fantastic!

Alice Allen
Mashpee, MA

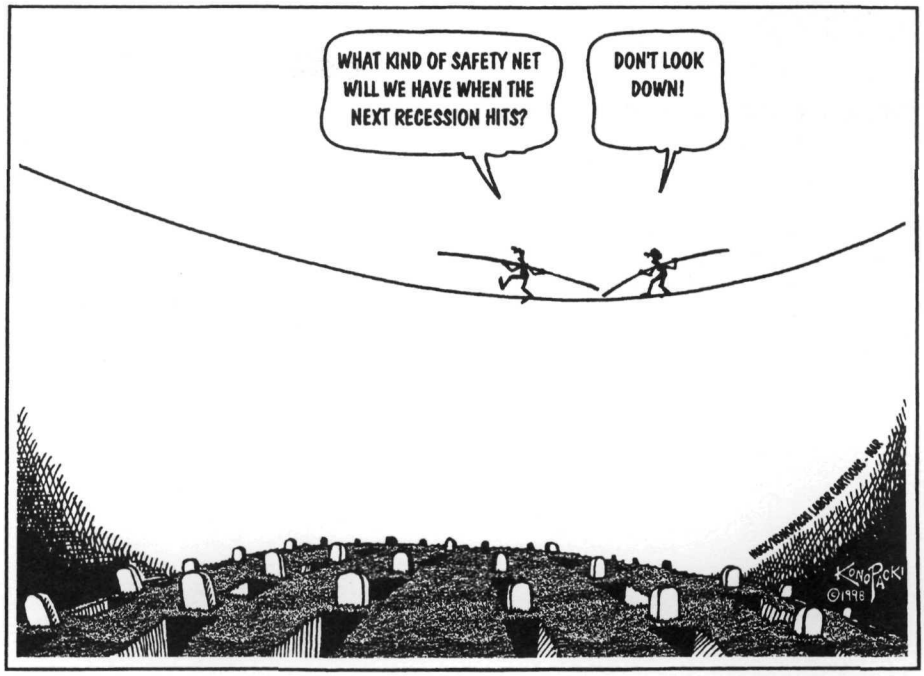
JUST A YELP at the wrong by-line (Richard not Robert Thieme) on *A Sacred Canopy of Belief* on p.6 of *The Witness* that arrived this morning.

More substantively, a great editing job, and more than that, the issue had the impact of cool fresh air. What a terrific variety of POVs all "coming from the same place." Made me very much want to (1) do more for *The Witness* and (2) send you a check for a subscription, which I will. Lisa Gayle's article went straight to the depths of my heart, as I am a "clarified" Jew who was an Episcopal priest for 16 years and immersed in that world for 20 before leaving 4+ years ago to pursue this new vocation. I have wandered so often into theme parks of "disneyland religion," designed to house imaginary cartoon characters, run smoothly, and exclude anything that looks like "reality," I had almost forgotten that pockets of possibility and promise like *The Witness* still allow our voices to coalesce ...

Richard Thieme
Milwaukee, WI
http://www.thiemeworks.com

HAVING NOT READ *The Witness* in a long while, I was delighted to pick up a copy recently [4/98].

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann may be right that the Big Bang isn't a very appealing creation myth (although Matthew Fox has restored some sense of awe and wonder to it), but I wonder if you dislike dinosaurs because you have never heard about the woman who



started the first dinosaur craze. Mary Anning (Lyme Regis, 1799-1847) made three of the greatest paleontological finds of all time before she had turned 30. Though a poor dissenter, she formed friendships with well-off Anglicans who were clerics, fossil collectors and geologists and eventually joined the Church of England herself. Though unschooled, she helped shape the development of science. Though she had a deep faith which helped her to do difficult and dangerous work, her discoveries unsettled the beliefs of others. Though she could not vote herself, her campaigning for a local Reform candidate helped to bring down a corrupt Tory political machine.

I first started looking for books about Anning while I was teaching fours and fives at the Riverside Church Weekday School where the tykes rekindled my own fascination with prehistoric creatures. Not finding one, I gradually fell into writing her biography myself, which is now nearly completed. Festivities are being planned for 1999 to celebrate the 200th anniversary of her birth.

Thomas W. Goodhue
Brightwaters, NY

[Ed. Note: Mary Anning sounds wonderful, although knowing of her work doesn't change my impression that dinosaurs are too big, too old and too uncertain to be meaningful except as myth.]

I THOUGHT I HAD FOUND kindred spirits when I subscribed to *Witness,* but when I opened my April issue I could not believe my eyes. The lead article, "Refashioning Our Faith," sounded so much like the anti-intellectual arguments of some of my fundamentalist "creationist" friends that I was sure I would find "April Fool" at the end, but as I read on I realized that the "liberal" label for the magazine did not necessarily include biblical interpretation.

I belong to a Presbyterian church that welcomes theological diversity, and so far the bonds of friendship and shared work have held. We teach that the Bible includes poetry and prose, history and stories, doctrine and experience, and that we should approach scripture with "literary and historical understanding," as our Confession of 1967 says. That does not solve all the problems, however, as there is an element of mystery in personal and corporate spiritual experience. Some members interpret the virgin birth, the ascension

letters continued on back page

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The Witness

Volume 81 • Number 7-8 • July/August 1998

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8 Tricksters in the Bible by Carole R. Fontaine
Often considered pagan, tricksters appear regularly in the Bible — even God takes on that guise when we won't pay attention, according to Fontaine.

***12* Harlequin Christ** by Harvey Cox
Jesus' unpredictable behavior gives followers broad parameters and a mandate to be foolish.

***16* When the rules subvert: a roundup of trickster tales**
An Internet query yields a variety of examples of times that the rules have been used to defeat the system.

***19* 'Roll the cameras no matter what I say'**: an interview with Michael Moore by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann
Michael Moore, director of Roger and Me and The Big One, acts as a trickster when he dogs corporate powers trying to bring them to accountability for their work force.

***23* Trickster spirit: challenging social action paradigms** by Joe Summers, Will O'Brien and Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann
As the times change, our approach to entrenched issues must also. These writers take a second look at anti-racism strategies, voluntary poverty, and methods of protest.

The Witness offers a fresh and sometimes irreverent view of our world, illuminated by faith, Scripture and experience. Since 1917, *The Witness* has been advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those people who have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." We push boundaries, err on the side of inclusion and enjoy bringing our views into tension with orthodox Christianity. *The Witness'* roots are Episcopalian, but our readership is ecumenical. For simplicity, we place news specific to Episcopalians in our Vital Signs section. *The Witness* is committed to brevity for the sake of readers who find little time to read, but can enjoy an idea, a poem or a piece of art.

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

The editor whose editorial appears on page 5 crafted this issue.

Cover: Eternal Tree *by Elly Simmons. Available from the Syracuse Cultural Workers, catalogues are $1, 317-474-1132.*

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Coyote wants more

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

We're in trouble. In case you hadn't noticed.

The myth is that things have never been so good, we're all in the stock market, the dream is in reach.

But a good friend, Deb Choly, who has sued the state over prison conditions in Michigan, was updating us on changes (all more proscriptive) when she said, "I believe that with GATT and NAFTA we've just moved into warp speed and we're about to enter hyper space of global capitalism where no local laws that protect workers or the environment will have any effect."

Meanwhile the activities of people of faith seem pretty tame and predictable.

We write checks, write letters to the editor, sign petitions, join boycotts, participate in vigils, occasionally go to jail. These activities don't seem, these days, to have the edge needed to really challenge the powers.

Yet, it's only getting harder to get the media to cover critical issues, so public discourse is extremely shallow. Even though a rabbi, a Baptist pastor, several bishops and a gaggle of politicians spent a day trying to work through solutions that might put some 2,000 people back to work and end the Detroit newspaper strike that is dividing the community, no media outlet saw fit to cover it. It makes you crazy to see all this good-will and hard work thwarted. But increasingly the media are owned by the same handful of conglomerates, so whether you approach TV or radio reporters, newspapers or book publishers, the same corporate types make the final decisions.

We're deep into the technological world that George Orwell predicted in *1984* in which no one has any privacy or independence. We are now accustomed to video camera surveillance everywhere from the gas station to store dressing rooms. Outdoor microphones that catch seemingly private conversations are the norm. And even your innermost thoughts posted by email are vulnerable to interception.

So, what do people of goodwill do? The answer may be simple.

Maybe we stop being so earnest, stop trusting that if we just play by the rules, it will all come out right and instead engage in periodic mischief!

Part of the charm of the middle class is its faith in the system. Now and then it has been able to call the system to account by sheer faith (as in the aftermath of Watergate). Yet you've got to wonder if it will be profitable to send Andy Griffith and Aunt Bea up against gun manufacturers, media conglomerates and corporations with record-breaking profits that don't hesitate to throw workers into chaos as they relocate in Mexico.

I'd trade 10 Andy Griffiths for one Michael Moore any day (p.19). Moore, who rose to national fame with his film *Roger & Me*, doesn't fight with traditional middle class tools. He doesn't just write letters, start boycotts, speak out in church basements or even practice civil disobedience. He is altogether less predictable and his unconventional arrogance takes viewers by storm, cracking open the absurdity of the corporate crime and corporate welfare that make middle- and working-class Americans destitute. He also reveals the cost of downsizing — the despair, the substance abuse, the broken families, the suicides. And, somehow, he also makes us laugh.

It's Moore's brand of activism that I want to recommend. It's time that our activism become less deliberate and more quirky. We need the energy of the trickster who uses lies to reveal truth, appetite to bait, vulgarity to appall, wit to entrap.

Lewis Hyde in his best-selling T*rickster Makes this World* suggests the trickster is essential to culture — when the rules and power arrangements have become rigid, we need people from the margins to disrupt the order, to startle us into seeing the possibility of other arrangements (p. 37)

Arguably, Jesus is just such a person. Both Carole Fontaine (p. 8) and Harvey Cox (p. 12) reveal ways that biblical figures, and even God, have acted as tricksters.

"[Trickster's space is] ruled by the disarming charm of the very young child," Hyde writes. "It is a traveler's space where everything is on the road, cut loose from any clear locale. Here the citizens walk their livestock backward and speak a weird reversing language."

Fortunately Jesus can accompany us into trickster territory —he speaks from the margin and the crossroad. He travels light.He varies his responses — sometimes healing, sometimes rebuking, sometimes fleeing. He takes authority yet refuses to defend it with violence. And he teaches a third way, a way to resist oppression without taking up arms. Carole Fontaine says that when humanity will not listen and has put God in a box, God too will resort to trickster methods. TW

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is co-editor/ publisher of *The Witness*, <jeanie@thewitness.org>.

editor's note

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When the work of your heart becomes surveillance art

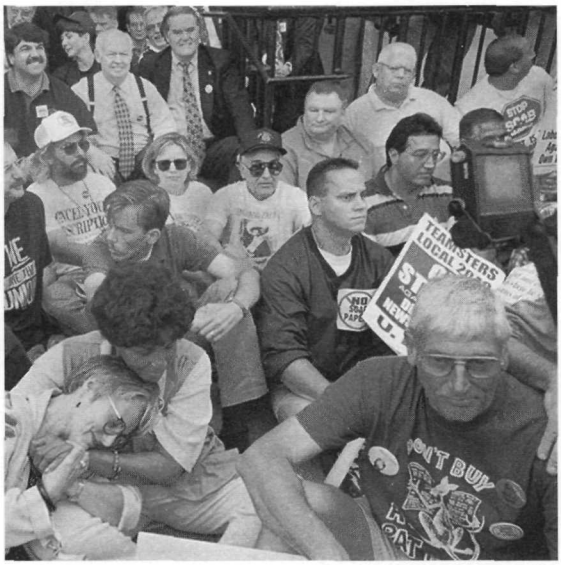
by George Waldman

My reaction was emotional when the young woman at my front door handed me the subpoena. But I took it gently and said "thank you." She seemed to expect more, or maybe less, as she paused for a moment and finally looked me dead in the eyeballs before turning away.

Then it sunk in what had come to me, and I felt the same bewilderment and anger I felt about 1,000 days ago in July 1995 when one of the newspapers in Detroit unilaterally canceled a contract with my sister labor unit, forcing all unions connected to go out on strike.

Leaders of both sides had left us with few options. The editor and publisher of *The Detroit News* announced he would smash the unions. Those who wanted to return would have to go crawling back, he said. I felt the same anger four days before Christmas in 1996 when I got a letter telling me I was fired for taking part in a civil disobedience rally. As a colleague, also fired, said, "It was just mean what they did."

Now the companies subpoena all the photographic work I have done since the strike began. They own all the photography I did with them before the strike. Now they want all I have been able to do since. Maybe they want my work to see if there are images to support the firings of others, or to support an effort now in the courts to shut down the tiny strike paper — whose photography department I coordinate — because they complain it "unfairly competes."



George Waldman's photos of strike activities, like this Labor Day sit-in, are being seized as evidence against strikers.

The legal mysteries recall a commitment voiced by the chief executive officer of Detroit Newspapers more than two years ago: to keep the issues in court until all the strikers have either left town or died.

But this new tactic truly is bewildering. Strong media outlets in this country have fought for years to avoid subpoenas that have "a chilling effect" on the ability to gather news from people who might fear retribution. Journalists have gone to jail on contempt charges rather than give up evidence that law enforcement agencies or those involved in civil suits could have found in other ways. To avoid a subpoena, an editor at my own newspaper, the *Detroit Free Press,* once told a fellow photographer to leave town for a few days, check into a motel somewhere and put it on an expense account.

Once again, the actions of these newspapers have not conformed to the principles of the profession or their own past policies and previous editorials. I tried to avoid this subpoena, warned that it was coming. But the young woman who came to the door looked so much like a friend of my son.

At some point, I'll have to decide if I should ignore it and risk going to jail. For now, I'll go along with the union-appointed attorney. She says three other photographers and I should base our objection to the subpoenas on "proprietary rights." I'm not a business person; I don't know what that means. I can't find advice from anyone who knows First Amendment rights. Most of them work for the corporations.

I'll go along with the "proprietary rights" argument through the preliminaries, which could take forever, with objections and appeals. And if it comes to going to jail?

Could that happen in this legal world? My spouse of 32 years, who understands long-term trials, says, "Just keep it in the courts until they all have left town or died." TW

In July 1995, six unions representing more than 2,000 workers went on strike against the Detroit Newspapers (DN), the company that manages *The Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press*. Despite a National Labor Relations Board ruling that the DN engaged in unfair labor practices and despite the unions' offer to return to work, the company continues to lock workers out.

George Waldman is a locked-out photographer from *The Detroit Free Press* and the publisher of *Voices of the Strike*, a collection of photographs and essays by locked-out workers. *Voices of the Strike* ($25) is available by calling 313-964-5655. This article first appeared in the *Detroit Sunday Journal.*

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A Continuing Saga

by Leslie A. Reese

a continuing saga
this is a continuing saga
this is a song that continues/this is a song loved by
  spring:
This is the slippery-backed happy rascal scandalizing
  summer
this is a continuing saga
this is the thing that keeps going around in circles
this is the whirlpool/this is the fool/this is the ritual/this
  is the medicine
  scooping out your guts and working its toil and pain
  in autumn
this is that song again/this is that poem again
this is your toenails growing some more

this is you crying again
this is the continuing saga
this is the part where you cry
this is the part where you want to die/live forever
  speaking the language of winter
  so you won't have to do
this, again is a song that continues
the continuing saga
the thing that keeps going around in circles
this is the butterfly/this is the caterpillar/this is 18 legs
  turned into wings
this is the way we chop the wood/this is the way we eat
  the food
  this is the way we reap our good/this is what we'd
  know if we could

this is the medicine
this is the lovemaking
this is the lovetaking
this is the undertaking
this is the overcoming

this is the story that continues to unfold

this is the needle skipping on your favorite part of the tune
this is somebody baying at the moon
this is this/that is that

this is

this is
this is

the continuing saga
this is poor people who are poor/rich people who are
  poor
  poor people who are rich
this
  is rich this is rich

this is a spiritual/this is that poem again
this is your life again/this is your strife again
this is your knife again/this is your life again

this is what's my line?

this, again, is a song that continues
this is repetitious for no reason again
this is what you already know
this is the thing that keeps going around in circles
this is the medicine that scoops out your guts again
"this is the medicine that heals you"
  this is the aftertaste

this is the part where you start crying
this is the part where you start crying
this is the part where you start dying
this is the part where I stop lying

this is the part where I start looking for a dictionary
this is when I need my thesaurus

this is my going off again

this is your life again
this is the song that continues to continue

this is when I go in search of musicians
this is when I go looking for sex
this is when I need some tylenol
this is when I start writing my bible
this is when you start living your bible
this is the part where you cry

this is the part where you cry

this is the part that laughs

this is

this is

this is

the

continuing.....
sagaaaaaaaaa.....

— included in *Upside Down Tapestry* (Broadside Press, Detroit 1987).

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Tricksters in the Bible

by Carole R. Fontaine

trickster tumbles
at the edge of the world:
his face is set
toward the wilds,

but where he passes
cultures rise

women trick
inside the tent,
under the cover
of veils or night,
and on their backs
culture thrives

This little poem, which arose spontaneously out of the present writer's "scholarly" investigation of trickster behavior in the Bible (*Semeia* 42 (1988):84-102) nicely sums up our problems with the notion of biblical tricksters. We need them, apparently, for these ambivalent ne'er-do-wells always seem to be at their comical worst just when a culture is facing new territory and breaking new ground. On the other hand, we don't particularly care for being the target of their culture-making jokes. Even worse, given the exalted place which Holy Scripture holds in the life and practice of the Church and Synagogue, it is natural to be just a bit alarmed when literary critics start suggesting that not only is tricky conduct apparent in the Bible, it is sometimes highly valued and even becomes a hallmark of God's interactions with communities that can be as hard of hearing as they are hard of heart. Is the Bible really a "divine comedy" of errors, reversals and restorations? Should we be laughing? That hardly seems appropriate, given the gravity of the existential questions the Bible poses—but maybe, just maybe, we will discover at the end that the joke really is on us!

Modern readers in the U. S. are probably more familiar with the paradigm of the "trickster," that deadly serious hero of lighthearted tales from West African and Native American cultures, than they might think. From Wile E. Coyote of the "Road-Runner" cartoon cycle to the ebullient Kramer on Seinfeld, we are used to the antics of these characters who, full of schemes for trapping others, seem to wind up repeatedly falling into their own snares. From our kindergarten days of Uncle Remus stories, with B'rer Rabbit and B'rer Fox, we learn to laugh heartily at the tricksters as they amuse us with their cunning and artful dodges. Always trying to "get ahead" or "beat the odds," they go out of the frying pan and into the fire. Their machinations are stock elements in our comedies. Indigenous peoples made stories out of the keenly observed tricksters of nature, and in the mirror of those tales, saw a human—and a divine—reflection. Like the kitten going head-first into the paper bag to hide, the animal tricksters forget that even though they cannot see us, we can still see them ... and therein lies the joke! We laugh appropriately, but we seldom think of our own behaviors in justice-making and Kingdom-bringing as a variation on this old theme. But perhaps we should.

Those who find themselves disadvantaged, on the "outside," make use of trickery and other forms of manipulative behavior (like gossip, misinformation, nagging, playing possum, distractions and deceptions) because they do not have what sociologists refer to as "assigned power."

We have been in the habit in our use of the Bible in religious education or worship contexts of highlighting the morally uplifting, spiritually inspiring elements within our received tradition. We want to be faithful like Abraham (Gen. 22 is good behavior, for which one should be rewarded?!!), we want to be favored like David (the Philistine mercenary??), or chosen like Jacob (the "Heel-Grabber"?). We don't always stop to examine more closely the behaviors of our "heroes of faith": Abraham bluffing assorted rulers into thinking Sarah is his sister to save his own skin, or David's trickery regarding the House of Saul or Uriah the Hittite, and of course, what preacher or teacher can forget (though we might like to!) Jacob the Trickster? Jacob tricking Esau into selling his birthright for a dish of lentil stew; Jacob conning his handicapped father into giving him his brother's blessing; Jacob cozened by father-in-law Laban into bedding the wrong bride; Jacob struggling with a divine entity by night, to walk away "chosen" and

Carole R. Fontaine is professor of Hebrew Scriptures at Andover Newton Theological School and co-editor of *A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible: Approaches, Methods, Strategies* (with Athalya Brenner). Artist **Meinrad Craighead's** work appears in *Woman Word: A Feminist Lectionary and Psalter* by Miriam Therese Winter (Crossroad, 1990).

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newly named "Israel"—but limping (so this is "chosen"?!), and later tricked by his own children, just as he tricked his father. Trickery is apparently a common commodity for those paradoxical figures who wind up "getting the job done," even in Holy Writ. But wait: Who is that laughing behind the tent flap? Another trickster, of course!

In fact, the trickster archetype found in the Bible is a necessary element if the fulcrum of worldly power is to shift toward justice. In a world where the "first-born" is truly first: invariably blessed, protected, guaranteed inheritor of all that there is, the presence of the trickster upsets the apple-cart of the status quo. It is not the first son who will inherit the promise in Genesis, nor, in the relentlessly patriarchal world of the ancestors, is it always Father who knows Best. Significantly, women — mothers, to be more precise! — are often the ones who Arrange Things. They see to it that the "correct" child is the one to carry the promise forward, violating the status expectations of the narrative and social world in which these stories were born. It is no wonder that little, late-comer nation Israel envisioned itself as the heir of second-born leaders and slaves set free. Such tricky reversals are no less than a major theme in the biblical story: potent promises gone awry into the hands of the outsiders instead of colluding in the accumulation of power for the elite. What kind of God favors slaves over chariots (Ex. 15), a widow over a general (Judg. 5), an old woman over a nubile young co-wife (Gen. 21), a mother's scheme over a father's decree (Gen. 27), a small shepherd over a mighty champion (1 Sam. 17)? The Hebrew Bible's God, that's Who.

Biblical scholars and preachers of other eras, times when only the (white, male, educated) elite were allowed the official power to interpret our sacred texts, found the trickster behavior of God & Friends to be ... well, somewhat disreputable, to be explained away as "primitive" or "sinful," or better yet, "a Mystery." How dare the text go so far out of its way to authorize the underdogs, misfits, and throwaways of antiquity?! Such shameful behavior might be expected of women and slaves, perhaps: These persons of lower rank, after all, have not been trained to uphold the code of male honor which is the stock-in-trade of the invested, yet inviolable elite. Rachel bargains away a night with her husband to her sister in her quest for a successful pregnancy and later tricks her father when she steals his household gods (Gen. 30-31). The midwives in Egypt who served the Hebrew slave population trick the mighty Pharaoh on his throne by suggesting that female biology accounts for their inability to carry out the ruler's plan of genocide. Miriam tricks Pharaoh's daughter into hiring Moses' own birth-mother to be his wet nurse; Bithiyah, as tradition has named this daughter of the royal house, turns right around and tricks her father by raising Moses as her own. Later, Zipporah tricks God with the sight of blood from her son's (husband's?!) emergency circumcision (Ex. 1-4).

Pharaoh's Daughter Meinrad Craighead

After all this, are we really surprised when it turns out in the Christian Scriptures that a carpenter is king, and death is not the final word God speaks to a world beset by tragic injustices and everyday betrayals? In some ways, it has been ordained from "In the Beginning" that such strategic reversals of fortune would be known in Israel not as signs of a world gone mad, but as typical of divine intervention. Prophets left holding the bag when the Holy One goes all soft and compassionate, forgiving the wicked yet again, may lament this sort of divine quirkiness, but to the lost, the broken and the suffering, it looks rather different. Yes, it may well turn out that the "Day of the Lord," a festival of national triumph built on the backs of a populace paying for the grand lifestyle of its rich and famous, will be a day of dismay, a veritable Feast of Fools where those at the top tumble to the bottom, and God does the unexpected.

Now, it should be noted that it is not only Israel's God who displays the traits of a trickster among the divine beings known to the ancient Near East. From Sumer to Egypt, deities locked in struggles with one another resort to deceptive behaviors when they must. Inanna tricks Enki to steal away wisdom for her city; Isis tricks Amon-Re to learn a cure for snakebite which she teaches to humanity; the Storm-God tricks the Dragon whose greed threatens fertility. These motifs are, in many cases, a simple function of the polytheistic world-view of Israel's neighbors: Those with less clout will repeatedly challenge those with more, in order to equalize or reverse the flow of energies that constitute power, be it cos-

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mological, national or personal. Those who find themselves disadvantaged, on the "outside," in the margins as it were, make use of trickery and other forms of manipulative behavior (like gossip, misinformation, nagging, playing possum, distractions and deceptions) because they do not have what sociologists refer to as "assigned power." Assigned power is just that: assigned (usually by the elite in favor of the elite), but masquerading as divinely ordained, cosmically correct and unquestionably true — in short, an unassailable "given." Those who challenge such power arrangements, divine or human, can wind up in personal "hot water" (the Greek Prometheus comes to mind), to be sure — but the very risks they take in their trickery move their special groups forward culturally to inhabit a new level of integration. The trickster exists to redistribute power: From the Snake who Beguiles to the Lamb who Redeems, readers of the Bible watch the interplay of potencies move from the "Haves" to the "Have-Nots." The gifts of consciousness ("they knew that they were naked ..."), freedom, or salvation arrive, more often than not, through the comic, cosmic juggling of such masters of sleight-of-hand.

So the biblical God is not unique in "his" (another trick?!) trickster-hood; rather it is something of a family trait in the world out of which those stories grew. If Israel's God is not engaging in trickery because He has to in order to defeat divine rivals (because, as Second Isaiah is so fond of telling us, He has none), then just what is going on in the characterization of God as trickster? The biblical trickster figure is often in profound solidarity with those whom power has passed by, and allows us to see a divine spark in the "view from below." Rather than routinely promoting the prospects of the favored elite (no matter what the Books of Samuel and Kings would have us believe), this deity seems to take real pleasure in overturning our expectations.

Not driven to trickery by the assaults of more powerful gods nor exhibiting it as a kind of "evil inclination" personality trait, the Holy One invites our participation in cosmic laughter and urges us toward reorganizing our strengths, dreams and energies toward a more wholesome form of social organization.

When the power-brokers simply will not listen, when the center forgets the margin — well then, a trick may be in order.

In literary and theological terms, it may be that we are witnessing in the trickster archetype an intense struggle for meaning in these textual "glitches" in the transfer of power, the shadow of fiercely opposed groups with competing goals and understandings of the character of God. When the power-brokers simply will not listen, when the center forgets the margin — well then, a trick may be in order: There is a baby floating in those rushes, a woman judge in charge of an all-volunteer army of subsistence farmers, a "lying spirit" in the prophet's mouth (1 Kings 22:22), a message concealed in the ways of the ant and eagle (Prov. 6:6; 30:19).

If "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to the skillful; but time and chance happen to them all," as the rich wise man complains (Ecc. 9:11)—well, who made the world that way, and is it such a bad thing after all?

"Time and chance," the very unpredictability of a God who bends low and stands the certainties of the world on their heads, such things are the signs of the Great Trickster among us. It is no wonder we tremble in fear at the coming of such a One! The gift of the power of laughing at our own frustrated expectations may be greatest trick of all. When we join in the joke, paradise is regained. We can finally let go of our own notions of pride and precedence, take our place in the game and exit laughing. TW

Suggestions for further reading

Nancy R. Bowen, "Can God be Trusted? Confronting the Deceptive God." Pp. 354-65 in Athalya Brenner, ed., *A Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets* (FCB 8; Sheffield, U. K.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

Claudia Camp, "Wise and Strange: An Interpretation of the Female Imagery in Proverbs in Light of Trickster Mythology." *Semeia* 42 (1988):14-36.

Carole R. Fontaine, "The Deceptive Goddess in Ancient Near Eastern Myth: Inanna and Inarash." *Semeia* 42 (1988): 84-102.

Esther Fuchs, "Who Is Hiding the Truth? Deceptive Women and Biblical Androcentrism." Pp. 137-44 in *Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship,* ed. Adela Yarbro Collins (Chico, Cal.: Scholars Press, 1985).

Ronald Hendel, *The Epic of the Patriarch: the Jacob Cycle and the Narrative Traditions of Canaan and Israel* (Decatur, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1987).

W. J. Hynes and W. G. Doty, eds., *Mythical Trickster Figures: Contours, Contexts and Criticisms* (Tuscaloosa: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1993).

Susan Niditch, *Underdogs and Tricksters: A Prelude to Biblical Folklore* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).

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Schubert's unmanaged symphony

A story circulating on the Internet tells of a managed care company president who was given a ticket for a performance of Schubert's Unfinished Symphony. Since she was unable to go, she gave the ticket to one of her managed care reviewers. The next morning she asked him how he had enjoyed it. She was handed a formal memorandum which read as follows:

1. For a considerable period, the oboe players had nothing to do. Their number should be reduced, and their work spread over the whole orchestra, avoiding peaks of inactivity.

2. All 12 violins were playing identical notes. This seems an unneeded duplication, and the staff of this section should be cut. If a volume of sound is really required, this could be accomplished with the use of an amplifier.

3. Much effort was involved in playing the 16th notes. This appears to be an excessive refinement, and it is recommended that all notes be rounded up to the nearest 8th note. If this were done it would be possible to use para-professionals instead of experienced musicians.

4. No useful purpose is served by repeating with horns the passage that has already been handled by the strings. If all such redundant passages were eliminated then the concert could be reduced from two hours to 20 minutes.

5. The symphony had two movements. If Mr. Schubert didn't achieve his musical goals by the end of the first movement, then he should have stopped there. The second movement is unnecessary and should be cut.

In light of the above, one can only conclude that had Mr. Schubert given attention to these matters, he probably would have had time to finish the symphony.

The "other time"

"We have history but not myth. Only through art do most people find it. Listening to music, you enter the other time. Music makes its own time, literally. When you read a novel, you are living in another time. All arts create time outside of time, which is not clock-time. It is, in a sense, dreamtime.

"What's on the wrong track is television, the mindless babble that people leave on and sort of semi-watch. It doesn't take them into any other time; it just cuts up present time into these weird little sections interspersed with advertisements. Children's Saturday morning television makes my hair stand on end. It's a segmentation and a fragmentation of time."

Ursula K. LeGuin,
Parabola, *Spring 1998*

Murder linked to human rights advocacy

Death threats to associates of Bishop Juan Gerardi Conedera, the Roman Catholic bishop who was murdered April 26 in Guatemala City, are confirming the widespread conviction that the killing was politically motivated. Gerardi was bludgeoned to death in his garage just 48 hours after he presented the Recovery of the Historic Memory (REMHI) human rights report in the Cathedral.

The REMHI report documented over 55,000 human rights violations during the armed conflict and attributed responsibility for almost 80 percent of those to the Guatemalan armed forces. Since Gerardi's death, threats have been reported by another bishop and a priest who worked with Gerardi, two members of REMHI's forensic anthropology team and other human rights workers.

Gandhi's legacy gone?

India's decision to become a nuclear power "finally laid to rest" the legacy of Mohandas K. Gandhi, according to a June 1 editorial by Jonathan Schell in *The Nation.*

"India's act is the culmination of a growing conflict that Gandhi worked vainly to contain from his earliest days as an activist: the hostility between the Hindus and Muslims of South Asia," Schell writes. "That conflict is unique for having taken virtually every form that human conflict can take ... All that remains is nuclear war itself — something that people who know the region say may be more likely than it was between the Soviet Union and the U.S."

Schell reports Gandhi's response to the atomic destruction of Hiroshima: "The moral to be legitimately drawn from the supreme tragedy of the bomb is that it will not be destroyed by counter-bombs even as violence cannot be by counter-violence. ... Counter-hatred only increases the surface as well as the depth of hatred."

Schell comments, "The prophet is still honored, but not anymore, it appears, in his own country."

Peace Tax Fund

Revisions to the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Act (HR 2660) have addressed Treasury objections based on added administrative costs and reluctance to allow taxpayers to designate where their taxes will be allocated. The bill allows the Treasury to specify where the moneys are spent, so long as they are not used for military purposes. Also, the federal Joint Committee on taxation has certified that the Fund would likely increase revenues to the Treasury rather than add costs. To voice support for the bill, phone the White House at 202-456-1414, fax 202-456-2461 or <president@whitehouse.gov>.

Short takes

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Harlequin Christ

by Harvey Cox

One of the earliest representations of Christ in Christian art depicts a crucified human figure with the head of an ass. For years experts have disputed what it means. Some think it may be an arcane sign, others a cruel parody. Either could be the case. But it might also be true that those catacomb Christians had a deeper sense of the comic absurdity of their position than we think they did. A wretched band of slaves, derelicts, and square pegs, they must have sensed occasionally how ludicrous their claims appeared. They knew they were "fools for Christ," but also claimed that the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of humanity. Christ himself for them must have been something of a holy fool.

Furthermore, even in the biblical portrait of Christ there are elements that can easily suggest clown symbols. Like the jester, Christ defies custom and scorns crowned heads. Like a wandering troubadour, he has no place to lay his head. Like the clown in the circus parade, he satirizes existing authority by riding into town replete with regal pageantry when he has no earthly power. Like a minstrel, he frequents dinners and parties. At the end he is costumed by his enemies in a mocking caricature of royal paraphernalia. He is crucified amidst taunts with a sign over his head that lampoons his laughable claim.

The symbol of Christ the clown seems eminently right for the earliest period of Christian history. It could not persist, however, when the church's view of itself moved from the ridiculous to the sublime. What place is there for caricature when the church's regal vestments are taken seriously? When its crowns and scepters are made of real gold instead of thorns and wood? A church that actually holds power and reigns has little capacity for self-caricature or irony. So during most of the centuries of Christendom, with an exception here and there, the image of Christ the clown disappeared, at least officially. The carnival spirit persisted in the medieval street skits and morality plays. Though the hierarchy often disapproved, the comic gait, with its suggestion of ambivalence and self-parody, never completely disappeared. It simply went underground. Only now, in our secularized, post-Christian era, is it able to emerge again. A weak, even ridiculous church, somehow peculiarly at odds with the ruling assumptions of its day, can once again appreciate the harlequinesque Christ. His pathos, his weakness, his irony.

A weak, even ridiculous church, somehow peculiarly at odds with the ruling assumptions of its day, can once again appreciate the harlequinesque Christ.

Our whole relation to Christ, and to the whole of existence for that matter, is one of conscious play and comic equivocation. Only by assuming a playful attitude toward our religious tradition can we possibly make any sense of it. Only by learning to laugh at the hopelessness around us can we touch the hem of hope. Christ the clown signifies our playful appreciation of the past and our comic refusal to accept the specter of inevitability in the future. He is the incarnation of festivity and fantasy.

Faith as play

For us the problem is how to reconcile a high degree of critical self-consciousness with a burning desire for experience, which is not spoiled by too much self-analysis. The popularization of social science has made us all painfully aware of the sources of our feelings and ideas. Yet we also yearn for joyful immediacy. We want to believe but we are unable. We want to be coolly sophisticated yet not lose the simple directness we think is vital in human life. Is such a posture possible?

Christ the harlequin, the man of sorrows in the foolscap, symbolizes just this combination of merriment and seriousness. Henri Bergson in his famous essay on laughter said that a situation is invariably comic if it belongs simultaneously to two independent series of events and is capable of being interpreted in two entirely different meanings at the same time. The problem is this: As sophisticated and self-critical postmoderns, we know our religious symbols are human phenomena. We are often bored with them. We know our beliefs are historically conditioned and our faith influenced by social factors galore. We are no longer even interested in doubting them. The coming of Christ the harlequin means, however, that symbols, belief, and faith need not simply be jettisoned. That was the simple-minded critical response of an earlier generation, one that had not yet uncovered for itself the playful element even in such a serious thing as faith. Our ability to laugh while praying is an invaluable gift. It is not understood either

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by the sober believers or by the even more sober atheists among us.

Christ the harlequin is the joke in the middle of the prayer. Even better, perhaps, he is the prayer as joke or the joke as prayer. He is the spirit of play in a world of calculated utilitarian seriousness. It is a spirit for which Christianity, ironically enough, has somehow become one of the few remaining spokespersons and guardians. In the U.S., a land of puritan Protestantism and jansenist Catholicism, this comes as a surprise. But it should not be as surprising as all that. The close kinship of play and religion is something scholars have been uncovering for some years now.

Johan Huizinga has discussed the relationship between religion and play in his book, *Homo Ludens.* He points out that ritual and religion actually emerged very long ago in humanity's capacity for play. In tribal societies ritual is obviously loaded with play acting and "make believe." The men carve the masks and then scare each other with them. The women, who know full well their husbands and brothers are behind the masks, scream in terror at them. In ritual cures a certain complicity of doctor and patient is obviously involved. In the hunt and fertility dances, the dancers "become" the animals and clouds, but they know full well they are enacting these parts.

Despite this evidence many people still have great difficulty in seeing religion as a form of play. They have been taught to place "play" at a very low level of importance. This, however, is the prejudice of an industrial society, and is in no sense a universal judgment. Plato in *The Laws* not only made worship a form of play but taught that "life must be lived as play."

In my view, not only are prayer and play analogous but their kinship provides us with a sound contemporary access both to our religious tradition and to the future.

Prayer, whether spoken, danced or sung, provides a form for human fantasy. By praying, a person shows that he is not a slave of the past, of the "facts" or of fate. When the structure of a prayer is provided by ritual themes and historical images, the prayer is a bridge to the future. It produces action toward a goal. It is not an escape from the world but the first step in its recreation.

Nathan Scott makes comedy a way of affirming creation, and Falstaff is the comic figure *par excellence*. In comedy, he says, we learn to see and love people, "warts and all." Comedy disports in the mud and gumminess of life. It has no pretensions. It saves us from trying to be angels, and allows us to say with no apology, "I'm only human." Scott's is an incarnational view of the comic ingredient in Christianity.

Wood engraving by Hans Orlowski Motive Magazine

Quite a different point of view is found in Peter Berger's theologico-social essay, *The Precarious Vision.* Here Berger sees eschatology as the comic element in Christianity. The clown refuses to live inside this present reality. He senses another one. He defies the law of gravity, taunts the policeman, ridicules the other performers. Through him we catch a glimpse of another world impinging on this one, upsetting its rules and practices.

Both Scott and Berger, and most of the other theologians who have discussed the subject, agree that the comic spirit is somehow closer to Christianity than is the tragic. In tragedy the hero first defies, then accepts, as one must, the inexorable. Heroes are fated people. Their heroism emerges if they can meet their fate with dignity and humanity. Comic figures cannot be dignified. Few of us are. But they reveal the clay feet of the monolith. They make us glad. In tragedy we weep and are purged. In comedy we laugh and hope.

For Christianity and for the comic sensibility nothing in life should be taken too seriously. The world is important but not ultimately so. Like the clown, people of faith can snicker at the pretense of the prince because they know the prince is but a person who will return one day to the dust. But more than that, people of faith can even chuckle at their own snickering. They can see the prince and themselves in a perspective that cuts both down to size but also opens to both new worlds of possibility.

Some hold that the comic is possible in other religious traditions but not in Christianity. The reason advanced is that since for some faiths the world is *maya*, a form of illusion, it need not be taken seriously. This makes possible the fascinating theme of "Lilia" or divine play in Hinduism. But because Christianity is grounded in his-

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torical events, so the argument runs, such comic detachment is not possible.

This argument also fails to withstand careful scrutiny. The point in Christianity is not that the world is "unreal" but that it should not be taken with ultimate or final seriousness. Christianity does share a sense of comedy with other traditions. But its grounds are different. Instead of one world of shadow and deception it affirms two real world ages, the passing one and the coming one, neither of which should be seen without reference to the other, or taken with full seriousness on its own. We live "in between."

There is also the ethical objection. Some sensitive people claim that laughter is not an appropriate response to war, racism, hunger and injustice. Only serious dedication and sacrifice will ever rid the earth of these pestilences. They are right. But neither seriousness nor dedication, as we have shown before, is the opposite of the comic. The opposite of the comic is tragic necessity and perhaps even stoic resignation. The comic sensibility can laugh at those who ferment wars and perpetuate hunger, at the same time it struggles to dethrone them. It foresees their downfall even when their power seems secure. The comic, more than the tragic, because it ignites hope, leads to more, not less, participation in the struggle for a just world.

Christ is the spirit of play in a world of calculated utilitarian seriousness. Where laughter is real, laughter is the voice of faith. It is the expression not only of our ironic confidence and our strange joy, but also of our recognition that there is no "factual" basis for either.

There is, however, a vexing philosophical problem that lurks in the depths of the question of religion and the comic sensibility. It is the question of whether human beings can ever stand far enough back from their own religion (or irreligion) to get any "comic perspective." Religion or its equivalent provides our root orientation to reality. How do we "step back" from it without toppling into the abyss?

The comic sensibility suggests a solution to this debate. We are able to gain

Going the second mile

by Walter Wink

Going the second mile, Jesus' third example [of nonviolent ways to resist evil], is drawn from the relatively enlightened practice of limiting to a single mile the amount of forced or impressed labor that Roman soldiers could levy on subject peoples. Such compulsory service was a constant feature in Palestine from Persian to late Roman times. Whoever was found on the street could be coerced into service, as was Simon of Cyrene, who was forced to carry Jesus' cross. Armies had to be moved with dispatch. Ranking legionnaires bought slaves or donkeys to carry their packs of 60 to 85 pounds (not including weapons). The majority of the rank and file, however, had to depend on impressed civilians. Whole villages sometimes fled to avoid being forced to carry soldiers' baggage.

What we have overlooked in this passage is the fact that carrying the pack a second mile is an infraction of military code. With few exceptions, minor infractions were left to the disciplinary control of the centurion (commander of 100 men). He might fine the offending soldier, flog him, put him on a ration of barley instead of wheat, make him camp outside the fortifications, force him to stand all day before the general's tent holding a clod of dirt in his hands — or, if the offender was a buddy, issue a mild reprimand. But the point is that the soldier does not know what will happen.

It is in the context of Roman military occupation that Jesus speaks. He does not counsel revolt. One does not "befriend" the soldier, draw him aside and drive a knife into his ribs. Jesus was surely aware of the futility of armed insurrection against Roman imperial might; he certainly did nothing to encourage those whose hatred of Rome would soon explode into violence.

But why carry the soldier's pack a second mile? Does this not go to the opposite extreme by aiding and abetting the enemy. Not at all. The question here is how the oppressed can recover their initiative and assert their human dignity in a situation that cannot for the time being be changed. The rules are Caesar's, but how one responds to the rules is God's, and Caesar has no power over that.

Imagine, then, the soldier's surprise when, at the next mile marker, he reluctantly reaches to assume his pack, and the civilian says, "Oh, no, let me carry it another mile." Why would he want to do that? What is he up to? Is this a provocation? Will this civilian file a complaint?

From a situation of servile impressment, the oppressed have once more seized the initiative. They have taken back the power of choice. They have thrown the soldier off balance by depriving him of the predictability of his victim's response.

— Excerpted from The Powers That Be, *a condensed volume based on Wink's award-winning Powers trilogy, Doubleday 1998.*

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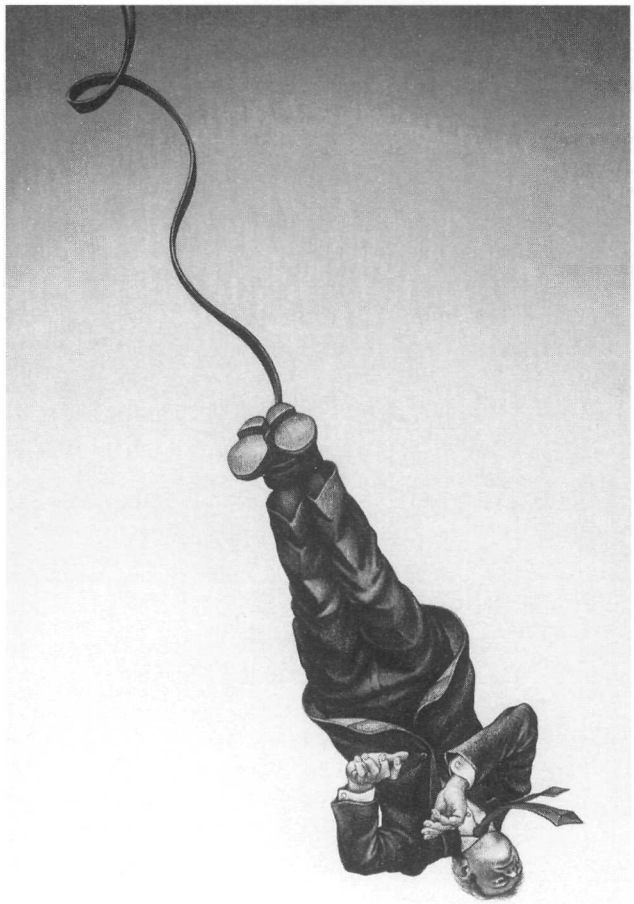
perspective, even on our most cherished beliefs and values. But we do so not by moving beyond symbol worlds, rather we do so by juxtaposing them. Bergson's theory that the comic occurs in a situation open to disparate orders of interpretation suggests that a person is capable of living in these disparate spheres. Their very disparity supplies the leverage for the comic perspective. It is not only modern people with their multiple symbol worlds who stand astride this fulcrum. Primitive people had it too insofar as they recognized the curious discrepancy between the worlds of fact and fantasy.

Wherever people live at the vortex of multiple worlds of meaning, the comic is possible. Only in a closed, monolithic universe is it excluded. Such a sober universe can be created by an inquisitorial religion, by a totalitarian state, or by a sleekly efficient technocracy. In the first two, however, there remain resources for comic criticism as the bawdy street plays of the medieval period and the underground jokes in police states prove. In fact, it is the rulers' fear of heresy and dissent that produces the thumb screw and the gestapo. The horror of the technically ruled society is that no such tortures are even needed. Dissent is quashed in more subtle ways and comic criticism is killed by kindness. Certainly technological blandness is more our danger today than either clericalism or state terror. This may be why Wolfgang Zucker in a brilliant essay on the clown says that in a world tending toward "absolute mechanization" and faced with the "myth of an unchanging mechanism," the clown, once nearly lost to our consciousness, "becomes necessary again." He is the one who "affirms by denying."

The clown does affirm by denying. But in denying he is also affirming. He enables us to laugh at our failures and successes, at our fears and also our faith. By involving us in his denial he lures us into affirming after all.

If playfulness is the only way we can deal with our past, laughter enables us to live with the future. Laughter of course can be strained, cruel, artificial, or merely habitual. It can mask our true feelings. But where it is real, laughter is the voice of faith. It is the expression not only of our ironic confidence and our strange joy, but also of our recognition that there is no "factual" basis for either. Perhaps that is why Dante reports that when he finally arrived in Paradise after his arduous climb from the Inferno, he heard the choirs of angels singing praises to the Trinity and he says, "*mi sembiana un riso dell universo*" (it seemed like the laughter of the universe).

The laughter of the universe in heaven? Of course. In hell there is no hope and no laughter, according to Dante. In purgatory there is no laughter, but there is hope. In heaven, hope is no longer necessary and laughter reigns.



Michael Bergt

Comic hope is the mood of our embryonic religious sensibility today. It has left behind orthodox credulity, existential pathos, and sanguine optimism. It supplies the only possible idiom for faith at a time of dead gods, museum churches, and antiquarian theology. Theologians are right that hope is the characteristic form of faith for modern people. But our hope is neither the serene confidence of medieval people, nor the liberal's bright expectation of better things around the corner. Ours is a more or less formless hope, but a hope nonetheless. It is a hope in search of content, a hope that some form of hope will once again be made available to us.

Given the empirical evidence around us, this hope can be held only in the most daring act of effrontery. But laughter is hope's last weapon. Crowded on all sides with idiocy and ugliness, pushed to concede that the final apocalypse seems to be upon us, we seem nonetheless to nourish laughter as our only remaining defense. In the presence of disaster and death we laugh instead of crossing ourselves. Or perhaps better stated, our laughter is our way of crossing ourselves. TW

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When the rules subvert

The Witness *asked Quest users if they knew of times when the rules had been used to thwart the rule-makers.*

Payment every two weeks!

Larry and I were Junior Engineers in the gas plant, which means that we were clerks. Anything that could be classified as paperwork came to the flat double desk across which we faced each other. The Main Office downtown sent us a bewildering array of orders and rules that were to be put into effect.

Junior Engineers were beneath the notice of everyone except the Mexican laborers at the plant. To them we were the visible form of a distant, unknowable paymaster. We were *Señor* Payroll.

Those Mexicans were great workmen; the aristocrats among them were the stokers, big men who worked Herculean eight-hour shifts in the fierce heat of the retorts. They scooped coal with huge shovels and hurled it with uncanny aim at tiny doors. The coal streamed out from the shovels like black water from a high-pressure nozzle, and never missed the narrow opening. The stokers worked stripped to the waist, and there was pride and dignity in them. Few men could do such work, and they were the few.

The Company paid its men only twice a month, on the 5th and on the 20th. To a Mexican, this was absurd. What man with money will make it last 15 days? If he hoarded money beyond the spending of three days, he was a miser — and when, *Señor*, did the blood of Spain flow in the veins of misers? Hence, it was the custom for our stokers to appear every third or fourth day to draw the money due to them.

There was a certain elasticity in the Company rules, and Larry and I sent the necessary forms to the Main Office and received an "advance" against a man's paycheck. Then, one day, Downtown favored us with a memorandum: "There have been too many abuses of the advance-against-wages privilege. Hereafter, no advance against wages will be made to any employee except in a case of genuine emergency."

We had no sooner posted the notice when in came stoker Juan Garcia. He asked for an advance. I pointed to the notice. He spelled it through slowly, then said, "What does this mean, this 'genuine emergency?'" I explained to him patiently that the Company was kind and sympathetic, but that it was a great nuisance to have to pay wages every few days. If someone was ill or if money was urgently needed for some other good reason, then the Company would make an exception to the rule.

Juan Garcia turned his hat over and over slowly in his big hands. "I do not get my money?"

"Next payday, Juan. On the 20th."

He went out silently and I felt a little ashamed of myself. I looked across the desk at Larry. He avoided my eyes.

In the next hour two other stokers came in, looked at the notice, had it explained and walked solemnly out; then no more came. What we did not know was that Juan Garcia, Pete Mendoza, and Francisco Gonzalez had spread the word, and that every Mexican in the plant was explaining the order to every other Mexican. "To get money now, the wife must be sick. There must be medicine for the baby."

The next morning Juan Garcia's wife was practically dying, Pete Mendoza's mother would hardly last the day, there was a veritable epidemic among children, and, just for variety, there was one sick father. Nobody paid Larry and me to examine private lives, so we made out our forms with an added line describing the "genuine emergency." Our people got paid.

That went on for a week. Then came a new order, curt and to the point: "Hereafter, employees will be paid ONLY on the 5th and the 20th of the month. No exceptions made except in the cases of employees leaving the service of the Company."

The notice went up on the board, and we explained its significance gravely.

"No, Juan Garcia, we cannot advance your wages. It is too bad about your wife and your cousins and your aunts, but there is a new rule."

Juan Garcia went out and thought it over. He thought out loud with Mendoza and Gonzales and Ayala, then, in the morning he was back. "I am quitting this company for different job. You pay me now?"

We argued that it was a good company and that it loved its employees like children, but in the end we paid off, because Juan Garcia quit. And so did Gonzalez, Mendoza, Obregon, Ayala and Ortez, the best stokers, men who could not be replaced.

Larry and I looked at each other; we knew what was coming in about three days. One of our duties was to sit on the hiring line early each morning, engaging transient workers for the handy gangs. Any man was accepted who could walk up and ask for a job without falling down. Never before had we been called upon to hire such skilled virtuosos as stokers for handy-gang work, but we were called upon to hire them now.

The day foreman was wringing his hands and asking the Almighty if he was

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Artist **Woodleigh Marx Hubbard** lives in Brainbridge Island, Wash.

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personally supposed to shovel this condemned coal, while there in a stolid, patient line were skilled men — Garcia, Mendoza, and others-waiting to be hired. We hired them, of course. There was nothing else to do.

Every day we had a line of resigning stokers, and another line of stokers seeking work. Our paperwork became very complicated. At the Main Office they were jumping up and down. The procession of forms showing Juan Garcia's resigning and being hired over and over again was too much for them. Sometimes Downtown had Garcia on the payroll twice at the same time when someone down there was slow in entering a resignation. Our phone rang early and often. Tolerantly and patiently we explained: "There's nothing we can do if a man wants to quit, and if there are stokers available when the plant needs stokers, we hire them."

Out of chaos, Downtown issued another order. I read it and whistled. Larry looked at it and said, "It is going to be very quiet around here."

The order read: "Hereafter, no employee who resigns may be rehired within a period of 30 days."

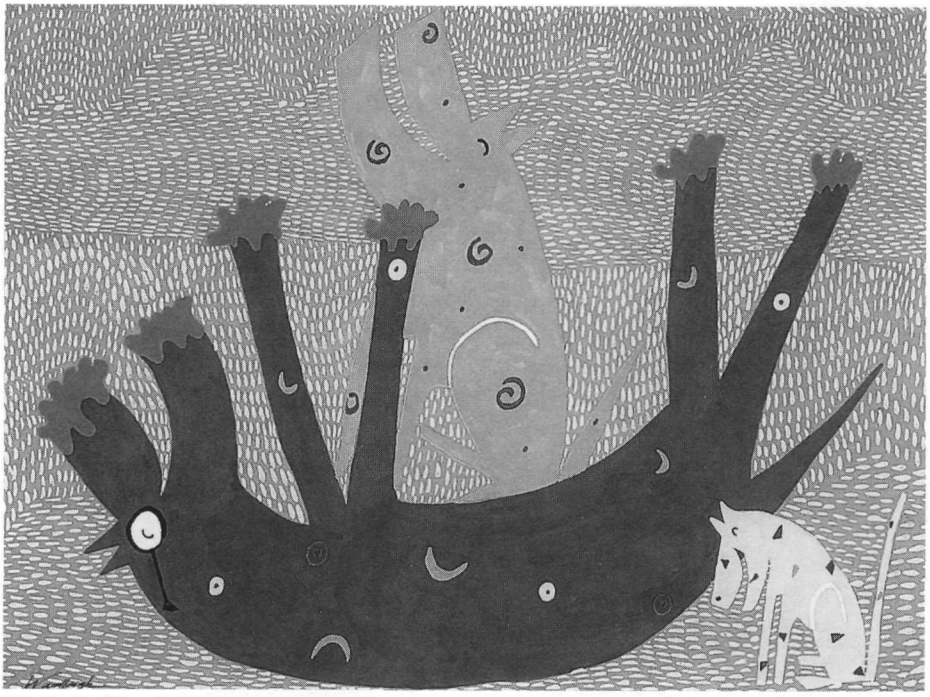
Juan Garcia was due for another resignation, and when he came in we showed him the order and explained that standing in line the next day would do him no good if he resigned today. "Thirty days is a long time, Juan."

It was a grave matter and he took time to reflect on it. So did Gonzalez, Mendoza, Ayala and Ortez. Ultimately, however, they were all back — and all resigned.

We did our best to dissuade them and we were sad about the parting. This time it was for keeps and they shook hands with us solemnly. It was very nice knowing us. Larry and I looked at each other when they were gone and we both knew that neither of us had been pulling for Downtown to win this duel. It was a blue day.

In the morning, however, they were all back in line. With the utmost gravity, Juan Garcia informed me that he was a stoker looking for a job.

"No dice, Juan," I said. "Come back in 30 days. I warned you."



***Giggly* by Woodleigh Marx Hubbard**

His eyes looked straight into mine without a flicker. "There is some mistake, *Señor*," he said. "I am Manuel Hernandez. I work as the stoker in Pueblo, in Santa Fe, in many places."

I stared back at him, remembering the sick wife and the babies without medicines, the mother-in-law in the hospital, the many resignations and the rehirings. I knew that there was a gas plant in Pueblo, and that there wasn't any in Santa Fe; but who was I to argue with a man about his own name? A stoker is a stoker.

So I hired him. I hired Gonzalez, too, who swore that his name was Carrera, and Ayala, who had shamelessly become Smith.

Three days later the resigning started.

Within a week our payroll read like a history of Latin America. Everyone was on it: Lopez and Obregon, Villa, Diaz, Batista, Gomez, and even San Martin and Bolivar. Finally Larry and I, growing weary of staring at familiar faces and writing unfamiliar names, went to the Superintendent and told him the whole story. He tried not to grin, and said, "Damned nonsense!"

The next day the orders were taken down. We called our most prominent stokers into the office and pointed to the board. No rules any more.

"The next time we hire you *hombres*," Larry said grimly, "come in under the names you like best, because that's the way you are going to stay on the books."

They looked at us and they looked at the board; then for the first time in the long duel, their teeth flashed white. "*Si, Sênores*," they said.

And so it was.

— William E. Barrett, via Mary Parsons, editor of Alaskan Epiphany

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Detailing them to death

Did it myself actually. Worked in a welfare office as a social work supervisor, and they wanted all of us to write exact time studies for a few days. I included the time writing up the time studies. Also time in the bathroom, and time for travel to and from it. I explained that if it wasn't exact like that, people were just making it up. The time study ceased very quickly and was never heard from again. But then I was always a bureaucratic trouble maker. I could tell the head guy in my office his memo was castrating and why, and he would revise it. I also told the Missouri Director of Welfare in a staff meeting for the city of St. Louis Welfare Office that I didn't know whether his action was stupid or cynical but probably both. After the meeting the city director of welfare thanked me for being so polite!

Bob Rea
San Francisco, CA

Years ago, a parishioner who spent most of his career working for the federal government told me about a tactic people in the bureaucracy used to humiliate unreasonable supervisors. They called it "malicious compliance." Apparently, it is one of the few effective weapons available to low status employees in an oppressive system.

James R. Adams, President
Center for Progressive Christianity

Teaching speech

I bought my first parrot, Polly Esther, as a six-week-old chick: a domestically hatched African gray. "An African gray?" a pet-shop owner said. "They're the Rolls-Royce of parrots! The best talking parrots there are."

I was thrilled. I couldn't wait.

Every evening after supper I put her on my hand and took her into a quiet room. "Hello, hello, hello," I'd repeat. My entire vocabulary was an endless string of hollow hellos.

Polly Esther would cock her head and give me a bewildered look. Out would come a sweet little "peep!"

She would not talk. There wasn't a "hello" to be heard, beyond mine. This went on day after day, week after week.

About this time I was having some renovations done on my home. A local carpenter came every day, working alone on an upstairs bedroom while I was at work. One day he went downstairs to use the bathroom. Quiet, and quite alone, he thought.

Suddenly, he heard a voice!

"Shut the door!" came a loud, clear command. He bolted to the bathroom door and slammed it shut.

After a moment he ducked his head out. "Hello?" he said cautiously.

"Shut the door!" came the response.

Peering into the other room, he saw ... Polly Esther. "Shut the door!" the parrot insisted. Her first words.

That was several years ago, and Polly Esther's vocabulary has grown considerably: "Stand back, I'm an eagle!" for example, and "What's for supper?" She calls the dog when I go to let her in, and she finally did learn to say "hello" — but only when the phone rings.

She also learned to imitate the hair-raising, high-pitched shriek of a smoke detector when its battery needs replacing.

John Edward Young
Christian Science Monitor

Ministers in a patriarchal system

Many of the women in our support group were facing big question marks about their future ministries. One was relinquishing a position she'd held for many years, sure that this was right but not having any clear idea of what would come next. Others were in the process of deciding whether or when to leave. After a morning of sharing the doubts and concerns, one woman said, "I wonder where we'll each be in six months." The response of another became the group's refrain: MAKING MISCHIEF!

Elizabeth Morris Downie
Fentin, MI

"Pie the polluting lolly"

"I'm part of a gang of bad hellions that has declared a pie war on all the unpleasant celebrities in every kind of domain," Noel Godin told Hugues Henry last February in an interview for "The Netly News," a daily Web zine, just after Godin's group pied Microsoft chairperson Bill Gates in Belgium.

"We began by targeting 'empty' celebrities from the artistic world who appeared to think that they were the cat's meow. Then we attacked the French TV news business, and soon we began to pie political figures as well."

Bill Gates was selected, Godin said, "because in a way he is the master of the world. Bill Gates was at the top of our list because he could have been a utopian but he prefers being the lackey of the establishment. Our war cry was explicit: 'Let's pie! Let's pie the polluting lolly.' "

Godin explained that they have meetings in his home where they select targets and then they study the individuals' habits. In the case of Gates, a couple of French accomplices followed Gates around Paris the day before and learned that he is escorted by armed body guards. Sometimes, as in this case, people within an organization will tip off the pie crew.

"We are comical terrorists. The pie is symbolic. The victim is injured only in his self-esteem. We take a lot of care that the pies can't hurt physically. The pastry is soft and full of cream.

"We have sympathizers everywhere. We also have many enemies. But we are like Laurel and Hardy, Bugs Bunny, the Marx Brothers, the Yippies of May 1968."

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'Roll the cameras no matter what I say': an interview with Michael Moore

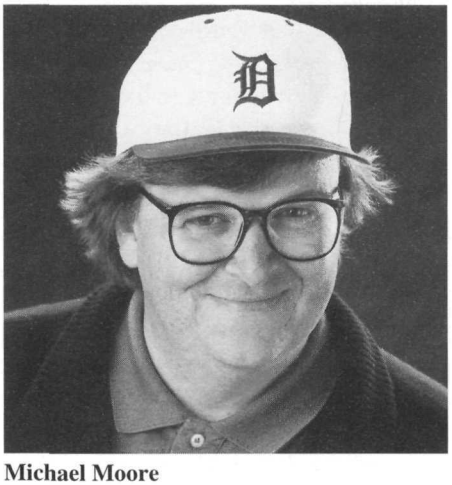
by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

Michael Moore, creator of the widely viewed documentary *Roger & Me*, is someone from the margins who uses unpredictability, bravado and humor to upset our understanding of power arrangments. In *Roger & Me*, he juxtaposes images of opulent GM parties (where *people* are actually hired to pose as mannequins!) with laid-off GM workers.

Life in Michigan was more lively when Moore was producing the *Flint Voice,* which later became the *Michigan Voice.* It was a tremendous loss when *Mother Jones* hired Moore away to become editor of the premiere Left magazine. Moore's friends were horrified when *Mother Jones* fired him just after he moved to the West Coast. Apparently, among other possible reasons, Moore's style and the fact that he didn't have a college education were disturbing to senior staff members.

Moore landed on his feet. After working with Ralph Nader in D.C., he decided to make *Roger & Me* (for only $200,000!) and was startled to see it glide off the charts in popularity. Moore funneled money into Flint social programs and into his production company, Dog Eat Dog Films. Moore turned his attention to his *TV Nation* series (Fox, summers of 1994 and 1995) and production of his new film, *The Big One* (Miramax Films — half of the profits go to Flint), which tracks Moore's book tour for his best-selling *Downsize This! Random Threats from an Unarmed American* (HarperPerennial, 1996).

In *The Big One*, Moore interviews workers who are laid off by corporations that are more profitable than ever, but eager to move to Mexico. Finally, Phil Knight, CEO of Nike, invites Moore for an interview. On the way, Moore picks up two plane tickets to Indonesia. When Knight concedes he has never been to Indonesia where 14-year-old girls make Nike shoes, Moore presents the tickets, saying "Let's go."



Michael Moore

Knight quickly declines — not this Sunday, not ever.

Moore, married to and working with Kathleen Glynn, was educated in Roman Catholic schools. If asked, Moore would say he's put the church behind him. But when I remarked that part of me believes we're all supposed to end up on the cross, he responded, "Actually the way that story ended the rock got rolled back and he came out and partied for another 40 days. Look at the 40 days from the resurrection to the ascension — he wasn't healing lepers or tearing down temples. He was just hanging out with his friends. If he'd stayed up there on the cross, they would never have gone on to do anything."

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann: You've characterized yourself as a working class person who somehow got under the radar and into the public view. Can you say a little about how the media keep views like yours out of the mainstream?

Michael Moore: I was interviewed recently on NBC's *Today Show*, where they acted like the economy has never been so good. But afterwards the production crew spoke up, "Hey Mike, I'm a temp and I've been here for years." "Hey Mike, this list on the wall is for our co-worker, our insurance won't cover his illness." At NBC!

I believe that "views like mine" represent the majority viewpoint in this country. The media present a distortion of what people really care, think and feel about things politically. No less a source than the Gallup poll backs me up on this — if you ask a sampling of the American public what their feelings are on various political issues, you'll find the majority are very liberal, very progressive on virtually all the social and political issues. The majority of Americans are pro-labor, pro-environment, pro-women's rights. People are very liberal on the issues. They just don't like liberals — or liberal leaders — which is understandable.

J. W-K.: *The Nation* summarized your views as saying that if people on the Left want to have any impact, they need to stop talking to each other, listen to country music, learn to line dance, and go to stock car races.

M.M.: I've modified my feelings.

J. W-K.: You've modified your feelings? The Left shouldn't bother?

M.M.: No. I'm just saying for those people who come from the working class and remember those things, instead of denying it — like so many of the people from the working class especially after they go to college — they should try to rediscover that bit of how they were raised and notice that there are a lot of genuine and good things about it.

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is co-editor/publisher of *The Witness*, <jeanie@thewitness.org>.
Dog Eat Dog's web site can be accessed at <http:www.dogeatdogfilms.com>.

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For people who come from the upper class and who are liberals, I really don't wabars or our bowling alleys, because you're going to be uncomfortable, you're going to look and feel foolish. You would do better spending your time working with or against the other upper-class people.

I spoke at Brown University a few months ago and this student comes up to me afterwards and says, "I want to make a documentary film about people living in the inner city here in Providence, but I come from wealthy parents and I just don't know what to do so that they'll relate to me." I said to her, "You know what? Don't ask them to relate to you. They don't, they can't and they aren't going to. It would be helpful to all of us — if you share the same kind of political beliefs that we have — if you could make a documentary about the rich! You grew up in the country clubs. Go after them. We would like you to explain to us how they feel or what they do. It really has more to do with class than Left or Right.

J. W-K.: If it really has to do with class, then say a little more about what you think people who are born into privilege can do. It's fair that they shouldn't be the vanguard — even though that's generally how they see themselves, leading the revolution — but are they useful?

M.M.: They're not useful to us. Jeanie, you know me, I made this really bad mistake. I had a millionaire Leftie from San Francisco come to me and say "Stop what you're doing in Flint, and come out here to San Francisco and you can do it nationwide [as editor of *Mother Jones*]." And I took the bait. (Or as my Irish grandparents would say about those who switch from being Catholic to Protestant, "They took the soup!")

It became clear to me within weeks that while we may all have had similar politics, they had a very different worldview. Their worldview was seen around the silver spoon sticking out of their mouths. Any time I have tried to be part of something where I thought, "I can leave my own class and do that," I've been knocked up one side and down the other. It's best to stick to what I know.

Now, if people want to attack me, they say, "Look at Mr. Working Class making all this money!" But they don't understand that the basic premise of class has to do with what you come from and what you take with you for the rest of your life. At various points of my life I'm going to make money and at other times I'm not. At the beginning of this decade I was on unemployment and while in Michigan I never made more than $12,000 a year.

J. W-K.: At this point somebody could call you a millionaire Leftie, right?

M.M.: Except I'm not a millionaire. But you could definitely say that I'm doing a hell of a lot better than I've ever done before financially.

J. W-K.: Say a little bit about where some of your money goes.

M.M.: I give a good third of it away and then the rest goes into the next film, TV show, book. And I don't invest in the stockmarket.

J. W-K.: How many folks work at Dog Eat Dog?

M.M.: Four full-time people.

J.W-K.: Are any of them working class?

M.M.: I have an affirmative action program. We're going to start staffing for the next TV show and we're going to end up hiring 50 people. I told the producer that we are to aggressively look for people who come from the working class, for people who have not been to college, and that in turn will give us a number of African Americans, Hispanics, women, and all the others that we should have to make sure that we have a diverse staff.

J. W-K.: There must be a lot of kids born into privilege who would love to work at Dog Eat Dog.

M.M.: Are you kidding? They call and write every day. At the end of *The Big One*, the names of the interns come up and at one of the screenings somebody shouted, "How much do you pay your interns?" And it was really weird, 'cause I'd never really thought about it. Of course my first answer was, "Not a God-damned cent!" But then I said, "You know why? Because they already have money. A real working class person could never be an intern, 'cause you have to have a job to pay the bills."

After that I thought, "I'm going to get rid of the intern program and start some kind of development program where we bring people in and *pay* them." Jeanie, what if this was 10 years ago, and I was back in Flint, how the fuck would I ever get my foot in the door? It's all about the right connections and the right universities.

J. W-K.: You talk about getting under the radar — it seems like a lot of it rides on your sense of humor.Can you say a little bit about the usefulness of humor or the limits of humor?

M.M.: Humor is an incredible means of communication and it's a powerful political tool. Certain critics tend to think that if you use humor, you're trivializing "a very serious subject." I think the Left has lost its sense of humor by and large and that's very sad.

J. W-K:. Are there limits to what you can do with humor?

M.M.: Well, I could give you personal lines that you don't cross.

J. W-K.: Say something about that. When somebody offers you hospitality and you're in their environment, does the fact that they're being nice ever stop you from doing what you feel like you need to do?

M.M.: No, but I'm usually nice to them. You can see that even when I'm debating somebody in the corporate lobby, I'm respectful to them as a human being. And it's how I genuinely feel. Because most of the time I'm dealing with "good Germans" who are sent forward to do their job.

I always believe — and this is prob-

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ably the part of me that's still in the seminary — that conversion is possible. I really believe people at their core are good. If there were some way to penetrate that and to touch that sense of fairness ...

Talking to Phil Knight [of Nike] — I don't know whether it came across in the movie — but I wasn't in there just goofing around. I truly was trying to penetrate this man's conscience. I believe that he has a conscience and that at his core he is a good person and would do the right thing. Hang on just one second ... [*The Witness* gets put on hold.] I just got some good news from Miramax! I'm trying to get them to put *The Big One* in the $2 houses around the country because a lot of people that I would want to see this film can't afford $7 or $8 to go to a movie. It isn't just $7 or $8. It's two people plus the babysitter, you know what I'm saying? They're going to do it!

J. W-K.: Terrific! Michael, I believe you see potential for good in people, but do you ever feel sorry for the people you've trapped? In a *TV Nation* episode you asked CEOs to meet the challenge of doing the work. And the CEO from Ford came, he changed the oil, he looked proud of himself. Then you just blew him away by looking at that poster on the wall that said, "At Ford Quality is Job Number One," and ...

M.M.: I said, "What's job two?"

J. W-K.: It's priceless — there was no good answer to that question.

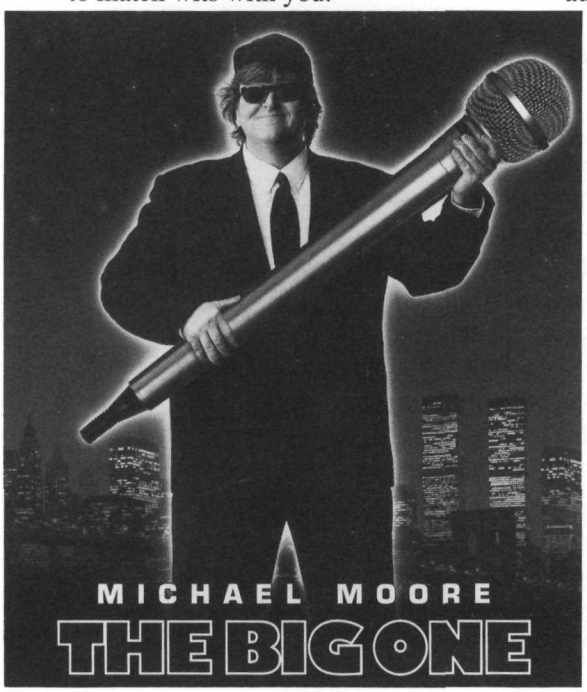
MM: That's just the Irish in me though. Something like that just pops in my head — we live in this world of advertising slogans and all this hype.

But don't feel sorry for him. He felt really good about the whole thing. He didn't feel that I had sandbagged him. Ford ran that tape on the assembly lines.

J. W-K.: There are ways in which you remind me of Oriana Fallaci. Kissinger once said that the stupidest thing he'd ever done was give her an interview. He did it because she was interviewing all these heads of state, was smart and had a point of view — it was seductive.

M.M.: That is the reason people talk to me, or Mike Wallace, or anyone else. There is something seductive about that little red light on the camera.

J. W-K.: Well it's that, but it's also trying to match wits with you.



M.M.: With Phil Knight — in interviews — I've heard him say that he'd seen *Roger & Me*. He felt like he knew how to handle me. In his mind he was going to show Smith how to do it.

J. W-K.: Well, if he had built the Nike factory in Flint, maybe he would have.

M.M.: I'm telling you, it would have been a fucking smart thing for him to do! In a way I was probably hoping it wouldn't happen, simply because I would be used then to mask all of the other evil things that they're doing.

J. W-K.: Then you could have brought the young Indonesian workers over to see the plant in Flint. You'd have come up with something!

Tell me about lying, cheating, stealing for a story. I love the fact that you tell your camera crew, "Keep the camera rolling no matter what I say." Then you oblige the officials by saying, "Turn it off, turn it off now." They don't, of course.

M.M.: I've always hoped somebody would catch what I'm trying to do with that. I'm trying to show how people in authority, whether it's the head of security or a PR person, see me as the authority over my crew. They believe that if the person in authority says something, you do it. I never put a piece of black tape over the red light on the camera. The red light's always on. They just assume that the guy has turned the camera off, simply because the man in charge said to! I LIKE that.

But there are other questions. Through *TV Nation*, I learned that I don't like lying.

J. W-K.: So you don't?

M.M.: At the beginning we did. Then we decided no more hidden cameras, no more misrepresenting who we are in the name of the story. I'm not saying that I wouldn't ever do it again. If it was Nazi Germany and you had to misrepresent yourself as a Nazi to report on what was going on, the ends justify the means.

J. W-K.: What don't you like about it?

M.M.: You don't feel good. Plus any of us who have a conscience, we can't lie that well.

J. W-K.: I love what you do with the juxtapositions. I think of the Bosnian Embassy story with a pizza. I'm sitting in my living room thinking "No, they can't — they can't possibly — describe the green pepper as the Serbs ...

M.M.: There's an instance where we were very up front. To me that made it even more funny and more damning. That they would say, "Give me the knife! I want my slice of Slovenia!" Whoa!

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We're not writing the script!

J. W-K:. And I love the fact that you took the head of the Michigan Militia on the ferris wheel! How did you get the idea?

M.M:. We were driving around Petoskey and the Knights of Columbus carnival was going on. I said let's just pull over. It made the Knights of Columbus very upset when they saw the militia.

J. W-K.: [laughter] A culture war! You quote the head of the militia as saying that people in the sixties were actually right about a lot of things and he asks, "Where are you guys now when we could use you?"

M.M.: A lot of conservatives have realized that they have been lied to over the years by the government. Unfortunately it took seeing their American dream go up in smoke. All those guys we talked to are former auto workers. Norm went to my wife's high school and his wife went to a high school next to mine. A number were from the Flint area.

What happened was that the Right was there to interpret for them — the immigrants are the problem, the welfare mothers are the problem. And the Left has never been there for those people. I truly believe that had they been presented with another road, they would have gone down that road.

J. W-K.: I don't want to get fixated on this, but if Left folks, who have tons of education, don't go to your bars and don't cross culture lines, they're not going to have a lot to say that's useful. Don't they need to step across the threshhold?

M.M.: I'm not opposed to that, but they should go in asking the working class what the working class can do to lead them, not what they can do to help the poor stupid workers.

J. W-K.: That's the same thing that you would hope would happen if people cross race and class lines in the city.

M.M.: That's what I do by listening to rap music. I don't like rap, but I want to hear those voices.

J. W-K.: In your interviews, if reporters call you an activist, you say, "No, I'm a citizen and democracy takes work."

M.M.: Yeah, I don't want to be separated from the mainstream.

We were sitting here yesterday trying to think of new ideas for the new version of *TV Nation* — we're thinking of calling it "The Awful Truth." We were trying to think of a way I could interview someone famous and then take an interview that they've already done with somebody else and cut me into it. But we couldn't think of who to interview. There's Gingrich, but he has like a 10 percent approval rating. It's not very risky to go after Newt Gingrich at this point. But who do we go after? People in Congress don't get our juices going because they're not really the power. That's why people don't vote. And, of course, you can't vote for your corporate chairman who really does have an impact on your daily life. So then people cop this sort of dog-eat-dog attitude — "Okay, where I need to spend my time is on my 401K plan and my mutual funds. I'd better protect myself as much as I can so when the shit hits the fan, I'll have some money."

J. W-K.: So what about the hope?

M.M.: The hope is that human beings throughout history have the tendency to rise up against intolerance. The more people they downsize, the more people are going to turn into citizen activists.

J. W-K.: It's gotta be true that if they're willing to downsize so many people, even with the risk that they're going to turn everybody into activists, they must feel pretty insulated from anything that people can do in response.

M.M.: They are convinced that people will not respond. They are sure of it. That's why they are going about this with such reckless disregard for the potential of people to rise up against it.

But we all have to run for precinct delegate; we have to go in and take over the local party apparatus. It's there for the taking. Once we elect enough people, they can declare eminent domain for the good of the people! It's constitutional. Congress could say, "No, G.M., you can't move that factory from Hamtramck to Mexico. That's an asset of the U.S. That's an asset of the working people of Detroit, so you will not do that."

J. W-K.: We'll get through the hard times?

M.M.: If I didn't think that I'd stop doing what I'm doing.Seriously, I would much rather just come back to Flint and be with my friends and family and put out the paper. It's only because I know that in an instant I could go back, do that and be an extremely happy person, that they'll never have me. Whether it's the movie company or the TV studio, I can always tell them to fuck off! When they tell me, "You can't put a chapter in the book called 'Why doesn't General Motors sell crack?'" I can say, "Well, fuck off! Then I'm not putting out the book."

Fox wasn't going to let me run an episode on *TV Nation* with Newt Gingrich because the news corporation which owns Fox also owns Harper Collins and they'd just done a book contract with Gingrich for $4 million. I'd gone down to Cobb County to ask, "Why is Cobb County one of the top counties in the country in terms of receiving federal aid, and yet you hate the federal government so much and you want to cut federal spending, why don't we start here in your county?"

J. W-K.: And he said?

M.M.: "Start elsewhere! We need it." I said, "That's what everybody says." And he responded, "Yeah, but we're telling the truth." So I asked, "Why do you need all this money for the Coast Guard? Your county is land-locked." He gave me this like evil eye, walked away from me and called the police.

I called Fox when they refused to run the episode and said, "I quit." I didn't show up for three days. They ran it. TW

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Unpacking anti-racism

by Joe Summers

In graduate school I volunteered to help lead an anti-racism retreat for the students in our college. I discovered that the retreat was supposed to begin with minority students gathering to talk about the ways they had been victimized by racism and white students gathering to talk about the ways they had profited from racism. Intuitively, this seemed wrong. Instead, I encouraged all the students to talk about how racism had hurt them. The white students' initial response was denial, "I've never been victimized by racism," or superficial, "The black students always eat together in the cafeteria," but slowly the discussion deepened. What began to emerge was a discussion of how, as young people growing up mostly in the suburbs of Detroit, their lives had been bound by invisible spheres of terror and how much that terror had defined their lives. The fact that their terror seemed so much greater than mine, even though I had experienced interracial violence and they had not, struck me profoundly.

The unimaginable possibilities that emerge when one encourages people to talk freely about their experiences was reflected at the retreat in the experience of one young Asian-American woman who insisted she was white. In the course of the first evening she was suddenly able to realize the connection between her race and the time in junior high when a group of students had tried to set her clothes on fire and the fact that she had never had a date in high school. These were experiences she had always seen as rooted in some kind of personal deficiency. She emerged from the retreat freed from the need to be white. So, too, the African-American students, whose prejudices against Asian-Americans only seemed confirmed by her insistence on not being in the minority group, came out of the retreat with a new empathy for Asian-Americans in this society. While white students emerged from the retreat with a powerful understanding of why daily life can be such a struggle for black students, black students came out of the weekend with their assumption that whiteness equals power shaken by the kinds of powerlessness described by most of the white students. The way students emerged from this retreat — with a concrete understanding of how racial domination is reproduced in our society and their unified, energized commitment to interrupt these processes —remains for me a vision of what is possible when there is authentic dialogue between peoples of different races.

It unfortunately also stands in contrast to most of my subsequent experiences in anti-racism workshops. As a white community activist, who is boiling with frustration at our failure to build a successful anti-racist coalition to challenge those who are reinforcing racial domination in this country, I'm trying to unpack why and how many of the efforts done in the name of anti-racism are in practice doing exactly the opposite of what they are meant to do in theory, i.e. mobilize white people to fight racism.

If one attends almost any of the anti-racism forums to be encountered in mainstream Protestant and Catholic churches, one will hear racism defined as systemic prejudice, the coming together of individual and institutional discrimination. It is a useful definition, particularly in a nation that is continually tempted to see everything in individualistic terms.

But if one claims that actions can only be racist when they are connected with institutional discrimination, then one makes the actions and attitudes of whites in essence different from those of blacks. It means that we are unlikely to find our way towards any common ground as a basis for common understanding and common action. For example, if one holds to this definition, those who lack institutional power can be bigoted, but they can't be racist. Thus my minister in high school insisted that African-Americans in this society could not be racists because they lacked systemic power. Around this period I began to experience the horror of race riots and of being targeted because I was white and living in the inner city. There are few more powerful experiences than the experience of having your whole humanity and individuality denied because of the color of your skin. White people could work with this experience by imagining what it is to have that experience multiplied exponentially.

Instead, under the current definition, an attack can only be considered racist if it is directed by a person/people from a dominant group towards a person/people of an oppressed group. This does two things. It disconnects people from experiences which should naturally help them make personal connections to the struggle against racism. Second, it puts whites and blacks into different moral categories. While it is true that racist blacks have been able to do less harm than racist whites because they have less economic and political power, this does not make their actions less harmful by nature.

Joe Summers is co-pastor of the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation, Pittsfield Township, Mich.

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Certainly a significant part of the problem is the way this definition has been appropriated. A definition meant to force people's attention onto systemic racism has instead been re-translated into individualistic terms with even more deadly results. Thus it is now individual whites who are responsible for creating and maintaining systemic racism as opposed to understanding that these structures and processes were promoted by particular elite groups of whites to maintain domination and exploitation. This again puts whites and blacks in opposite categories as blacks are not viewed as willing racism into being. Such workshops rarely focus on how blacks *do* cooperate with, give consent to, or internalize these structures of domination. Since the majority of whites may give consent to such structures, but have neither created nor chosen them, they are asked to bear the guilt for something they have never done. This distorted idea of the role of white people in the perpetuation of racism can be found in a number of the popular conceptions promoted in anti-racism workshops.

Racism as the original sin of whites

While this metaphor is useful in highlighting the degree to which racist attitudes and practices are something you are born into and thus can only overcome by actively resisting, it has the disadvantage of de-historicizing racism and making all whites born racists. It is a mark you bear no matter what your attitudes or the degree of your anti-racist commitments.

The recovering racist

In many contexts this is the highest level whites can aspire to. This language, taken from Alcoholics Anonymous (where people often begin their sharing with the phrase "I'm a recovering alcoholic"), has the advantage of recognizing that racism is like a disease you did not choose but with which you are always going to have to struggle. It also has the distinct disadvantage of making racism into something which, like a disease, is rooted in individuals and is beyond our control. It does not allow whites to honor themselves for their role in the battle against racism.

Whiteness as over-privilege

Understanding white privilege is useful in helping whites understand the many realities they take for granted which blacks in this society cannot. And it challenges them to use their privilege to create a more just society. However, such a conception fundamentally fails to recognize that whiteness also represents a form of cultural conquest of *European-Americans* which must be addressed if whites are going to do battle with racism.

Unfortunately, I've found whites are not challenged, or given permission, to talk about their own experiences and are instead guided to focus on their guilt. I believe it is the attempt to control the discussion of the experience of whites that leaves whites unable really to engage the broader question of systemic racism and their relationship to it. Having an idea of how you should think or feel imposed on you is always paralyzing. This might explain why such workshops rarely lead to any common agenda that includes tackling structural or systemic problems. Worse, while sensitizing whites to the experience of blacks within this society, they simultaneously perpetuate a stereotyped understanding of whites that makes it difficult to build authentic relationships between participants.

Such approaches to racism have meant that whites are not helped to understand, or forced to confront, the degree to which political and economic elites have fostered racism as a vital part of the cultural domination and economic exploitation of working class European-Americans.

This is not to cover over the degree to which many whites at the grassroots level have been racist and promoted racism, but it is to recognize the complexity of the relationship of whites to racism.

Covering over issues of class — and the ways the definition of whiteness has continually changed (Italian-Americans weren't considered white in many parts of the country until the 1960s) — has helped perpetuate the myth of whiteness. In their most twisted form, anti-racism workshops have encouraged a kind of self-hatred, or self-loathing, among whites and anti-racism work has become a form of exorcising the invisible demon of whiteness.

Understanding racism as basically a problem whites have has also meant that many of the lessons learned in the struggle against racism have been rendered inoperative for African-Americans. The claim that African-Americans cannot be racist has helped to perpetuate a variety of abuses, such as the failure to confront black political machines when they have used racialist thinking to distract people from their own conservatism or corruption or when they have perpetuated discrimination against others. (Cornel West and others have also pointed out how the rhetoric of black nationalism was used to hide the growing class differentiation in the black community.) Perhaps we should reserve the term racists for those who identify themselves as believing in racial superiority and instead focus on racist practices and beliefs. Over the last year, I've been struck by how progressive leaders like Jesse Jackson have begun to talk about the ways they have to struggle against internalizing racist beliefs or attitudes, such as the media-propagated fear of black people as criminals. If we understand racism as something that *all* people need to struggle against, then we're back on common ground.

Anti-racism work is so frequently carried out in a way that leaves whites feeling guilty (we have been further educated to the devastating consequences of racism and we have come to understand that

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we are the enemy), powerless (racism has an insidious power to control us no matter what we do so probably the best we can do is support minority people in their struggle against racism), and without vision (anti-racism is about acting against my self-interest and encouraging other whites to do likewise). This is undoubtedly an oversimplification, but it bears reflecting on.

I cannot speak for where such workshops leave African-Americans, but I've certainly heard the frustration and anger that things never seem to move in any concrete direction. We can continue to do such workshops, condemning those who are unwilling to participate in them, or we can ask, is this really helping us to accomplish what we need to do?

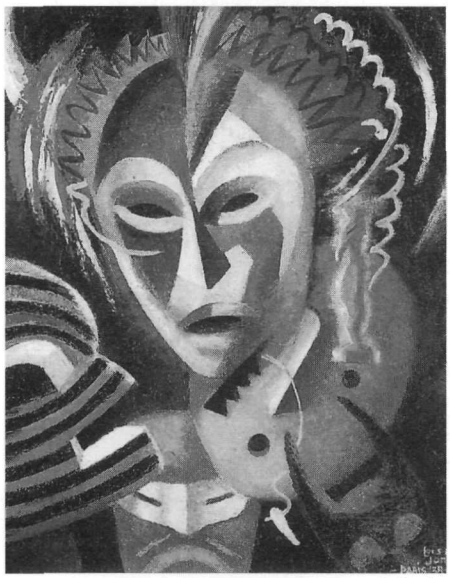
Given the kind of passion so many whites feel about overthrowing racism, why hasn't a strong anti-racist movement emerged in this country? Why is it that whites and blacks and other people of color continue to have such a hard time working together as partners in such a coalition? Does it help to ask those from the oppressed group *only* to speak and lead and the dominant group *only* to listen and follow? Is inverting the paradigm working? Is it time to move on to another stage in the struggle?

I believe it is long past time to move on. If we are going to move on we need to do a number of things. These include:

1) Recognizing that while racism cannot be reduced to any other form of oppression we must at the same time understand the links between racism and other forms of systemic oppression like classism and sexism and more specifically the ways in which racial and sexual subjugation and cultural domination and economic exploitation have reinforced each other. Without tracking these different narratives in their relationship to each other we will not understand where we are today or how we got here.

2) Emphasizing the centrality of our concern with structural/institutionalized racism while at the same time helping people understand the connections between any kind of prejudice and structural domination.

3) Making a clear distinction between having racist attitudes or saying racist



***Les fetiches* by Loïs Mailou Jones** Smithsonian

things, which is part of our common legacy in this society, and being a racist — one committed to racial domination. If people struggling against racism have to fear being called racist, a term which for good reason in American life has become the moral equivalent of being a Nazi, they are simply not going to be open to taking the risks required to move forward.

4) Challenging racialist modes of thinking (you are defined by your race) and visceral politics. A critical area now is to struggle against the way the bodies of black men have been criminalized. So too, we need to struggle against the way white bodies have had power and privilege projected onto them in such a way as to make invisible the realities of class. This view leaves anti-racist whites often caught up in a Promethean struggle of continually striving to prove they aren't racists. This can translate into being critical of other whites who are "less evolved." This does not advance the cause of anti-racism.

5) Allowing whites and blacks to become equal partners in the conversation about race and racism. This is not to say that, in general, blacks don't understand more about racism. It's also not a call for blacks to be wiped out by the ignorance of whites. It's simply a recognition that putting blacks in the position of teachers and whites in the position of students, as permanent positions, perpetuates paternalistic relationships and the instrumentalist mentality that often keeps whites from becoming empowered and acting on the basis of their experience.

6) Expanding our dialogue around race so that it grows beyond the dichotomy of black versus white not simply in terms of developing a more complex understanding of who whites and blacks are, but also so that it includes other peoples of color, their experiences, and their narratives.

Today we stand in an era similar to the post-reconstruction era at the end of the last century. That era saw the re-assertion of the racial and gender hierarchies that an earlier period had challenged. Struggles like the current battle around affirmative action mean everything in terms of whether we have any hope of standing our ground against the perpetuation of systemic racism. My hope is that this article will not insult those who have been doing the important work of anti-racist education, but will challenge them/us, to understand what we need to do to be more effective.

Unless we can change our practices I fear that white people will continue to battle windmills, whether in the form of self-condemnation or of throwing stones at small groups of the KKK, while the dragon destroys the little progress we have made. TW

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No hairshirts in the kingdom of God's grace

by William O'Brien

"I tell you solemnly, there is no one who has left house, brothers, sisters, father, children or land for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not be repaid a hundred times over, houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and land — not without persecution — now in this present time, and in the world to come, eternal life" (Mark 10:29-30).

Every Thursday at our apartment a small circle of friends gathers for morning prayer followed by breakfast. Our conversation this week was particularly animated. One friend is starting a new Catholic Worker community. Another had just returned from Iraq as part of a delegation that delivered medical supplies in defiance of international sanctions.

We were reflecting on the idea that people of faith ought to undertake a voluntary "fast from oil" as a response to the suffering of the Iraqi people. After all, the war and the subsequent violence of sanctions were rooted in U.S. demand for oil so as to maintain our "way of life." Culpability for the suffering was not limited to corrupt politicians — it fell on all of us who share in that "way of life."

As the conversation unfolded, we began to dissect how our privileged U.S. lifestyle is the linchpin of so much injustice and oppression; how our excess consumption and devouring of resources result in the suffering of countless people throughout the globe.

For me, the conversation was a painfully familiar one, now entering its third decade. As we talked, I glanced over at our refrigerator. There, on that large appliance which sucks up electricity 24 hours a day to store excess food, we have taped a poster of the prophetic citation of Isaiah 58, with its call for a fast acceptable to the Lord. We have also taped a sheet of paper with statistics on the global village, reminding us of the threads of consumption and injustice.

I poignantly recalled the fervor of my early years of Christian radicalism. The arguments for alternative lifestyles were overwhelmingly persuasive: Material possessions are a hindrance to our relationship with God. Excessive Western lifestyles are destroying the environment. Global justice demands that we counter the hideous inequities of resources.

Equally clear, it seemed, was the gospel mandate: Jesus came in poverty. He lived in community with the poor and outcast. The way of the Gospel, the life of Christian discipleship, meant entering into solidarity with those who are suffering.

In my zeal, along with other kindred spirits, I undertook the starkly clear response to corrupt U.S. lifestyle: downward mobility, economic resistance, voluntary poverty.

But we encountered some problems along the way to economic integrity.

Simple living, as has been said, was hardly simple. It was onerous enough to wrestle ourselves free of the seemingly endless tangles of complicity in oppression: Practically all options for food, energy, lodging, transportation, or health care were tainted with corruption.

Far worse, our efforts to live faithfully were not infrequently poisoned in a vortex of legalism, judgmentalism, guilt, and stress: Were we living simply enough? Was it wrong to own a stereo? Can we ever use a car? Is it a sin to take a vacation?

Meanwhile, our choice to live in voluntary poverty was itself a luxury that distanced us from those non-voluntarily poor folks with whom we sought solidarity.

Several years ago, I heard anew the familiar words: "Take no thought for what you will eat or drink ..." (Matt. 5:25).

Looking at the strains and stresses of my experiments in voluntary poverty, it suddenly struck me: I was taking a lot of thought about what I was eating, drinking, wearing, owning.

Spending energy and anxiety on decisions about downward mobility and minimal possessions seemed as much a violation of Jesus' teaching as spending energy and anxiety on amassing wealth.

Obsessing about little money was no different from obsessing about much money.

Somehow, my struggle with simple living was at odds with what I began to understand was Jesus' invitation to a radical freedom of trusting God.

More recently, my understanding of biblical justice has been deepened by the notion of the Jubilee. The covenant outlined a communal practice of respecting God's creation and accepting God's providence. The covenantal community was to

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William O'Brien is a contributing editor to *The Other Side* magazine. He is part of a small house church in Philadelphia and works in programs that provide housing and services for persons who are homeless. Artist **Betty LaDuke's** work can be ordered by writing to 610 Long Way, Ashland, OR 97520.

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balance work and rest, refrain from hoarding or exploiting, release all from bondage, and correct inequities so that everyone could share in the fruit of God's shalom.

Through the lens of the Jubilee, I even began to see Jesus' radicalism on money and possessions differently. He did call his disciples to break from the corrupt order and practice a new economy of sharing and mutual aid (Mark 10:17-27, Acts 2:44-45, 4:32-35). But, like the covenant and prophets before him, he did so in light of God's promise and God's bounty. After all, he promised an economic windfall for the discipleship community: more land and houses and kin than they would ever know what to do with (Mark 10:29-30).

Jesus' teaching on money — in fact, the entire biblical witness on economics — is not a call to dire austerity but an invitation to the life-giving abundance of God.

The mistake of much of the simple-living movement was the assumption that discipleship demanded deprivation. For the sake of justice, we donned hairshirts in the economy of grace. We mistook voluntary poverty for the richness of the reign of God.

Granted, some are called to genuine voluntary poverty, just as some are called to celibacy. These are particular vocations that stand as radical social and spiritual witnesses; they play a role in the reign of God. But they are neither central nor superior expressions of the biblical witness.

I tread with utmost caution here. U.S. culture is fiendishly seductive (I do not use these words lightly). We hear the siren calls of comfort, possessions, and leisure. It's just easier to drive the car, go out to eat, use the credit card. Of course we need a bigger house, another appliance, a nicer school for our kids.

We cannot allow our theologies to function as rationalizations for accommodating to materialism and privilege. The gospel choice brooks no compromise — God or Mammon. That choice is especially stark for us today: Money is the arch-idol of U.S. society.

Africa: Spirit Mother **by Betty LaDuke**

We still face harsh and radical choices about our complicity in global injustice. The children of Iraq suffer as we drive our cars to the rally against sanctions.

But for me, the goal isn't austerity or deprivation. The goal is God's jubilee — for all people. The task is one of tough but creative choices about our economic lives that aspire to the joyful abundance while challenging injustice and oppression.

Those choices are not necessarily any easier than in the days of my youthful zeal, but I undertake them in a new spirit: responding to Jesus' invitation to participate in God's gracious bounty. The struggle for justice is a joyful one.

So there we were at the breakfast table, grappling with issues of discipleship and lifestyle. We enjoyed tea purchased from the local co-op, sipped out of mugs made by a local monk potter. We ate homemade muffins while out the window we could look on our friendly, economically marginalized, working-class African-American neighborhood. We could see our plot in the community garden, where we grow the bulk of our produce. In a little while, I would ride my bike to work at a program where I opt for a salary based on need rather than seniority or hierarchy.

I realize painfully how much I am still complicit in a corrupt and inhumane economic system. I am still in the clutches of insurance, credit, and banking systems (though with some creative alternatives). I still struggle with questions of money and possessions, though I do so with a sense of God's grace and mercy.

But with my community of friends and with much grace, we are colonizing a little liberated zone for the reign of God. There is abundance on the way to justice. We'll keep trying to spread it far and wide. TW

BACK ISSUES

The following back issues of* The Witness *contain articles which may relate directly to* Trickster: social action in the 90s, *or simply to the spirit of this month's topic.

- *What to do with what you don't believe (4/98)*
- *Is it ever okay to lie? (4/96)*
- *Glamour (11/94)*
- *Fasting in Babylon (12/96)*
- *Dialogue (4/94)*
- *Be Ye Perfect (3/93)*

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When peacemaking grows tame

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

What would happen if we reworked our sense of obligation "to do good" into a passion for making mischief? Listening to a sermon on Christian calling and sacrifice recently, I got a perverse take: If getting into heaven depends on caring for the sick, homeless, naked and imprisoned, then we Christians end up having a stake in people continuing to be in pain so that we can help them. There's a peculiar way in which our Christian activity can be utterly self-centered and even dishonest.

This is particularly true if we don't examine the causes we embrace in an effort to locate our self-interest. This is a lesson fully embraced and taught by liberation and feminist theologians: We are grounded in what we've come through. We need to know our context.

As the powers become more monolithic, Christians really need to stop acting by rote, no matter how good the patterns may seem to be. Those of us with a long history of getting mailings out, trekking to church basements for lectures, writing letters to the editor, vigiling and sometimes crossing the trespass line, must think hard about what we're choosing to do. These methods, chosen in a different era, may be the best ones we still have, but some may no longer serve us.

What if we got off the white horse, entered our homes and pried up the floor boards of our psyches to learn what our own passions are truly for? What if we got really honest with ourselves and with each other about how we see life, laying all virtuous pretense to the side? What might the Holy Spirit be able to do with us then? It's ironic to think that in response to a threatened war in the Gulf, we might all be at the local Federal Buildings while the Spirit is trying to prompt us to something altogether different.

Could we closely guard our freedom, act unpredictably while also grounding ourselves in community, in the arts and in faith?

My thinking about this follows on some 15 years experience in nonviolent direct action. The Detroit Peace Community observed liturgical seasons by making public and prayerful witness at sites where weapons were built, policy was made or injustice acted out. These services would often result in arrests followed by a prayerful sequence of court appearances and jail visits.

I learned a lot. I had to lay down my attachment to being a "good citizen" and my dependence on a clean arrest record. I had to forego some professional opportunities (I interviewed for a reporting job at *The Detroit News* in 1981 on the same day my name appeared in the paper for an arrest — my first — protesting a development project). I've had a chance to test whether I could cope in a jail cell, whether I could identify at all with the regular prison population and whether I could make a dent in the hostility of the guards. (In the latter case, I couldn't and that was humbling.) I learned what it is like to pray and to read the Bible when you have nothing and no control over your life. I became familiar with the one-sided condescending attitude of most prison chaplains — they nearly always assumed we'd done something wrong, didn't listen and offered weak theology.

For those reasons I would recommend that people cross the line for their beliefs; it clarifies a lot.

However, if the goal is to really create change — to thwart the powers that value profit over creation and humanity — I believe these times call for a different way. Those of us in the peace movement are perhaps too predictable. Our actions can be anticipated and we can be outmaneuvered.

I dread hearing that folks are locked away for 18 years for participating in highly symbolic plowshare actions, in which they hammer missile silos or aircraft and bathe them in their own blood. This became clearest to me when I was most desperate about living in Detroit. When we had three crack houses on our (former) block and gangs were assaulting our neighbors' homes with shotguns and Molotov cocktails, I was inwardly screaming, "Forget sacrificing your freedom at military installations — come deal with the death right here! Come live outside the prison walls and feel every inch captive."

In the April issue I intimated some of these thoughts during my interview with Walter Brueggemann, who agreed that maybe the times are not right for direct confrontation and a reader responded in June: "I love Brueggemann — and I am using the part about the complaining Psalms in liturgy Sunday. However the other part of the interview had me thinking that Bill Stringfellow would be chiding. The saints will lose. We're to be fools for Christ. It's still about doing quality work of advocacy and resistance — efforts so good that they should change the world — and sometimes winning, but most times seeming the fool."

She's right. I don't question her bot-

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is co-editor/publisher of *The Witness*, <jeanie@thewitness.org>.
Artist **Laurel Burch** can be emailed at <infor@interart.com>

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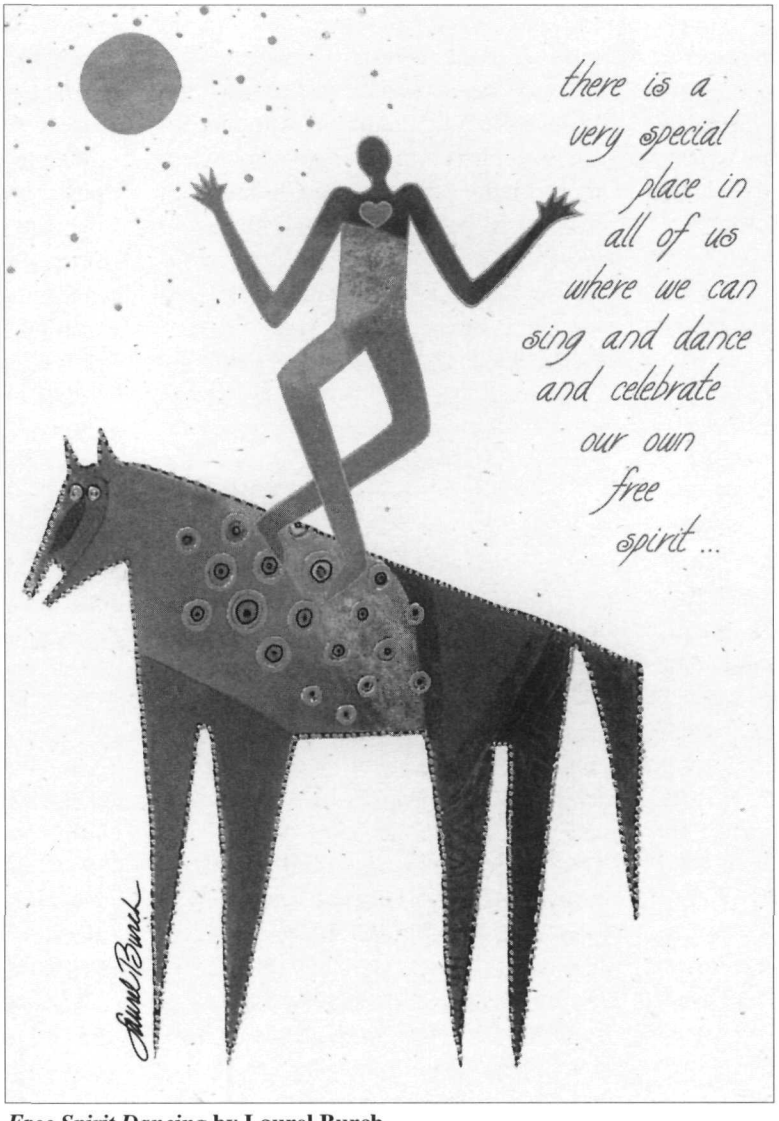
tom line, but I do increasingly question the tools we resort to and our abbreviated thought processes. Isn't there possibly a wider range of options? And isn't it possible that some activities that may seem mundane may be entirely radical? When news of the recent Oregon shootings swept through, I found myself praying in thanksgiving for monastic communities. I feel a desperate need for people to hold the center, to live an understanding of the sacred. Clara Brower, in her spiritual direction thesis, reports that feminist scholars are increasingly advocating that women "hold open a space for the Sprit to enter our living." She adds, "The women have stopped looking to male authorities to tell them about truth. Instead, they are learning to trust the sacred within."

The times are different now. They've been shifting gradually. At *The Witness* we've taken Korean theologian Chung Hyun Kyung's description of "ant and spider resistance" seriously. She says resistance happens locally in small, persistent ways and yet is linked (by spiders) to local activities all over the world. Yet, whenever we're out in public, it's easy to get tongue-tied as some people say, "Yeah, but tell us what to do!" It feels pale to say, "form a circle, enter a conversation and wait to see what evolves. Keep your heart open and honest. Watch for the movement of the spirit." When I attempted to say exactly this at a gathering in Utah, one man nearly walked out, clearly feeling his times was wasted. It was a relief when another said that the most hopeful and perhaps radical thing he was doing was meeting monthly with a group of men of varying ages, not all people of faith. At their last meeting he said they had talked about houses they had lived in. Their agenda was not limited to forming fast strategies for social change. Yet, in the course of things, organically, people in the circle stepped up to things that needed doing. For instance, one man, an electrician, totally rewired an older woman's home, saying he couldn't sleep knowing her house could go up in flames.



Free Spirit Dancing **by Laurel Burch**

So what's radical? Is it dashing off to meetings? Is it repeating activities that perhaps used to work?

The work done in the sixties was tremendously important and provides a critical foundation — we need the analysis. But the most important work we can do now may be entering into reflection and digging deep. The next wave of resistance may not involve mass marches on Washington. We may not be carrying the flag for charismatic leaders. We probably won't be hurtling ourselves at the blades of the state to make a symbolic point that the media won't report.

We need to reclaim our sense of self both individually and as faith communities. We need to shield ourselves from the media (like the few in George Orwell's *1984* who tried to turn off the two-way TVs and step out of range of the ubiquitous listening microphones). We need quiet. We need to replace the jingles and seductions of advertising with a quiet rehearsal of our own stories — what is our personal history, what do we cherish, when have we felt God's presence, what is sacred? We need to rehearse these stories for ourselves, teach them to children and help them write their own.

"If you look at the exilic Psalms,"

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Walter Brueggemann said in the April issue of *The Witness*, "they really knew that their capacity to stay together as a community of faith was in great jeopardy and they engaged in a lot of remembering and they engaged in a lot of truth-telling."

Somehow this sounds pedestrian compared to extreme needs and dramatic protest actions, but I think it's fundamental. We are a people with no sense of history who are subject to tremendously sophisticated conditioning — most of us are exposed to 3,000 ads a day (*TW* 9/95). If we imagine that our sense of self is so strong as to be uninfluenced, we are deceiving ourselves. Resisting the suggestions that we are inadequate, unless we buy certain products, requires discipline and silence. Our own voice, our song and our ability to hear the earth's song as a people is nearly extinguished. (Watch for *TW* 10/98.) We need to recover it. We need to find circles in which to tell our stories truthfully — no bullshit. We need to discern the story of our bioregion: Where is the earth crying out for help? What does humanity need? What do our own spirits need? In December, *The Witness* will examine ways that people are finding to "go off the grid" — to get freer of the superstructures.

In that spirit, we look to the trickster.

When the powers are overarching and seemingly unchangeable, trickster is our best ally. Trickster can take rules and bend them back against the system. Trickster can persuade the ruling gods to step outside with those apples of immortality and then steal them for the earth-bound creatures. Or trickster can drag fire down from the gods for humanity. Wily, unpredictable, elusive, funny and often silly, trickster upsets both the gods' and our own expectations, breaking open the hegemony so that we can see another way of living.

In *Trickster Makes This World* (p. 29), Lewis Hyde says, trickster moves in "uncanny territory. It is a space ruled by the disarming charm of the very young child. It is a traveler's space where everything is on the road, cut loose from any clear locale. Here the citizens walk their livestock backward and speak a weird reversing language."

At a recent Klan rally in Ann Arbor, Mich., citizens tried to present themselves as a buffer between the Klan, whose speech they reluctantly wanted to protect, and young demonstrators who believed the Klan should be smashed before a neo-Nazi spirit overwhelms the nation. My partner Bill participated in the work of the Chris-

Strategems of the powers

Corporate America and the government's ability to defuse protest is no accident. For several decades, academics have been issued grants by the justice department to investigate the "prototypes" of criminal activity and of "collective disorder."

In 1973 such a study resulted in guidelines that recommended that police intelligence units collect the names of activist organizations and their leaders. "Know their faces, addresses, cars, telephone numbers. Know the goals, strategy, and tactics of their organizations, the number of members, the level of their funding, and the sources of their funding."

In 1981, researchers at the University of Michigan agreed to produce another report for the Justice Department (though they didn't tell respondents for whom they were doing the study). This one would study "collective disorders." Targeted were fast food workers trying to organize a union, May Day demonstrators, Chrysler workers who vandalized the line when they learned they were being laid off and Iranian demonstrators. Those contacted were told the University wanted to examine "the effectiveness of specific actions in the expression of issues and grievances."

Members of the 100 activist organizations contacted were assured confidentiality but their ages, occupations, marital status, number of children, sex and race were carefully recorded.

At the time, University of Michigan sociology professor William Gamson, who sat on the study's advisory panel, conceded that "There's no way we can really monitor the project. I'd feel more comfortable if it were not sponsored by an agency whose mission is social control."

We can't be reminded too often of COINTELPRO and the methods the U.S. government used to decimate activist groups in the 1960s and 1970s. Whether the groups' activities were something we'd want to support is secondary. The first is whether it is legitimate for our government to lie, cheat, steal, threaten and kill to inhibit them.

This year, The Wall Street Journal ran an article that included a cryptic paragraph indicating that many in the Pentagon believe the next war will be on U.S. soil - it didn't say whether the enemy would be intruders or citizens. Shortly thereafter the government authorized $7 billion for investigation of "terrorist" activities, which is to say any activity which the government can argue might result in "disorder." If you find that reassuring, think again.

— *J.W-K.*

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tian Peace Team, which put its bodies between the Klan and the rock-hurling protesters. When he got home, Bill said it had been a confusing day. The peace team was fronting for the cops so it was hard to make it clear that he didn't like the Klan and also understood that cops could be abusive. Perhaps the best moment, he said, came when a group of high school students crashed into the scene with dragon puppets, drums and a wizard pinata — yelling "Yippee! Have a nice day!" and "The wizard is full of candy" as they threw candy to the crowd. It was also a nice touch that a sign above the Klan rally touted the dollar amount pledged to diversity work for every minute the Klan rally lasted — they raised over $20,000.

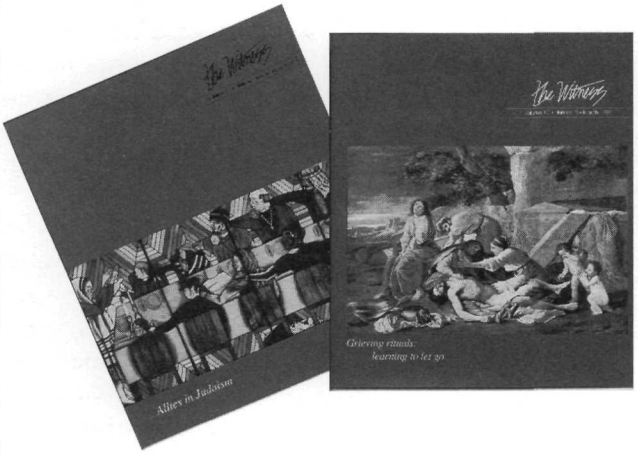
Perhaps as important as telling our stories is taking time to notice the creation, to appreciate fire, water, air and earth. To fight with a sense of humor and cagey wit requires rest.

Trickster is clever, but also lazy, indolent, pleasure-seeking. Following the trickster model allows us to relax the grip of necessity and guilt which can make it hard to enjoy a meal or an afternoon by a river. Trickster is not rigid, moralistic or stoic. Trickster is not co-dependent. Trickster is not always nice. Neither is Jesus — "glutton and wine bibber" as he's accused of being.

Rosanna Kazanjian, one of the women at the Greenfire community in Maine, dreamed that she was crucified between two women. After a while one woman said, "You know you can get down whenever you want." It seemed too far to get down safely, but she did. Then she walked into a sanctuary and slipped on a beautiful colored sari and danced and danced and danced.

What I would like for us is the freedom to honor God by reveling in the creation while actively remembering our identity and vocation, free always to act unexpectedly in resurrection hope. As Wendell Berry puts it in part of the *Manifesto: The Mad Farmer's Liberation Front:*

Ask yourself: Will this satisfy
a woman satisfied to bear a child?
Will this disturb the sleep
of a woman near to giving birth?
Go with your love to the fields.
Lie easy in the shade. Rest your head
in her lap. Swear allegiance
to what is nighest your thoughts.
As soon as the generals and the politicos
can predict the motions of your mind,
lose it. Leave it as a sign
to mark the false trail, the way
you didn't go. Be like the fox
who makes more tracks than necessary,
some in the wrong direction.
Practice resurrection. TW



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Can we talk?

A conversation on inclusion, exclusion and orthodoxy

[Douglas LeBlanc is the editor of United Voice, *the newspaper published by Episcopalians United (EU). EU promotes what it understands as orthodox Christian faith. Although* The Witness *could be characterized as articulating an opposing Christian Left perspective,* Witness *co-editor Julie Wortman and LeBlanc have become friends over the years in the course of covering many Episcopal Church events and gatherings. Following publication of the May 1998 issue of* The Witness *on the "The Episcopal Church in conflict," Wortman received a personal note from LeBlanc that developed into an e-mail conversation. We thought* Witness *readers might find that conversation of interest as they contemplate their own responses to the church-in-conflict topic.]*

Douglas LeBlanc: I appreciated both halves of your interview with Verna Dozier on ambiguity (see *TW* 4/98 and 5/98). But I am troubled by the wording of your final question: "If you accord someone's exclusivist position dignity, it is hard to know how to proceed because the terms for inclusion involve someone else's exclusion."

It seems to me that to speak of "according dignity" to someone's position is to speak the language of exclusion: i.e., "I decide if your ideas are worthy of dignity." I know you're responding to what Verna said earlier in the interview and I may be misreading you. And I'll say flat out that some beliefs, such as Nazism, are so inherently evil that they deserve no respect. I am hard pressed, however, to find many people on the Right who happily own the label of "exclusivist." Do you really believe that many of us on the Right are concerned primarily with excluding people? If so, I think you're not understanding our convictions very clearly. By all means we're called to holiness, humility, justice, mercy, grace, peace, love. All of these are summarized well in the phrase, "imitation of Christ." (Let me acknowledge here that I have used such terms as "revisionist" and "liberationist" in the past. I am now deeply skeptical about the worth of most words ending in "ist," unless people choose those words for themselves.)

Do you really believe that many of us on the Right are concerned primarily with excluding people? If so, you're not understanding our convictions very clearly.

— Douglas LeBlanc

My usual experience with "inclusivity" is receiving letters and e-mail in which people announce their own fierce commitment to inclusivity, only to tell me how much I am driven by fear, hatred, "literalism," lust for power or some other motive they cannot possibly discern from a distance of hundreds of miles. I don't think it takes a theologian to recognize this as a moral and theological blind spot.

Julie Wortman: When I speak of according someone's position dignity, I guess I make a distinction between people and positions. Every person's dignity must be respected. That is, every person has standing.

D.L.: I join you in making that distinction.

J.W.: But let's take a situation in which, say, the church has decided that women cannot be denied access to ordination on account of their sex, but some folks say that the only way they can continue to be members is if they are allowed to exclude women from the ordination process or from exercising an ordained role. I think according that exclusivist position dignity or standing is problematic. I can appreciate that a person might not believe women can or should be ordained. I can appreciate that this person will avoid the ministry of women clergy. But I cannot support this person's insistence on blocking women from access to ordination or denying women the possibility of serving in an ordained capacity as proof that the rest of us respect and include them.

Think of the bishops at Lambeth who will not accept having their picture taken with the other bishops of the Anglican communion if the women bishops are to be in the picture! I would prefer everyone be in the frame despite the ambiguities. If the bishops who do not accept women bishops wish to take themselves out of the frame, fine. If the powers that be accommodate to these bishops I'll be irate.

D.L.: I'd like everyone to be in the frame despite the ambiguities, too. As to accommodating the bishops who do not accept women bishops, I guess it depends on what qualifies as accommodation. I don't think anything will stop the group picture from being taken, or all meetings from proceeding as planned.

J.W.: I can see that few people might want to think of their position as "exclusivist," although we are routinely exclusivist in the church about who can or cannot do various things, who is or is not qualified for various assignments. I don't think most people see themselves as looking for people to exclude, but I do think that many of the convictions of those on the Right are, when lived out, decidedly exclusionary in a way that seems largely biased in favor of straight white men. (The Bible is largely patriarchal, too. Whether

Co-editor/publisher **Julie A. Wortman,** <julie@thewitness.org>, edits the Vital Signs section. She received an award of excellence for her issue on "Immigration: the flight into America" [12/97] from Episcopal Communicators.

Vital Signs

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one sees that as of God or of humanity is a big question. I'm guessing we'd disagree?) When these convictions are proclaimed "orthodox," discussion seems to have been nipped in the bud.

D.L.: I would have to say the Left is also exclusionary — but based on *ideology* (or on *theology*), not on sex, race or sexual orientation. Sometimes that means excluding straight white men. Sometimes that means excluding conservatives who happen to be Caribbeans.

You're safe in guessing that we disagree on whether the Bible is patriarchal. Just because the Bible describes polygamy in Old Testament times, for instance, does not mean it endorses polygamy. (The Bible describes human sin honestly, in all its ugliness.)

The Gospels certainly describe Jesus as inclusive, although I would say inclusivity was not the primary point of his life on earth. Redeeming human beings in body and soul was the primary point — that included physical healings, dining with outcasts, announcing the Kingdom of God, clearly proclaiming himself as the Messiah, dying on the cross and rising from the grave.

As for the word "orthodox," I find this definition from James Davison Hunter to be accurate and fair: "Orthodoxy: the commitment on the part of adherents to an external, definable and transcendent authority."

We once chatted about a rubber stamp that says "Orthopraxis, not orthodoxy." As I suggested then, I think that rubber stamp offers a false choice. The two depend on each other: Orthopraxis without orthodoxy is a social gospel, which may not transform human souls. Orthodoxy without orthopraxis is the faith of the Pharisees, and we know what Jesus had to say about the Pharisees.

J.W.: It is difficult to be pluralistic when among those gathered around the table are persons whose belief systems appear to reject ambiguity. The definition you offer for "orthodox" pertains to this. Generally, I think of orthodoxy as "right thinking" or "right belief." But who defines this external, transcendent authority you commit yourself to? In what way is the transcendent an authority? Is "transcendent" the only nature of this authority?

My guess is that you have answers for these questions that you regard as the correct answers. If I reject your answers, what then?

When you say that "orthopraxis without orthodoxy is a social gospel, which may not transform human souls," I find myself wondering why you presume that the souls of those who engage in social justice and other forms of orthopraxis are not transformed? Do you have a standard for the soul's transformation — a way we know that the soul has been properly transformed? Acknowledging that "doing the right thing" may often lack integrity, plenty of people on the Left these days are advocating that social action must be grounded in personal, spiritual transformation.

Who defines this external, transcendent authority to whom you commit yourself? Is "transcendent" the only nature of this authority? If I reject your answers, what then?

— Julie Wortman

D.L.: I have no problem accepting orthodoxy as "right thinking" or "right belief." And, yes, I do have some answers to your questions. God, through the Holy Spirit, defines the external, transcendent authority to whom I commit myself. God (the transcendent) is an authority by virtue of creating the world and redeeming it. We are responsible to use Scripture, reason and tradition to understand God's revelation clearly. The way that we know that the soul has been properly transformed is if a soul that had not heard the Good News of Jesus now knows Jesus as Savior and Lord. I know that's the language of an evangelical, but it is also the language of the Baptismal Covenant we hear so much about.

And despite our differences, so long as we are friends, or both Anglicans, I hope we remain in conversation. We both give our passion and activism to what we believe in, and we both try to be faithful to God as we understand God. In the spirit of Gamaliel, I suggest we leave the truth of our respective beliefs to God and to eternity. (If, for instance, inclusivity is more important to the Gospel than I recognize, I pray that will become clearer to me.)

J.W.: I'm wondering what it means to "know Jesus as Savior and Lord" and how you believe that shows up in someone's life? So often I find this sort of language code for something that never is made explicit.

D.L.: Well, I loathe code language and jargon. I do believe that "Savior and Lord" language expresses theology of the Atonement, which is a part of our Anglican heritage.

Let me express it in personal terms. Until I was about 13, I lived in a "works righteousness" universe. I knew I did bad things, and I hoped that my good deeds would somehow balance off those bad things. When I finally understood that Jesus died on the cross for my sins, I embraced him as my Savior. Ever since, I've been learning to make him my Lord as well — to welcome his discipline, to listen when the Holy Spirit warns me to flee temptation, to repent when I have mistreated somebody.

J.W.: What, exactly, is Jesus' discipline?

D.L.: When I speak of Jesus' discipline I mean that Jesus does not simply allow me to remain who I would be of my own volition. On my own power, I am inclined to be profane, to overeat, to be lazy, to be sarcastic, to jump to harsh conclusions about people — just a few examples. Jesus calls me out of self-indulgence and into a life of sacrifice. I would describe it as my daily struggle against sin. Can we agree that "sin" is still a word with some fairly clear meanings, rather than code for something more? If not, please see the Ten Commandments and the Seven

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Deadly Sins to know what I mean.

J.W.: I reject atonement theology, Anglican heritage or no Anglican heritage. For me, what Jesus' life, death and resurrection point to is that death is not ultimate, that a person can — is called to, in fact — choose life without fear of death. I don't get a picture that Jesus thought that people were basically sinful, though he certainly pointed to the oppressions and death-dealing choices he encountered.

D.L.: We can agree that death is not ultimate. But I believe death would have been ultimate without the resurrection of Jesus. What are the theological essentials of being a Christian? I ask because I'm hearing so much about what you reject. I don't think Atonement theology — which is spelled out rather clearly in the liturgy of the Episcopal Church — is something we can reject as glibly, say, as somebody's musical tastes.

J.W.: What is essential for you and for me will be different. But I do embrace a hermeneutic of suspicion about the institutional church and Scripture and the human fashioning of both — something I find missing from much of what you and others on the Right say about God, authority and Jesus.

D.L.: You find the hermeneutic of suspicion missing from my view of the Bible because I do not believe Holy Scripture is at the mercy of my subjective judgments. God, through Scripture, holds my life against God's standards of holiness. Scripture judges me — not the other way round. I worship God, not Scripture. But I do take Scripture at face value when Scripture describes itself as God's self-revelation through human authors.

If your hermeneutic of suspicion leads you to believe, say, that Jesus does not present marriage as God's design for human sexual relations (as I believe it does), what do you believe he *does* present as God's design for sexual relations? Do you base this belief on any specific texts, scriptural or otherwise? Is marriage an entirely worthless concept?

J.W.: The last thing I take at face value is Scripture! With respect to your question, I'd have to say I don't believe that Jesus presented us with some clear picture of God's design for sexual relations except in the sense of suggesting that we are not to trifle with one another. I know that many believe that Jesus' encounter with the Pharisees over divorce is a place where he says God intends men and women — and only men and women — to marry (without the possibility of divorce), but this passage seems to me to highlight a moment when Jesus plays the trickster in using the Pharisees' own game of invoking Scripture to confound their attempt to trip him up. In the marriage service in the prayer book the best we can do is to say we believe Jesus "adorned" married life because Jesus was among the guests at the wedding at Cana and performed his first miracle at the wedding feast. To my mind, Jesus here is not offering a very clear picture of God's intention for sexual relations. Still, I think marriage is valuable — I believe that it is so worthwhile (presuming we are speaking of a non-patriarchal version of marriage) that everyone should be able to partner in that way, with the support of the church and of the community.

What are the theological essentials of being a Christian? I ask because I'm hearing so much about what you reject. — LeBlanc

I should also make clear that I don't reject Scripture as an authority, I just consider it a set of texts to be engaged. Every Sunday evening and every Monday morning my community engages Scripture as we listen for the spirit's call in our individual and collective lives. We have all been shaped by the stories — and the interpretations of the stories — contained in the Bible, but we do not regard what has been handed down as sacrosanct and impervious to honest questioning.

D.L.: I wouldn't say you reject Scripture as an authority. Clearly our understanding of its authority differs. I think the phrase "sacrosanct and impervious to honest questioning" is a misunderstanding of the scriptural authority I embrace. I certainly believe God expects us to use our reason in understanding Scripture. Both Scripture and God can withstand "honest questioning." Does honest questioning require a hermeneutic of suspicion? No.

J.W.: We on the Left and Right really don't accord one another dignity very much, do we? Not as if all our lives depended on it. There are so many ways we are all up against the wall and, I think, could be allies.

D.L.: I fully agree. I think we can all be better allies if we find a way to articulate, and understand, what we *do* hold in common as Episcopalians. I suggest the basic theological affirmations of the Nicene Creed and the baptismal covenant as a sensible starting point, but I doubt that enough progressives would agree.

J.W.: That might be true, especially as we talk about what those affirmations mean. I don't know if the church will survive these debates, but this bothers me less and less. I no longer expect the Episcopal Church to be an ally in knowing life and God and working for salvation because so often the institution denies the "dream of God" it carries. If we expect the institutional church, whatever the denomination, to be the only vehicle for knowing life and God and working for salvation, we'll be frustrated as often as we are helped — perhaps more often. The church is a principality like any other, fallen and in need of being recalled to its vocation to praise God and serve life.

D.L.: Perhaps this is a miracle: I agree with every word in your final two sentences! But I cannot say that I have given up on the Episcopal Church as an ally in knowing life and God and working for salvation. My *parish* is a strong ally, but at the diocesan, provincial and national levels the Episcopal Church can be as much of a burden as a help.

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Arkansas dissidents test boundaries of diocesan authority

A mission congregation within the boundaries of the Episcopal Diocese of Arkansas is seeking to remain in the Anglican Communion, but not as a congregation of Arkansas — or even of the U.S. Episcopal Church. The situation tests the boundaries of diocesan authority and will likely end up on the agenda of this summer's Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops. According to Larry Maze, Arkansas' bishop, the congregation was started by a group "that had become disenchanted with the general direction of the Episcopal Church." As the congregation first began to form, Maze said he made it clear that "new congregations in our tradition do not spring up over disagreements" and he urged the group to "stay within the ranks of the larger church in order to be a voice for the changes" they were seeking.

The congregation has turned a deaf ear to such pleas, receiving guidance and help from the North American Missionary Society (NAMS), an independent organization within the Episcopal Church urging creation of a new theologically conservative Anglican province (see TW 5/98).

NAMS spokesperson Jon Shuler said that the majority of members of the congregation had "gradually ceased to worship in the Cathedral parish because of consistent, sustained and public support of the bishop's action [in signing the Koinonia Statement in 1994], which they believe to be an abandonment of the apostles teaching." The statement, written by John Spong of bishop of Newark, said that sexual orientation is morally neutral and that it is possible to honor same-sex relationships.

Under protest from the diocese the congregation called Thomas Johnston of South Carolina as rector. "To our utter amazement on April 13 we learned that the bishop of South Carolina had earlier received a request to transfer Mr. Johnston to the Diocese of Shyira, Rwanda, Africa, and on April 6 had complied with the request," Maze said. This action effectively removes Johnston from "accountability to the American church. In effect, what had been a national dispute involving the integrity of diocesan boundaries is now an issue transplanted to the larger Anglican Communion," Maze said.

At the 1988 Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops, Maze pointed out, a resolution "reaffirms its unity in the historical position of respect for diocesan boundaries and the authority of bishops within those boundaries." The resolutions said that it would be "inappropriate behavior for any bishop or priest of this Communion to exercise episcopal or pastoral ministry within another diocese without first obtaining the permission and invitation of the ecclesial authority thereof."

Maze dismissed attempts by those who would reduce the disagreement "to a struggle between a 'liberal' bishop and a 'conservative' congregation." He stressed that mission strategy is "an intentional, collaborative effort on the part of the department of mission, the bishop, the executive council, the standing committee, and the annual convention" and that precludes forming any "special interest congregation."

To our utter amazement we learned that the bishop of South Carolina had received a request to transfer Mr. Johnston to the Diocese of Shyira, Rwanda, Africa, and had complied with the request. — *Larry Maze*

Maze expects the issue of diocesan boundaries to be on the agenda of this summer's Lambeth Conference. In the meantime, he will consult with the bishop in Rwanda and "review this situation as it impacts the larger church."

— based on a report by James Solheim, Episcopal News Service

Call for music celebrating gifts of women

The Women's Sacred Music Project, Inc., in conjunction with the Episcopal Church's Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, is seeking submissions for a supplement to the church's hymnal aimed at celebrating the gifts and diversity of women in scripture, women saints, and churchwomen. Simple congregational music is needed. Accompaniments should be varied and flexible, adaptable for use in small groups and parishes, reflective of the cultural diversity of the church and appropriate for use by both men and women.

This supplement is intended to encourage women poets and composers to write for the church. The deadline for submission of texts (without musical settings) is Sept. 17, 1998.

Musical settings of existing texts are also needed, specifically settings of supplemental liturgical texts contained in *Enriching Our Worship*, available from Church Publishing, Inc., in New York (can be ordered by calling 1-800-242-1918). Settings of the eucharistic liturgy and the offices will be included. Settings of texts from the New Zealand Prayer Book are also welcome. Deadline for submission of music with text is Jan. 19, 1999.

Please send submissions to: The Women's Sacred Music Project,Inc. c/o the Cathedral Church of the Saviour, 3723 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104. For more information, call Lisa Neufeld Thomas, 215-557-8172.

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Ireland's peace process

by David Stevens

Yes I said Yes I will Yes.
(James Joyce's novel *Ulysses*)

The Agreement on Good Friday between the British and Irish governments and most of the political parties in Northern Ireland aims to end almost 30 years of bitter civil and sectarian conflict and lay the foundations of peaceful coexistence between the two communities in Northern Ireland, and between the North and the South.

Running to well over 10,000 words, the agreement seeks to address relationships within Northern Ireland, between Northern Ireland and the Republic, and between the two jurisdictions on this island and England, Scotland and Wales. It also contains measures on human and civil rights, policing, prisoners and other issues that have been sources of conflict in Northern Ireland.

The people of Ireland were asked in separate referenda, North and South, on May 2 whether this agreement offered an acceptable way forward.

People in the South voted overwhelmingly to accept the Agreement, seeing it as offering a chance of peace.

Nationalists in Northern Ireland also overwhelmingly said Yes, seeing the Agreement as an opportunity to make political progress. The Unionist community in Northern Ireland gave a much more reluctant Yes. It was an agonizing decision for many. Opinion polls showed large numbers of undecided Unionists only days before the Referendum vote. In the event around 45 percent said No.

The proposed accelerated release of terrorist prisoners was a sticking point for many. Decommissioning of terrorist weapons was also a significant issue.

Paradoxically, two of the groups which helped to make the Agreement possible — the Ulster Democratic Party and the Progressive Unionist Party — had close links with loyalist terrorist organizations. Many of their leaders were former prisoners who had learned something in prison — that violence was not the answer. They played a significant and constructive role in Northern Ireland politics following the loyalist ceasefire in the autumn of 1994. (The IRA called their ceasefire at the end of August 1994). For these parties it was a "good enough" Agreement. The Union with Britain was safe.

Violence may continue for some time.

Sinn Fein — which has close links with the Provisional IRA — eventually voted to accept the Agreement. This acceptance meant that many of the sacred principles of Republicanism have had to be compromised. The leadership of Sinn Fein has been extremely skilled in bringing the Republican movement in from the political cold, while keeping so many supporters on board. The "normalization" of Sinn Fein as a conventional political party is not yet complete — there is still the link with the IRA. And some are still attracted to a militant Republican agenda. However, for most Republicans, too, it was a "good enough" Agreement. It could be sold as a transitional stage to a united Ireland.

The Agreement is not peace — it is simply an opportunity to make and build peace. Nor is the Agreement reconciliation between the communities in Northern Ireland. As the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mo Mowlam, said in the British House of Commons: "It will take a long time to repair the physical and emotional damage of the past and bring about a real sense of reconciliation and partnership." The Agreement is a political accommodation which may in time lead to reconciliation among the people of Northern Ireland.

The political action now moves to the selection of candidates and the campaigning for the elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly to be held in June. The leader of the main Unionist Party, David Trimble, took an enormous risk when he accepted the Good Friday Agreement. He scored a significant victory in the Referendum; he has not, however, conclusively defeated his opponents within unionism (including those within his Party). There is still a lot to play for. The Unionist rejectionists are hoping to wreck the Assembly. There are many difficult issues to face: the decommissioning of terrorist weapons, the setting up of a powersharing executive in which Sinn Fein are likely to be entitled to have members, the reform of policing. Violence may continue for some time — dissident republican paramilitaries oppose the Agreement and there could be violence from some loyalist sources. The (Protestant) Orange Order marching season is getting underway, which will inevitably raise community tension. Nevertheless, in the words of a Belfast Protestant, "It's a bit of a start." TW

David Stevens is a Corrymeela Community member and General Secretary of the Irish Council of Churches.

Keeping Watch

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Trickster makes this world

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

***Trickster Makes This World* by Lewis Hyde (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998).**

The role of the trickster, according to Lewis Hyde in his best-selling *Trickster Makes This World*, is to discredit what appear to be rigid social structures through creativity, inconsistency, lies, theft, and appetite. Trickster is at once clever and stupid, brilliantly creative and flagrantly vulgar. Trickster is a god of the crossroads, a god on the move with very little baggage, a god free of the shame inflicted by the rules of a locality.

When negotiating between mortals and gods, Trickster is an unreliable ally for both parties. He may steal the fire and give it to the mortals, but he is equally likely to betray mortals' expectations. He breaks down the rigidity in human commerce with the all-perfect gods. Trickster's gift is that his conduct disappoints our expectations and forces us to look at situations in a new way. If the rules of the prevailing order are not sacrosanct, what then?

In the common dualities, trickster finds another way. Hyde points out that when the predator throws in a fishing line to catch the fish, trickster enjoys approaching the hook under water, removing and eating the bait. He confounds the predator and feeds himself even though he may not feel any great love for the fish.

In modern context, Hyde compares the trickster to the con man who passes through town, stealing women's hearts, breaking the rules and feeling no shame. These rebels, he argues, are essential in maintaining the flexibility of our cultures.

"I want to argue a paradox that the myth asserts: That the origins, liveliness, and durability of cultures require that there be space for figures whose function is to uncover and disrupt the very things that cultures are based on," Hyde writes in the introduction. "I hope to give some sense of how this can be, how social life can depend on treating antisocial characters as part of the sacred."

Hyde notes in a concluding chapter that, at least within current scholarship, trickster tends to be male. He acknowledges that females sometimes act as tricksters, but they do not apparently sustain the level of deception, lust and mobility typical of tricksters. Hyde explores a variety of reasons for this, noting that perhaps a challenge to patriarchy from a male has a particular mythic meaning in its deconstruction. But Hyde acknowledges that the scholarly research may yet find such tales.

It's a great glimpse into a kind of activism that confounds middle class morality, but may set middle class persons free of the rules that weave a cloth intended to adorn the very rich.

Trickster's voice, his/her version of events — laced perhaps with lies that may reveal the truth — always comes from the margins, Hyde says. The first lie or theft is one accomplished in order to gain standing. For instance, Hermes, who is the illegitimate and unacknowledged son of Zeus, steals Apollo's sacred cattle. Through this theft he obligates his brother to enter into conflict with him, to acknowledge him. Eventually through his unabashed responses and his singing (which may allow him to rewrite history) he is able to lure Apollo into concessions which give him distinct and important roles in the pantheon.

"Our ideas about property and theft depend on a set of assumptions about how the world is divided up. Trickster's lies and thefts challenge those premises and in so doing reveal their artifice and suggest alternatives," Hyde writes.

In a fascinating chapter, Hyde examines the life and work of Frederick Douglass as essentially trickster. Douglass, he says, stole his education as soon as he overheard a slave owner saying that teaching literacy could end slavery. With his education, Douglass began to write, often with irony, about the prevailing order, raising questions about its presumed morality. Hyde acknowledges that Douglass spoke with integrity and earnestness. He did not embody the amoral foolery of the trickster, but he did cast confusion and break open the conversation. He did this in part by stealing back the force of his concealed patrimony by learning European scholarship and logic.

The book is wonderful. It is lively and well-written. It is rich in ideas. The author's politics are compatible with those of *The Witness*. It's a great glimpse into a kind of activism that confounds middle class morality, but may set middle class persons free of the rules that weave a cloth intended to adorn the very rich. TW

review

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is co-editor/publisher of *The Witness*, <jeanie@thewitness.org>.

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Witnesses, the quick and the dead (and the mythic)

Coyote

by Marianne Arbogast

"Coyote's identity expresses an ambiguity and paradox that confuses all customary categories and erases the boundary between order and chaos, human and animal, good and evil," Margaret Brady explains.

Coyote Tom Lumpkin

Coyote is not the type of person usually selected for the *Witness* profile. Not only is he a purely mythological figure, he is often a singularly disedifying one. But it is entirely in keeping with this trickster's style that he should pop up disconcertingly in this space.

Coyote occupies a central role in the mythology of native tribes of Western North America. His character, developed over centuries of oral tradition, is so complex and multi-faceted that some anthropologists have posited more than one Coyote. Others, like folklore scholar Margaret K. Brady, insist that Coyote, by nature, is an "ambiguous anomaly" and "the exponent of all possibilities" (*Some Kind of Power: Navaho Children's Skinwalker Narratives*, U. of Utah, 1984).

After skimming several collections of Coyote narratives, I can attest that I might have been happier not to have heard of some of these possibilities. The uncensored adult versions depict Coyote as insatiably greedy and lustful (incest is among the least imaginative of his sexual exploits). Not infrequently, the stories involve some form of bodily dismemberment. Some of this, no doubt, is linked to his role in the creation of the world, but it is still unsettling.

At times, Coyote performs useful services for human beings: teaching them how to fish and how to procreate, and stealing fire for their use. More often, his boundless avarice seems to land him in hot water himself, enabling others to outwit him and sometimes leading to his own death. But here, too, he violates boundaries, springing back to life again and again.

In Navajo myth, Coyote occupies a position near the door of the assembly of the Holy People, aligning himself neither with the good on the south side nor the evil on the north.

"Coyote's identity expresses an ambiguity and paradox that confuses all customary categories and erases the boundary between order and chaos, human and animal, good and evil," Margaret Brady explains. "In this coexistence of opposites that real power to energize the social system lies, for such paradoxical opposition expresses in a dynamic way the ultimate possibilities of that system."

The following stories offer a relatively gentle introduction to this disquieting character.

Coyote's swallowing match with Grizzly Bear (Molala)

Coyote was going up toward Mt. Hood. He met Grizzly Bear. Grizzly Bear said, "Where are you going, Coyote?"

Coyote said, "I am going up country."

"Why are you going there?" asked Grizzly Bear.

Coyote said, "I am making the world."

Then Grizzly Bear said, "We must fight."

Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of *The Witness*, <marianne@thewitness.org>. Her issue on Ireland [10/97] was one of three that earned *The Witness* an award of overall excellence from the Episcopal Communicators. Artist **Tom Lumpkin** is a Catholic priest living at the Catholic Worker House in Detroit. *[The Coyote stories are reprinted with permission from* Coyote Was Going There: Indian Literature of the Oregon Country, *compiled and edited by Jarold Ramsey, ©1997, University of Washington Press.]*

Coyote said, "No, we must have a swallowing match."

Grizzly said, "No! We must fight a duel."

Coyote said, "We will swallow stones."

Grizzly said, "Go ahead, we will swallow them."

Coyote said, "We must have them very hot."

"How many hot rocks?" said Grizzly.

Coyote said, "You swallow first, then I will."

Then the Grizzly Bear swallowed a hot stone, "Now it's your turn," he said.

Then Coyote said, "Yes," and began to swallow strawberries, not rocks! He fooled Grizzly, he swallowed five strawberries. Then Coyote told Grizzly, "Now you must swallow five hot stones."

"All right," said Grizzly. Then he commenced swallowing hot rocks, they burst his heart, and he died.

Now Coyote sat down and studied. "Now I must go, I am going on forever. He is gone now, the world is going to last so long!"

He skinned Grizzly, then began cutting him up; he scattered his body in little pieces all over. Then to the Molala country he threw the heart. He said, "Now the Molala will be good hunters; they will all be good, thinking and studying about hunting deer. They will think all the time they are on a hunt."

Indeed they know how to dodge out, those Molala.

Coyote builds Willamette Falls and the magic fish trap (Clackamas Chinook)

Coyote came to that place [around Oregon City] and found the people there very hungry. The river was full of salmon, but they had no way to spear them in the deep water. Coyote decided that he would build a big waterfall, so that the salmon would come to the surface for spearing. Then he would build a fish trap there too.

First he tried at the mouth of Pudding River, but it was no good, and all he made was the gravel-bar there. So he went on down the river to Rock Island, and it was better, but after making the rapids there he gave up again and went farther down still. Where the Willamette Falls are now he found just the right place, and he made the Falls high and wide. All the Indians came and began to fish.

Coyote became angry and said to the trap, "What, can't you wait with your fish-catching until I've built a fire?" The trap was very offended by Coyote's impatience, and stopped working right then. So after that the people had to spear their salmon as best they could.

Now Coyote made his magic fish trap. He made it so it would speak, and say *Noseepsk!* when it was full. Because he was pretty hungry, Coyote decided to try it first himself. He set the trap by the Falls, and then ran back up the shore to prepare to make a cooking-fire. But he had only begun when the trap called out, *"Noseepsk!"* He hurried back; indeed the trap was full of salmon. Running back with them, he started his fire again, but again the fish trap cried *"Noseepsk! Noseepsk!"* He went again and found the trap full of salmon. Again he ran to the shore with them; again he had hardly gotten to his fire when the trap called out, *"Noseepsk! Noseepsk!"* It happened again, and again; the fifth time Coyote became angry and said to the trap, "What, can't you wait with your fish-catching until I've built a fire?" The trap was very offended by Coyote's impatience, and stopped working right then. So after that the people had to spear their salmon as best they could.

Tsagigla'lal (Wishram)

A woman had a house where the village of N*i*xlu'*idi*x was later built [presentday Wishram, or Spedis]. She was chief of all who lived in this region. That was long ago, before Coyote came up the river and changed things, and people were not yet real people.

After a time Coyote in his travels came to this place and asked the inhabitants if they were living well or ill. They sent him to their chief, who lived up in the rocks, where she could look down on the village and know all that was going on.

Coyote climbed up to her home and asked: "What kind of living do you give these people? Do you treat them well, or are you one of those evil women?"

"I am teaching them how to live well and to build good houses," she said.

"Soon the world is going to change," he told her, "and women will no longer be chiefs. You will be stopped from being a chief."

Then he changed her into a rock, with the command, "You shall stay here and watch over the people who live at this place, which shall be called N*i*xlu'*idi*x."

All the people know that *Tsagigla'lal* sees all things, for whenever they are looking up at her those large eyes are watching them. TW

Coming in September ***Who is mentoring the next generation?***

Focussing on young adults 18-25, our next issue will explore the sorts of commitments this generation is developing and why. Let us know if there is someone (a potential subscriber?) to whom we should send this issue. Call 313-841-1967 or e-mail us <office@thewitness.org).

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Letters,

continued from page 3

and resurrection much more literally than I do, and that is okay.

I came of age when the liberal winds were blowing through most of the Protestant churches in the sixties, and we found our place to be in the secular world, welcoming the scholarship that made the Bible come alive, the truth to be found through all the arts, and the scientific findings that expanded our image of God and made us aware of our kinship with all of God's creatures, and with earth itself.

There were plenty of devils to be conquered: consumerism, discrimination, and war, to name a few, and young people willing to take the risk of challenging them all. However, you cannot change society without changing people, and you cannot change people by ignoring or refuting God's truth in the world outside the church with archaic sociological and theological language and symbols that have no meaning for those who have not grown up in the church. Action has to be undergirded by a theology that is in tune with what we observe as God's work in the world outside the Bible. Worship, theology and action — emotions, intellect and will, have to mesh.

Ruth M. Kratz
Newark, DE

LET ME START OUT BY SAYING that I do believe in dinosaurs, or, more precisely, that I believe the theory of dinosaurs to be a fairly plausible interpretation of certain facts. It remains only that. We cannot know what they looked like, how they lived or even which head might belong to which body with any certainty. I also do not know what it is like to live the life of a tree. Nor, truly, what it is like to live the life of my lover, how she feels, or what she thinks, except what she can tell me through the very imprecise medium of words. How much the more so are we unable to know and understand God, who is beyond all thought and form. The list of things that I do not know goes on, and that is one of the most religious statements that I can make.

All of our words about God, or the world around us, are dim metaphors, the finger pointing at the moon, so to speak, and not the moon itself. To forget this is to be tempted to recreate God through our own intellect, or even to begin to believe that we are God. The emperor really has no clothes. God is immensely more than we can know, and so is our world. Dinosaurs, trees and lovers remind us of the great faith that is required for our every action and of the vast mystery of the world around us.

Kim Conwell
Detroit, MI

Witness praise

AS A LAPSED AND VERY CONFLICTED Catholic your magazine gives a sense of hope — you speak such common love, sound sense, encompassing caring that you effectively take care of all of us.

Thank you.

Jan Torgerson
Pettibone, ND

IT TAKES A HORRENDOUS AMOUNT of "stuff" to keep me from reading you cover-to-cover on the day you arrive! The only time I've read an issue again is when I was looking for a missing issue—BUT I've never thrown one out, or even put it on the library's "put & take" shelf! AND I still intend to have a "subscribe to *The Witness*" table at St. Andrew's! (I have all the back-issues, etc. — just a matter of coordinating my time with the church calendar.)

Elisabeth Rees
Ann Arbor, MI

Renewals

I DON'T WANT TO LOSE YOU EITHER!

Having just moved, I can't find even one of the earlier notices I should have sent back, so here is what I hope is the right amount of money to renew — and my new address and postal code.

Please keep *Witness* coming. I find it a really reliable resource for many of the concerns I share with you.

J.R.H. Dempster
Vancouver, B.C. Canada

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The Witness

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Who is mentoring today's young adults?

The church in conflict

THANK YOU FOR THE SPLENDID service you have done all of us with the May issue. The analytical essays on right-wing organizing within the national Episcopal Church (Jack H. Taylor, Jr.) and the "New Colonialism" (Ian T. Douglas) are invaluable information pieces every Episcopalian should have at hand, especially given the Right's ready presence on the Internet. The companion pieces on "common ground" by Emmett Jarrett and Chris Ambidge — ESPECIALLY because they come from different sides in one volatile national debate —show all of us that trying to blast each other to smithereens legislatively is NOT our only option.

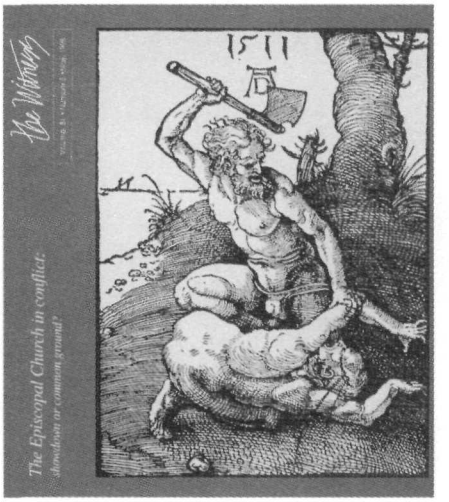
Thanks for all your efforts: You remain one of the redeeming graces in our church in this time.

Neil Elliott
St. Paul, MN

THANK YOU VERY MUCH for your helpful overview of the "Right Wing." Our American priest resigned last year and in early March Christ Church welcomed Jon Shuler as its second "interim" priest, sent by the Bishop of Singapore. None of us had ever heard of First Promise or Pawley's Island. He didn't tell us about those organizations or about PECUSA, Inc.

Traditionally, Christ Church has been a foreign congregation. Little mission witness but much social service outreach. Thai people who became Christian would be encouraged to become part of the ecumenical Protestant "Church of Christ in Thailand" (Presbyterian, Disciples and American Baptist rooted), the Southern Baptist Church, the Roman Catholic Church. We were not into planting Anglican churches.

Singapore is into planting, and converting, but the Anglicans that are being produced by the process appear to be somewhere to the



right of the Southern Baptists. These days, I feel more comfortable as an Anglican in Southern Baptist services in Bangkok than in the Thai services at Christ Church.

The Singapore-based clergy have moved, almost PECUSA style, to take over the polity of Christ Church, formerly linked with both the ecumenical CCT and the Roman Catholic Church.

Thanks for the fresh air.

Lance Woodruff
Bangkok Thailand

THANKS FOR THE REMINDER. I loved the issue on the church in conflict — especially Ian Douglas' article. I studied with Ian at EDS. He is redefining mission for the Episcopal Church — thank God.

Keep up the great work!

Chris Rankin-Williams
Santa Barbara, CA

THE WITNESS IS ALWAYS SPECIAL. The issue on Lambeth/Mission etc. very helpful.

Carman Hunter
Moorestown, NJ

I PARTICULARLY ENJOYED the recent issue on the Episcopal Church. As the Lambeth Conference draws near, I hope *The Witness* is covering that story very carefully [see p.24]. We need to hear what really happens there, and I'm afraid that our diocesan newspapers will gloss over the uncomfortable parts. I pray that this conference is a time of healing and coming together, and listening and considering divergent views.

I cannot send you a financial contribution, but I am happy to send along a list of names from which you could garner some potential subscriptions. These are classmates in my Education For Ministry class, and a trial subscription, along with my suggestion that they consider it will, I hope, push them over the edge!

Susan Conway
Greenville, SC

I AM RENEWING MY SUBSCRIPTION for *The Witness* another year. In the past, I have found about one copy a year was of particular interest to me. This year, however, there have been two issues in a row that I thought were excellent, April (What do you do with what you don't believe?) and May (The Episcopal Church in conflict: showdown or common ground?).

I always read anything quoted from or that is about Verna Dozier. So, I was blessed to have the interview with Verna by Julie Wortman in both issues. I believe God Herself talks to me through Verna. Then Julie Wortman wrote in her Editor's Note about the type of Christian she wanted to be, the type that Jesus sought to cultivate and inspire. Her love for the church "is not a love for the institution, but for the 'dream of God.'" That was helpful.

I have heard of all the conservative organizations that were listed in the article, "The Episcopal Church's Right wing," but I had never seen them all listed and described in one place, so that was thought-provoking. And then, I was glad to hear, in the articles by Emmett Jarrett and Carol Bell, that somewhere in the Episcopal Church, Christians are trying to solve problems by encouraging increased understanding and building a community that really listens to each other.

Last year, I was a part of a group in our church, most of us past vestry members, who brought issues to the rector and vestry that we believed needed to be discussed and understood at least, if not resolved. When they would not even discuss the issues with us, we appealed to the bishop of our diocese. After an exchange of letters and a meeting with the

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assistant bishop, where we listed problems that we thought needed to be addressed, the assistant bishop wrote us a letter. He said that since we had brought "no charges of incompetency, dereliction of duty, or heresy" against the rector (that thought had not occurred to us) there is no further action that can be taken or that needs to be taken by the Bishop. Further, we could be active members of our parish or we could "move on and find a community of believers where you will feel comfortable." It appeared that the solution of choice by the bishop's office was to enforce New York state law or have us find another Christian community.

Since I do appreciate the *The Witness*, I am adding a gift to help you carry out your work.

Betsey Matteson
Canton, NY

I WOULD LIKE TO COMPLIMENT YOU on your May issue. I think it does a fairly good job of trying to deal with the seeming enigma that Christianity (not just the Episcopal Church) is. Those who try to claim that Christ "said nothing" about homosexuality are the most ludicrous to me. As far as I'm concerned it was Christ's followers who had difficulty in dealing with homosexuality, not Jesus.

John Kavanaugh
Detroit, MI

Ed. note: John Kavanaugh's letter was pages too long to include here. Readers who would like to read his thoughts on the apostles' views of homosexuality and current church debates on the topic should send their names and addresses to Kavanaugh c/o The Witness *and we will forward them for reply.*

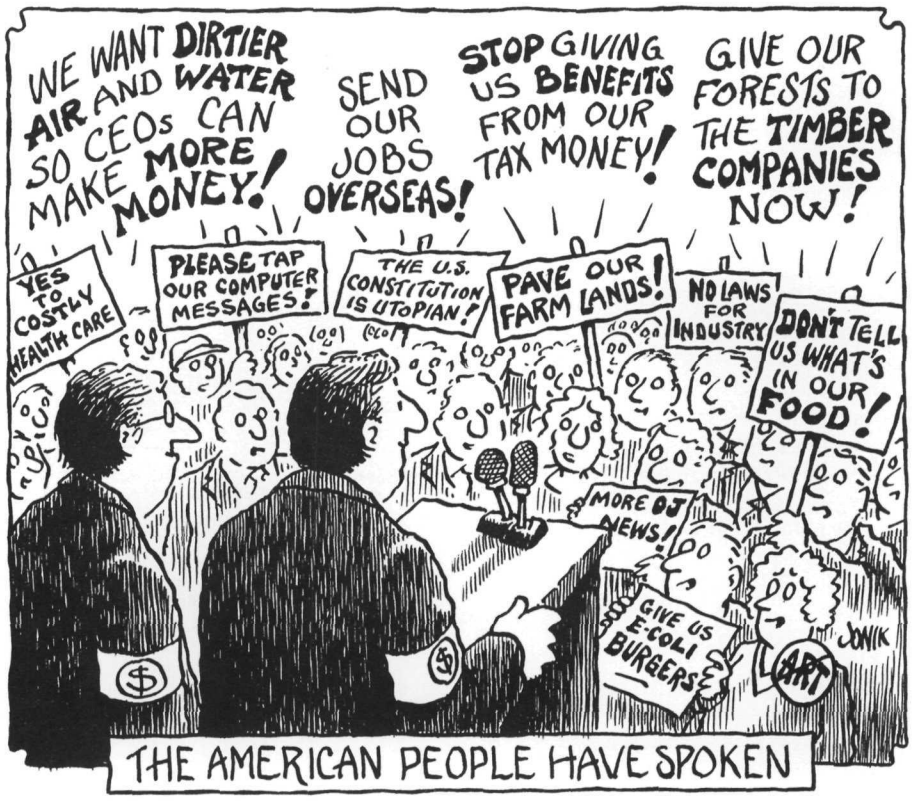
Struggling with feelings of exile

THIS IS TO PAY FOR SOME ISSUES of *The Witness* (the April issue) which I use for public relations and promotion purposes. That issue is a treasure and timeless.

Mary Durham
Beverly Hills, MI

FIVE MINUTES AGO I finished reading an interview you had with Walter Brueggemann.

letters contined on back page



Classifieds

Vocations

Contemplating religious life? Members of the Brotherhood and the Companion Sisterhood of Saint Gregory are Episcopalians, clergy and lay, married and single. To explore a contemporary Rule of Life, contact: The Director of Vocations, Brotherhood of St. Gregory, Dept. W, Saint Bartholomew's Church, 82 Prospect Street, White Plains, NY 10606-3499

Erotic Contemplative

The Erotic Contemplative Video/Audio Course offers essential education for Gay/lesbian Christians and their ministers. <www.erospirit.org/tec> or 800-581-3303.

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SCUPE

The Seminary Consortium on Urban Pastoral Education in Chicago offers a six-month MDiv internship program beginning January 1 which integrates ministry experience with a full semester of course work. Classes include: "Urban Principalities and the Spirit of the City," "Christology and Culture," "Church-based Community Development," "Dimensions and Dynamics of Urban Ministry," and "Spirit and Rhythms of Urban Preaching." Faculty include: Yvonne Delk, Addie Wyatt, Ched Myers and Jim Perkinson. Contact: Bill Wylie-Kellermann at SCUPE, 200 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60601 (312-726-1200).

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The Witness

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Assistant Editor	Marianne Arbogast
Magazine Production	Maria Catalfio
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by Camille Colatosti
Researchers say young adults today are both optimistic and fearful about their futures, hungry for mentors and pedagogies that offer substantive help with difficult life choices.

12 **Hire education: the rise of corporate curricula**
by Christopher D. Cook
The needs of industry have long been a driving force in defining education, but today more and more education dollars are being spent by corporations, for corporations.

16 **Reuniting mind with spirit**
by Victor Kazanjian
This month will see the kick-off of a national project aimed at helping universities and colleges define their role in shaping the moral and spiritual character of students living in our pluralistic society.

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Young adults talk about their values and mentors.

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Cover: Self portrait by Leslie Curd. Curd, who lives in Philadelphia, received her BFA from Moore College of Art and Design in 1997.

The Witness offers a fresh and sometimes irreverent view of our world, illuminated by faith, Scripture and experience. Since 1917, *The Witness* has been advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those people who have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." We push boundaries, err on the side of inclusion and enjoy bringing our views into tension with orthodox Christianity. *The Witness'* roots are Episcopalian, but our readership is ecumenical. For simplicity, we place news specific to Episcopalians in our Vital Signs section. *The Witness* is committed to brevity for the sake of readers who find little time to read, but can enjoy an idea, a poem or a piece of art.

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

The editor whose editorial appears on page 5 crafted this issue.

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Office: 7000 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210-2872. Tel.: (313) 841-1967. Fax: (313) 841-1956. To reach Julie Wortman: HC 35 Box 647, Tenants Harbor, ME 04860. Tel.: (207) 372-6396.
E-mail: <[first name]@thewitness.org>.
Website: <www.thewitness.org>.

Scanning the horizon for doves

by Julie A. Wortman

A highlight of my 12-day stint covering the Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops in Canterbury, England, this past July was a reunion with a younger friend who has spent the last two years teaching English to French-speaking Africans. I've known her for about eight years, since she was 16. An active Episcopalian, especially in college, she said she was eager to discover what the bishops were up to.

Anglicans are inveterate bishop-watchers, but neither the costuming (every possible permutation of episcopal purple, every conceivable cut of cassock and every imagineable style of pectoral cross) nor some bishops' high media visibility (okay, so it was cool to see Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey in the flesh) seemed to impress my friend. As the daughter of clergy parents (mother, father and step-mother), she seems immune to the holier-than-thou image projected on — and by — so many of the ordained, bishops especially.

Her interest waxed instead over calls for relieving the debt burden currently crippling nations in the southern hemisphere and reports of solidarity work among indigenous peoples ("And class?," she asked, "Are any of them talking about class?"). She was also pleased to meet Penelope Jamieson and some of the other women bishops, if only because this Lambeth Conference was the first to include women — and husbands. But as we discussed the politics behind some (male) bishops' efforts to both strengthen the primates' authority over local churches and engineer a strong anti-homosexual statement on traditional "biblical" standards of sexual morality (an effort that was largely successful, given the conference's final resolution on human sexuality which upheld "faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union," promoted abstinence for the unmarried and rejected "homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture") her enthusiasm waned, the shift from calling for justice to angling for control and shallow rigidity a disappointment.

This new generation understands that not only is the emperor not wearing any clothes, but that there is no emperor.

Of course, we didn't spend all of our time together talking about Lambeth. An exchange of letters, however regular, is no substitute for earnest, face-to-face conversation about the struggles, uncertainties and joys of life. We also spent several evenings over cider and pints of bitter wondering where, if not very much in the church, we've been seeing signs of people working for gospel values — and questioning what gospel values look like when lived out, anyway.

As we talked, and as I recalled the many phone calls and dinner conversations of similar intensity we've shared over the years, I realized that some folks would say I've been a mentor to this young woman. But they would be wrong — at least not in the sense that I have had much in the way of answers or specific guidance to offer, only my own live questions. Instead, our friendship has been marked by a mutual baring of souls, a mutual questioning and a mutual search for the companionship of questing people of compassion, justice and deeply attuned spirituality.

And this is as it should be. The next generation of adults has rejected the notion that they can be effectively mentored into the world by their elders if those elders are only offering guidance on how to enter and operate in the world as it has been. This new generation of young adults understands that not only is the emperor not wearing any clothes, but that there is no emperor. As researchers Laurent Daloz, Cheryl and James Keen and Sharon Parks point out in *Common Fire: Leading Lives of Commitment in a Complex World* (Beacon Press 1996), "A radically interdependent world economy has dissolved old boundaries, loosed waves of migrant labor, triggered smoldering cultural conflicts and forced profound social and political reorganization at all levels. We are simultaneously fragmented into loose and shifting associations of individuals, interest groups and tribes, yet drawn more closely into a larger web of life."

In some ways it is as if we have had the good fortune to find transport in a time of floods, but remain adrift. Together, we must scan the horizon for signs of returning doves, knowing that the younger ones among us are likely to have the keenest eyes. All of us, bishops included, are in the same boat. If any are to find the landfall we are seeking — what the *Common Fire* authors call "the new commons" or the new common good — we must mentor each other on the way. TW

editor's note

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

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Starting from scratch

by Jason Wilkins

Learning is largely a matter of imitation. Every child learns how to behave by emulating the adults nearest at hand — typically parents, the first and most powerful mentors. In this way, moral values have traditionally been handed down. But what happens to values when divorce is commonplace?

To find out, ask almost anybody under 30. My own experience is fairly typical. When I was four years old, my parents divorced. Too young to understand what was happening, I was old enough to feel shattered. I was Daddy's spitting image, a miniature version of my old man. When he vanished and was replaced with a stranger, I felt both abandoned by Dad and rejected by Mom. How could she bring this man into our lives and ask me to call him my father? These feelings never quite fade.

All this was happening while Nixon was still in the White House, lying on television. All the grown-ups complained about him. Even a child could see that he was a crook. Around the time of Nixon's resignation, Mom stopped taking us all to church. Maybe she couldn't take the glares across the pews, the old ladies frowning at the divorcee. Maybe she just noticed that church bored me. How could a boy with no faith in his own Daddy ever come to accept God, the ultimate father figure?

Even before my first day of kindergarten, I had learned to doubt all authority figures — be they at home, in the pulpit, or in Washington. It's healthy for an adult to be skeptical, but a child is fragile and needs someone to trust. Lacking this, I grew up feeling alone, like a freak, the only "divorced kid" — until I discovered the other divorced kids all around me.

As my friends and I grew up, we did not know what we wanted to do or become. Our goals were all negative. We did not want to marry young, have kids and then put our own children through the hell of divorce. We did not want to work at some dehumanizing job just to pay for a stroller and suburban pillbox. We did not want to become our mothers and fathers, and would not have known how in any case. Mom and/or Dad were often simply not there.

Even before my first day of kindergarten, I had learned to doubt all authority figures.

So we went off to college and/or moved into cheap apartments in the city and got into things our elders did not understand: nightclubs, theater, computer science, literary theory, personal web pages, obscure rock bands, polyamorous relationships, marijuana, Phish, progressive politics, New Age thinking, body piercing ... just about anything we could imagine. We made new families out of friends, roommates, lovers, ex-lovers. We had no models, so we made ourselves up as we went along.

The irony is that in trying not to become our parents, we emulated them. My mother grew up in a world where men and women got married and stayed married. She rejected this system, asserting that she had a right to find a husband who took good care of her and the kids. Now her sons form relationships with women outside marriage, sure that neither church nor state should interfere. Our folks fought the ideal of lifelong marriage, and we ignore it. Grandma said "Till death do us part"; Mom said "Till divorce do us part"; we say "As long as we're happy."

My peers and I found mentors outside the family: at work, in the classroom, in books, at the movies, on CDs, in our friends. Though we found them late, we were able to choose them, to participate in the creation of our own values. Is this a good thing or a bad thing? It depends on how much you value the old social structures.

Many people argue that the decay of the nuclear family, if not arrested, will destroy society. As a young man who has suffered directly from the fallout, I feel some sympathy for them — but can't help noticing that the loudest "family values" advocates are really just rich straight white men campaigning to keep women, non-whites, homosexuals and the poor subservient. Had this crowd been able to keep my mother married to my father, I would surely have grown up in a miserable home, and I would not be the contented (if sometimes directionless) person I have become.

It is possible to live an honorable life without buying into the traditional family and its church-based values, no matter what the religious right may say. When meeting young adults who have embraced since childhood the opinions of their parents, I may envy their peace of mind, but I can't help thinking that they have no minds of their own. I would not change places with them. Better to have endured a painful (but necessary) family trauma than to go through life with no unique identity. My friends agree.

It could be argued that our values are terribly awry, and that we would have turned out better if only our Dads and Moms had put aside their selfishness and stuck together "for the sake of the kids." The only way we can prove this argument wrong is to raise well-adjusted children of our own. It may take us a while to establish successful alternatives to the nuclear family, but give us a chance. The churches were not built in a day, either. TW

Jason Wilkins is a freelance writer living in Portland, Maine.

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Too Many of our Young are Dying

by Haki Madhubuti

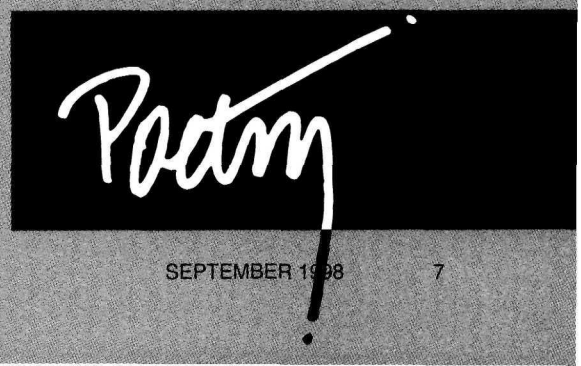
moments represent a lifetime.

our hearts lose sunshine
when our children cease to smile words
and share with parents their passionate pain.
our children, in the millions,
are dropping from the trees of life too soon,
their innocent hearts & bodies
are forced to navigate within modern madness,
searching for life and love
in the basements of a crippled metropolis,
a disintegrating culture too soon.

are we not all earth & lakes & sun?
are we not all mamas & babas to their young music?
their lives are not abstracted bragging rights,
we must never stop listening to their stories & songs.

when our children
do not share their young pain
it is a sign of our closed ears & punctured hearts
do not misread the silences in their eyes,
they are seeking sunshine from us
immediately.

— from *HeartLove: Wedding and Love Poems*, by Haki Madhubuti, © 1998, reprinted by permission of Third World Press, Chicago, Ill.



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Young adults today: optimistic but fearful

by Camille Colatosti

On the first day of each semester in the non-violence courses he teaches at Georgetown University Law School and the University of Maryland, Colman McCarthy holds up a $100 bill and announces a pop quiz. McCarthy, director of the Center for Teaching Peace in Washington, DC, tells his students that whoever recognizes all six of the names he mentions will win the money.

"I call out the name 'Robert E. Lee,'" explains McCarthy, "and all the students raise their hand.

Then I call out the name 'Ulysses S. Grant.' All the hands go up. I next call out 'Paul Revere.' Again, every hand goes up. Then I ask them if they have heard of Jane Addams. Rarely does a hand go up. I ask if they know of Dorothy Day or John Woolman. No one responds. I've never lost my $100.

"The students all know the names of the peace breakers, the men who wage war. But they don't recognize the women and men who wage peace." McCarthy sees it as his job — and the job of all professors and teachers — to change this. "If we are going to have a peaceful society," he says, "people need to be educated about the art of peacemaking."

McCarthy explains that the word education comes from the Latin *educare* — to lead out. This is what instructors of young adults must do, help lead students out of their old selves into their new ones. But McCarthy fears that *educare* is not taking place. He is not alone in his concerns. Duke University professor Jane Tompkins comments on the "corporatism and careerism sweeping higher education." As Tompkins puts it, colleges should be "communal, not combative." They should "focus on the self as well as the subject matter." They should "nurture the imagination, not just the intellect. Academe needs to do more than make a student marketable," says Tompkins. "It needs to educate the whole human being — mind, body and spirit."

"Students are hungry to learn," says McCarthy. They seek opportunities to develop their entire selves. They are eager for alternatives to the violence and confusion that they see in their world.

A desire to enjoy the good life

When Arthur Levine and Jeanette Cureton, authors of *When Hope and Fear Collide: A Portrait of Today's College Student*, surveyed college students from 1980 to the present, they found that undergraduates are "tired but also energized" by a desire to enjoy the good life and make their world a better place. As one student at the University of Colorado at Boulder explained, "I can't do anything about the theft of nuclear-grade weapons materials in Azerbaijan, but I can clean up the local pond, help tutor a troubled kid, or work in a homeless shelter."

Young people today, say Levine and Cureton, reveal contradictions. They "live in a world in which they distrust the nation's leaders. They have no confidence in the country's social institutions. They see large social problems all around them, from poverty, racism and crime to environmental pollution, a troubled economy and global conflict. In their words, 'Everything is wrong.'"

Yet, they also believe in their ability to fix what needs fixing. They believe in the power of an individual to make a difference. At two-year and four-year colleges, at residential and commuter institutions, at universities and at community colleges, nearly two-thirds of all undergraduates are currently involved in volunteer activities: They work with children; they clean up the environment; they help the homeless and the elderly.

Many young adults, report Levine and Cureton, believe in the American Dream — in good jobs, financial success, meaningful relationships and family. They remain optimistic but they are also scared.

According to Levine and Cureton, traditional age students of the class of 2001 are a generation living in a time of profound demographic, economic, technological, global and social change. Before their fourth birthdays, these students witnessed American hostages in Iran, a nuclear accident at Three Mile Island, the federal government bail-out of Chrysler Corporation, the Ronald Reagan presidential landslide, the shooting of John Lennon, astronaut Sally Ride as the first woman in space, AIDS, MTV, and the compact disc. Before they were four, the first U.S. software patent was issued; unemployment hit its highest level in this country since the depression; the ERA failed to be ratified; and, for the first time, a majority of their mothers were employed outside the home.

Throughout most of their lives, from 1975 to 1996, today's young people have seen the number of Americans living below the poverty line increase nearly 50 percent. At the same time, they have witnessed programs to assist the poor decrease dramatically.

Camille Colatosti is a professor of English at the Detroit College of Business, <colakwik@ix.netcom.com>. Artist **Holly Forrest**, 21, is finishing her BFA at Moore College of Art and Design in Philadelphia.

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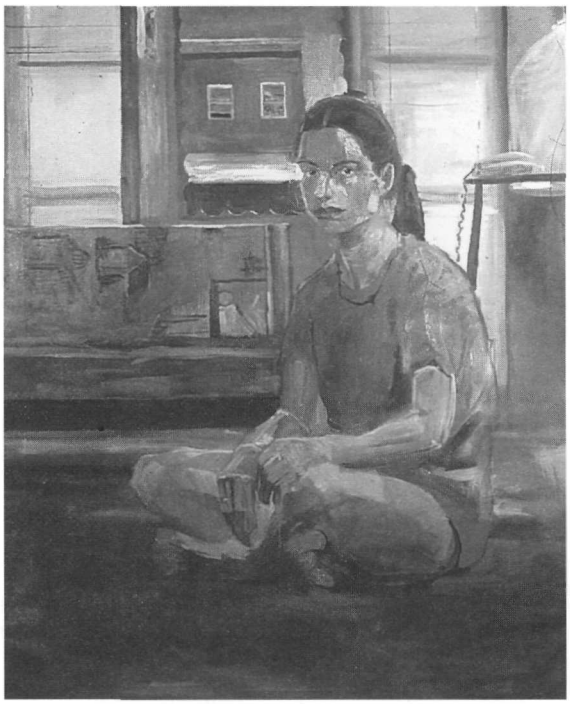
An increase in diversity

Demographically, this generation composes a smaller percentage of the population than any other. In 1970, 15- to 19-year-olds made up nearly 10 percent of the population. By 1995, the proportion had declined to just 6.9 percent. Their concerns are often not the focus of the country as a whole, little noticed and overshadowed by the baby boomers. They have also experienced another unique trend: an increase in their generation's diversity. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, during the past two decades, the number of 15- to 19-year-old Caucasians dropped by 19 percent. The number of African-Americans in this same age group decreased by only 6 percent. The Native American population in this same group increased by 18 percent; Latinos grew by 42 percent, and Asian-Americans increased by over 100 percent.

This means that there is a sharp increase in the proportion of teenagers and young adults of color. Today's college students are members of the most racially diverse generation in U.S. history. Yet, multiculturalism remains a difficult subject — both on college campuses and beyond. Levine and Cureton discovered that "in group interviews, students were more willing to tell us intimate details of their sex lives than to discuss race relations on campus. In fact, when focus groups were asked about the state of race relations at their college the usual response was silence.

"In private, individual conversations were very different. Few students were quiet. Some said campus race relations were 'good,' 'better,' 'ok,' or 'fine,' but many more used words like 'scary,' 'frightening,' 'sad,' 'angry,' 'embattled,' 'isolated,' 'divided,' 'frustrating,' 'heated,' 'explosive,' 'confused,' 'a mess,' and 'hopeless.'"

Relations were more strained at four-year colleges than at two-year and at residential than at non-residential institutions. This may reveal the segregation that exists at the nation's most prestigious and largest schools. Even as diversity increases among people of traditional college age, in general, many educational institutions, particularly universities, enroll only a small percentage of minority students, often under 10 percent. The reversal of affirmative-action programs has reduced this percentage even further.



Self-portrait **by Holly Forrest**

In commuter institutions and community colleges, where the minority population may be as high as 40 or 50 percent, tensions among racial and ethnic groups can ease and understanding increase as a diverse student body comes together in the classroom. For instance, at the Detroit College of Business, an open-enrollment commuter school where I teach English, more than 40 percent of the students are African-American, Arabic-American, Asian-American or Latino. In all of their classes, students interact both formally and informally with members of diverse ethnic groups. In group projects, students must work with at least some others who are unlike themselves.

During my Spring 1998 Introduction to Literature class, students discussed race relations today after reading Langston Hughes' play *Mulatto*, a drama about plantation life in the 1930s South. The play focuses explicitly on racial violence. Many students commented that the discussion, while uncomfortable and difficult, was important. For, as one student said, "Where else will I be in such a mixed group?" The student, African-American, noted that she had never before discussed racism with white people.

What is my work?

Tensions among young adults focus not just on race, however. Most stem from the difficult transitions people must make as they enter adulthood. Alex Esquerra, head of college-age ministries for the First Assembly Church in San Diego, notes that many students — no matter their race or ethnicity — are "in constant transition. Many just graduated from high school. They are between doing what mom and dad have required and doing what they can do on their own. Some get stuck with a job and/or 24 units for a semester in school and have difficulty balancing everything. They get confused." The challenge, says Esquerra, is to help young people through this period so that they can recognize and develop their gifts, affirm themselves and determine their place in the world.

In their book *Common Fire: Leading Lives of Commitment in a Complex World*, Laurent Parks Daloz, Cheryl Keen, James Keen and Sharon Daloz Parks explain

that young adults face two central questions: What is my work and who will be my partners? By "work," the authors explain, "we do not mean simply a job or career but rather a sense of one's calling — born from some reflection on life's purpose. Whether or not one is college bound, the task of young adulthood is to find and be found by a viable life 'dream' — and to go to work on it."

Need for mentors

The task of older adults is to assist youth in their search. Many point to the need for mentors. Yet, as Parks explains, "If one is to enter the world of adult work as it now is, a mentor who can 'teach you the ropes' and 'help you climb the ladder' may be enough." If one seeks to change the world, much more is needed.

Lisa Kimball, canon missioner for youth and congregational development of the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota, sees the need for mentors who are "self-conscious about their mentoring relationship. Young adults want for those who approach them to be willing to talk about faith issues at an explicit level. They don't want us to be dogmatic and preaching but they don't want us to avoid Jesus, God, and ethical dimensions of life. They don't want us just to be nice. Young adults," she adds, "want something substantive. They don't want something flimsy."

To respond to this need to create a mentoring community, the Episcopal Diocese in Minnesota started "Genuflection X" in the Twin Cities. This is a social group for young adults in their 20s. "This," says Kimball, "fits the mentoring umbrella." The group was started by young adults themselves. One young woman who felt the need for this came to Kimball. Kimball and the diocese then provided the resources to make the group happen. Kimball also helps develop one-on-one mentoring relationships between younger and older adults.

"I haven't taken mentoring as a 'let's add it to our programs.' I've looked at what we are already doing and how we can incorporate mentoring into our ministry. There are a lot of skill-based mentoring opportunities out there, but the missing piece is often the integration of faith and practice. Here in Minnesota," says Kimball, "we're blessed with a strong Native American community. The concept of elder is an important one. The mentoring movement is recapturing an appreciation for the wisdom of our elders."

"Skepticism among young adults is very real. Mentors gain credibility through action, not through their words." — *Lisa Kimball*

Kimball cautions against manipulating young adults, even if unintentionally, into a relationship with the church. She also believes that it is important to challenge older adults to commit themselves to a regular relationship with a younger adult. This relationship, she explains, needs to be quantified. Mentors must set aside a couple of hours a week to be available for the younger adult.

"Skepticism among young adults is very real," she explains. "Mentors gain credibility through action, not through their words."

Eloise Teisberg, a senior at the University of Minnesota, has been involved in a mentoring relationship with Chaplain Janet Wheelock at the University Episcopal Center for two years. This was crucial to helping her determine her direction in life. "I really missed the church my first year in school," she explains, when she attended a small private college. She was unable to find there the kind of community she craved. "It was like falling off a cliff."

After transferring to the University of Minnesota and finding the Canterbury Club, the Episcopal undergraduate association, she realized that "there were lots of incredible people who were just as involved and just as in love with the church as I was."

She has since become a peer minister, putting together programming for other students on campus. "There is a Sunday evening service, so that students can make it, and a Wednesday morning Eucharist followed by a free lunch," she explains. In addition, the Canterbury Club works in an interfaith group on campus called Intersection. "Last fall," says Teisberg, "we had a night in which we shared information about our faith. This was really exciting — safe and inquisitive."

New pedagogies

At some universities, professors are developing new pedagogies in order to foster students' self-exploration. Duke University's Jane Tompkins questions some of the practices of higher education in her book *A Life in School: What the Teacher Learned*. She writes, "Higher education, in order to produce the knowledge and skills student need to enter certain lucrative professions, cuts students off from their inner selves and the world around them. It prepares them to enter professional school but not to develop as whole human beings."

To change this, Tompkins argues, higher education must provide students opportunity for self-examination. As a professor of literature, she provides students the opportunity to immerse themselves in the texts they read. For instance, she explains, her students "climbed a mountain while studying Thoreau; stayed overnight on an island off North Carolina to feel the magic of Melville's sea; worked on a plantation while reading Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, then sat in a candlelit classroom reciting quotes from the novel aloud. Along the way, they tried to

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figure out what the books meant to them on a personal level and what they, as classmates, meant to each other."

McCarthy, from the Center for Teaching Peace, argues that "too many schools leave our students idea-rich but experience-poor." To counter this, he encourages his students to become tutors or mentors of others. "We read the work of Dorothy Day," he explains, "then we go into the inner city and teach children who are poor. In law school, we go to homeless shelters, schools, and prisons to expose students to public interest law, something too few schools push. It's mostly corporate law or tax law — make the rich richer law. Once you expose students to another world, they then begin to rethink their philosophy of life."

A few institutions are incorporating this type of self-examination and social exploration campus-wide through faculty development programs. The campus as a whole may identify a theme to be addressed through the year, such as the issue of capital punishment or the holocaust. Students see connections among classes and between what they learn and what they do.

Other schools have institutionalized experiential learning at separate college or university centers. The University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, for example, founded its Center for Community Service and Learning two years ago. Assistant Director Mary Beth Damm explains that the Center looks at three areas: First, it seeks to engage students in social activism and community service; secondly, it seeks to engage faculty members in community-based research; and, thirdly, it works with communities to get them the resources they need from the university. Service learning, then, redefines not only students' relationship to education, but the role of the faculty and the function of the university in the larger society. The university becomes not just a place for the discussion and development of important ideas, but also an institution that helps alleviate some of the injustices and suffering in the world.

Damm explains that service learning does not simply add a community service component to students' education. Rather, it incorporates "the community into an academic class and does it in a way so that students have a better, more practical learning experience. They understand the practical applications of what they are learning." A class called Community Strategies against Poverty, for example, first examines theories about welfare and welfare reform. Then students study the ways that community organizations work to combat poverty. In the nursing school at the University of Michigan, students in a nutrition class study theory and also work with a community clinic to teach mothers about proper nutrition for themselves and their children.

"Students can tutor children in Detroit and think, 'This is great; these kids really need the extra attention.' But there is also the student who goes in and also asks, 'Why are the books in this school 15 years old? Why can't this child take the book home?' We want students to wonder why this has happened."

— Mary Beth Damm

Many students are attracted to the Center and to this approach to learning. "We're not located within campus ministries," says Damm, "but students find a spiritual home with us, not in a religious sense. Students find a place where their thoughts and actions are valued and through which they can make a difference. In most large universities, like the University of Michigan, students have little direct connection with professors. At the Center," says Damm, "students find the resources they need and are valued for their resources — their work and energy."

This was certainly the case for Sara Saylor, a senior who became involved with the Center when she was a first-year student. "I went to many different meetings to find a place where I could use my passions. I found a place in the Center. It is important to see that there are problems and that when we graduate we have to deal with issues." After graduation, Saylor sees herself "going into community work."

Gap between activism and service

The Center for Community Service and Learning struggles against a number of obstacles, but the most difficult, believes Damm, is the gap between social activism and community service. As Damm explains, "We incorporate the values of social activism into service. A lot of people are attracted to service just for its own sake — which is great — but we need social justice. Students can tutor children in Detroit and think, 'This is great; these kids really need the extra attention.' But there is also the student who goes in and also asks, 'Why are the books in this school 15 years old? Why can't this child take the book home? Why doesn't this child have a playground to play on? Why doesn't this child have a gym?' We want students to go there and wonder why this has happened." Then, says Damm, we want them to go out and make the world a better place.

Sharon Parks explains it this way. All young adults, she argues, need to be encouraged to lead lives "committed on behalf of the common good — not just on behalf of me and mine." TW

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Hire education: the rise of corporate curricula

by Christopher D. Cook

In their 1994 book on the for-profit knowledge industry titled *The Monster under the Bed,* management gurus Stan Davis and Jim Botkin speak of "the coming shift from civil to commercial leadership in education" — in which corporate education replaces the state and even the private school as the chief engine behind economically driven learning. Some 25 years in the making, this corporate takeover is steadily turning higher education into a training exercise aimed at supplying companies with a just-in-time workforce that's well-versed in high-technology and receptive to the concept of flexible, at-will employment.

Corporations increasingly are having a direct hand in writing college curricula, and are using universities to build a continuous "knowledge community," says business consultant Larry Moran. "They are going out and influencing the curriculum, the standards, the programs and the student choices." Firms such as Nynex, American Express, and Motorola no longer merely recruit students; they now design college course materials and degrees — and even teach college classes — to ensure that graduating students have precisely the skills the companies require. "What they're trying to do is convert educational institutions into training institutes," says David Noble, author of numerous books on technology and work. "The purpose is to get people to develop their abilities as needed according to the specifications of industry."

And when they're not satisfied with the results, companies are simply starting up their own universities. So much so, in fact, that Peter Drucker, the apostle of business futurism, proclaims, "universities won't survive. The future is outside the traditional campus, outside the traditional classroom."

The real goal is to reduce the costs of training new employees in an era of short-term, just-in-time employment in which workers are continually being hired and fired, trained and re-trained.

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 farming. But today, as mega-corporations steadily eclipse state financial power, more and more education dollars are being spent by corporations, for corporations. U.S. companies spend in excess of $50 billion a year on education and training, according to *The Economist*, and "account for about half of America's total spending on higher education."

The "shadow education market"

Corporations are simultaneously pressuring universities to adopt utilitarian curricula, while also developing their own schools in direct competition with traditional colleges. As the Business-Higher Education Forum, a consortium of corporate CEOs and university presidents, warns in a recent report, "American colleges and universities are a major resource for preparing the nation to meet the challenges of the future. However, if they do not respond to the changing needs of the business world, corporations will rely more on their own educational systems to train employees."

While business invests heavily in "reforming" education at all levels to turn out the proper workforce, industry also plows billions of dollars into what Davis and Botkin call the "shadow education market" — employee learning on an as-needed basis. Enter the corporate university, a type of company campus where worker-students learn the latest skills required by the firm. Led by such institutions as Motorola University and the Arthur D. Little School of Management, this concept of strategic education has caught fire over the past 10 years; the number of corporate universities nationwide has skyrocketed from 400 in 1988 to about 1000 in 1996, according to the *Boston Business Journal*. At Land Rover University's training headquarters in Lanham, Md., employee-students take courses in communication and management, as well as in off-the-road driving skills — with support from the University of Maryland.

Perhaps most significant is the corporate push to spin off these universities into nonprofit institutions offering accredited degrees. In 1996, the Arthur D. Little consulting giant turned its company management university into a nonprofit school, a move which the Boston

Christopher D. Cook is a freelance investigative journalist based in San Francisco, <cdcook@igc.apc.org>. Artist **Eleanor Mill** lives in Hartford, Conn.

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Business Journal noted "will enable the school to file for grants and solicit foundations for scholarship dollars for students." According to Quality Dynamics, a New York-based corporate education consulting firm, one-fourth of America's corporate universities are moving to gain accreditation; and many plan to offer Associates, Bachelors and Masters degrees in business and manufacturing management, health care administration and interpersonal skill development.

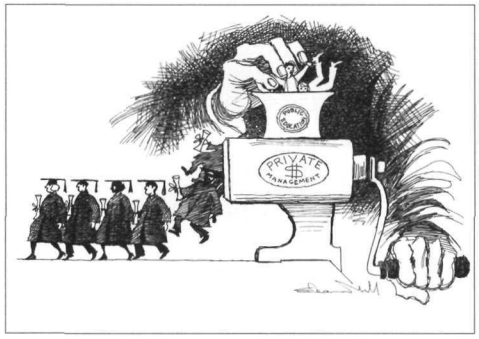
The validation of corporate learning as education also involves strategic partnerships which are increasingly transforming college degrees into training certification projects for company-specific skills. In 1995 the American Council on Education's college credit recommendation service reported that it was awarding academic credit status to 7,000 corporate university classes — meaning they could be applied toward traditional university degrees; this was triple the number it had given out in 1985.

As Jeanne Meister, president of Quality Dynamics, told the *Boston Business Journal*, this merging of corporate and traditional education is all about business' desire to redesign college curricula: "The fact that many schools don't provide the curricula that companies believe are necessary to compete in the 21st-century marketplace is driving this trend towards companies partnering with higher education to design and grant degrees."

Often eager partners in workforce development, "universities are letting the corporations determine which courses they should offer and what should be taught in them," write Davis and Botkin. For example, the University of Kentucky state system "willingly approves corporate-generated credits," in an effort to match its educational program with the skill needs of state firms. According to Milton Goldberg, Executive Vice President of the National Alliance of Business, "a lot of corporations actually teach classes in the community colleges. There is a lot of interest in making sure that people have the essential skills, communications skills, social skills, computational skills."

The "knowledge supply chain"

Since the mid-1970s, as America's post-war economic boom began to stagnate, business has sounded a series of alarms linking crises of national competitiveness and education — placing the blame for slowed economic growth on an alleged declining quality of the workforce. But as business literature makes clear, the real goal is to reduce the costs of training new employees in an era of short-term, just-in-time employment in which workers are continually being hired and fired, trained and re-trained.



Eleanor Mill

In today's frenetic economy, where corporate flexibility is the name of the game, business is transforming education in order to achieve the rational casualization of professional workers. As the National Alliance of Business (NAB) lays out in its recent newsletter, the aim is to harness just-in-time knowledge to maximize profits: "To stay competitive, U.S. companies are making a science of pulling together the right supplies at the right time in the right place. What would happen if companies could apply this process, known as supply chain management, to people? What if talented workers with the right skills were easy to find and ready to perform when companies needed them?"

Welcome to what Goldberg calls "the knowledge supply chain," the new business strategy of lifelong, "K through 80" learning. Business-tailored learning "is a cost-effective, efficient way businesses can insure that worker knowledge is put to use to help companies' bottom-line," says the NAB newsletter, *Work America*. "That's increasingly important today, when the cost of 'inadequate knowledge' is prohibitive because it threatens corporate competitiveness." Among the benefits touted by the NAB are "a 20 percent reduction in the cost of finding skilled workers, a 50 percent reduction in cycle times to deliver products or services," and a shortening of "ramp-up time" for training new workers.

Exponential changes in computer technology are also placing intense pressures on the pace and content of learning. "Because knowledge is doubling nearly every seven years, in the technical fields specifically, half of what students learn in their first year of college is obsolete by the time they graduate," claim Davis and Botkin. Thus, "Lifelong learning is the norm that is augmenting and in some cases displacing school-age education."

Equally ominous is the rise of the virtual university, a byproduct of the high-technology craze and that industry's exploding influence on education. More than 700 "cyber colleges" are now online, according to *Forbes* magazine, and computer-driven distance learning is a booming market. Overhead is low, since campus facilities and teaching staff are minimal. The University of Phoenix teaches business and information technology to 42,000 students at a bargain-basement tuition of $6,500, a very competitive price enabled by the fact that faculty are "entirely part-time and tenureless ... and teach from a standardized script," reports *Business Week*.

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The mounting presence of corporate and virtual education has intensified competitive pressures on universities to both downsize and rightsize — in other words, to cut costs and redesign themselves to capture market niche. On its "Think Mag" WebSite, IBM, one of the biggest benefactors of technologized education, celebrates the rise of "digital degrees": "The digital revolution is going to change not only who learns, how and when they learn, but who is providing the instruction." As a new wave of students, known as the "Echo Boomers," floods campuses, IBM touts digitized education as the money-saving solution: "Increasing the size and scope of nontraditional education-delivery methods, including distance learning — instead of building new campuses and hiring new faculty — is now viewed as the optimal means to absorb the influx of students." The chancellor of the 23-campus California State University (CSU) system, Barry Munitz, concurs, "If you look at different models for transformation and expansion, the economics are profoundly in the direction of technology."

Resisting automated education

David Noble uses a similar name but has a radically different analysis of this trend. The combined forces of the technology economy and corporate power have turned universities into "digital diploma mills" in which education is increasingly automated, Noble writes in a recent essay. Computer and education technology corporations have forged sprawling, controversial partnerships with universities such as UCLA and Canada's York University, Noble reports, in deals that enable administrators to slash faculty labor costs and intellectual power while opening up new multi-million dollar market opportunities for hardware and software firms.

At Noble's own York University in Toronto, untenured faculty must now put their courses on video, CD-ROM or the Internet or lose their job. "They have then been hired to teach their own now automated course at a fraction of their former compensation," he writes. So in the spring of 1997 York's full-time faculty went on a two-month strike against the university's corporate technology initiative, and, according to Noble, gained major decision-making control over how and when course materials can be digitized. But professors at UCLA surrendered, posting their lecture notes on company-run websites; Noble found that UCLA's Home Education Network system allows firms (and the Administration) to monitor student-faculty communications.

Another such battle is still underway in California, as the CSU Administration attempts to push through the California Education Technology Initiative (CETI), a multi-billion-dollar computer infrastructure partnership with GTE and Fujitsu that has ignited widespread student and faculty opposition. (Microsoft and Hughes Electronics, originally partners in the plan, pulled out at least in part due to protest.) The deal, which is on hold, will involve some trade-off in which high-tech firms will revamp CSU's computer networking systems while gaining special access to the student market and, possibly, control over electronic course materials.

The CETI project is a perfect expression of today's education wars. Public universities in particular are teetering on a financial precipice, and corporations are eager to invest in future consumers and workers. "Everybody is out there beating the bushes for money, and so much of the state and federal funding has dried up, so everybody is trying to get corporate involvement," explains Eloise McQuown, vice president of the California Faculty Association's chapter at San Francisco State University. "We're all having to scramble in a day and age where in order to stay current you have to invest millions of dollars."

While much of the negotiating over CETI centers on issues of proprietary control and faculty input, John Murphy, a communications major and senior at SF State, voices a more fundamental concern about corporate presence on campus. "The corporations are designed for making profits, and when they're involved in education, the whole influence is designed to educate people into a consumer culture. Just seeing the billboards and having that company presence, even if it's not directly in the classroom, represents a culture which is unsustainable and which education shouldn't necessarily be promoting."

Murphy, one of thousands of students throughout CSU who have protested against the CETI, points to a deeper purpose of education that is increasingly being obscured by the emphasis on marketing and workforce development. Education, he says, is "not something that should steer you toward one particular mode of development, such as being prepared for the workplace. It should prepare you for having the knowledge and skills to be able to do whatever you want to do with your life, but it also has to do with philosophy, understanding of ethnic relations, and other subjects which are not oriented toward working for the rest of your life." TW

Exposing repression

The Academic-Military-Industrial Complex and Central America by Jonathan Feldman is an essential guide for students and academics seeking to expose university complicity with militarism and repression in the Third World. Feldman presents an activist strategy for selective divestment, modeled on the experience of the campus-based anti- apartheid movement.

For a copy contact South End Press, 7 Brookline Street #1, Cambridge MA 02139-4146; <southend@igc.org>.

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Fish wars

In Texas, the plastic magnetic fish symbols that attach to car bumpers are meeting a challenge from plastic salamanders with "Darwin" written in them.

"Dallas, Houston and Amarillo are veritable seas of fish," writes Scott Baldauf in *The Christian Science Monitor* (4/29/98). "Some of the fish even travel in schools, gathering every Sunday in the Lake-Huron-size parking lots of a neighborhood Baptist or Pentecostal church.

"Inside city limits, it's another culture or ecosystem altogether. Downtown, the University of Texas campus is a mecca for sandal-clad twentysomethings communing with nature, warning about NAFTA, and protesting the Chinese occupation of Tibet. On talk radio, hosts lambast Bill Clinton for not being liberal enough. Even the high-tech industry is peopled with ponytails. This is where the salamanders thrive.

"... On the highways, you'll see fish with whiskers (signifying a love of catfish), and sharks (an aggressive Christian, perhaps, or an agnostic who eats door-to-door evangelicals). You'll even see an occasional big fish eating a hapless salamander, which may be intended to show the preeminence of God over material theories. Or perhaps just the skills of an almighty entrepreneur."

Science or emotion?

"I've heard that 'science vs. emotion' taunt just once too often," writes systems analyst Donella Meadows (*Timeline*, 5-6/98). "The straw that has broken my patience is the testimony of foresters from the Champion International logging company, fighting a proposed Vermont law to ban aerial spraying with herbicides. ... Said forester Stephen Richardson, 'I am pleading with you to listen to science ... and not get caught up in emotion.'

"... Corporations hire numerous scientists, but we know that their organizational purpose is not the search for truth, the stewardship of creation, or even the welfare of the human race. Their goal is to make money, which is perfectly rational, until it gets pushed to the point of destroying life-support systems. That's rationality gone over the edge into greed, domination, aggression. They are emotions that stand in sharp contrast to the fear, compassion, care and other wimpy emotions associated with tree-huggers. They are also more, well, let's face it, testosterone-based emotions.

"I would hate to bring up that sexist point, but the chemical companies have done it for me in the marketing of their products. ... There are commercial pesticides named Arsenal, Bravo, Clout, Force, Impact, Karate, Lance, Lasso, Machete, Oust, Pounce, Prowl, Punch, Ramrod, Rapier, Rodeo, Roundup, Scout, Sting, Stomp, Whip. What is being sold here? Science? Rationality?"

WTO fought in India

Hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated against the World Trade Organization in Hyderabad, in southern India, on May 3. The rally was organized by the Joint Action Forum of Indian People against the WTO and Anti-People Policies (JAFIP), a newly formed coalition of 50 peoples' movements. The site was chosen because of the high rate of peasant suicides and army killings of activists in the region attributed by JAFIP to WTO-imposed policies and suppression of resistance.

JAFIP's founding convention, attended by more than 900 representatives of people's movements, produced the "Declaration of Indian People against the WTO," which states:

"We, the people of India, hereby declare that we consider the WTO our brutal enemy. This unaccountable and notoriously undemocratic body called the WTO has the potential not only to suck the sweat and blood of the masses of two-thirds of the world, but has also started destroying our natural habitats and traditional agricultural and other knowledge systems ... converting us into objects of Transnational Corporations' economy of consumerism." It also commits its signers "to build a pro-people egalitarian social order through a genuinely democratic process."

For further information, see <<http://www.agp.org>

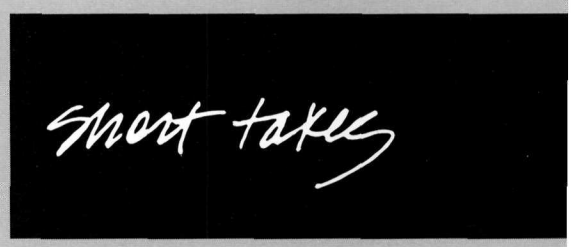
Nobel laureate's U.S. jail stay

The Northern Irish peacemaker and Nobel peace laureate Mairead Maguire has called her overnight stay in a U.S. jail an "irreplaceable experience," according to a report in *The Citizen*, a Belfast publication of the Peace People. In February of this year, Maguire engaged in a nonviolent protest in support of Philip Berrigan, in jail in Richmond, Va. for anti-nuclear resistance. After a visit with Berrigan (whom Maguire has nominated, along with his brother Daniel Berrigan, for the Nobel Peace Prize), Maguire informed the guards that she was refusing to leave.

Maguire's experience "included being lifted by three burly guards and dumped unceremoniously into a jail where she was strip-searched before being flung into a holding room with about 15 women on various charges from prostitution to drugs," *The Citizen* reports.

"She was held overnight in solitary confinement. At six o'clock in the morning, the women, handcuffed in pairs, were brusquely herded from the cells. As a guard moved to handcuff Mairead, an FBI agent intervened to stop him.

"But by this time, it was clear that the authorities knew they had a Nobel peace laureate on their hands, and were anxious not to make any embarrassing mistakes. ... At the appointed hour, the case was made by the prosecution, Mairead pleaded guilty and explained why: whereupon the judge dismissed the charges, and came down to ask Mairead how Philip Berrigan was keeping!"



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Reuniting mind with spirit

by Victor Kazanjian

Last fall I gathered a group of students at Wellesley College and asked them to share stories of moments of meaning that they had experienced in their classes. I was searching for a way to bridge the gap between the definition of education as a process of intellectual development separate from emotional, social and spiritual development and a more inclusive vision of education as an integrative process encompassing all of these dimensions of life and learning. The divide between mind and spirit, head and heart is so deeply embedded in western education that it seemed that any attempt to cross it would be futile. But as I sat with these students and listened to their stories a bridge appeared before my eyes.

Their stories cut across the entire curriculum, from biology to history, from sociology to theater, from ethnic studies to mathematics. One student told of a moment in molecular biology when she suddenly made the connection between the smallest forms of life and the largest living ecosystems of the planet. Another student related an experience of working closely on a psychology project with a faculty member which resulted in their co-authoring a paper. Still another spoke of her political science studies coming alive during a class trip to Mexico. But whether they spoke of meaningful collaborative work with other students, service-learning opportunities, or the helpful mentoring of a faculty member, in each case the students talked about these moments as representing a spiritual dimension to their education.

Since arriving in the world of higher education, I have sensed a deeply spiritual dimension to the educational process. And yet when I tried to speak about this to faculty members, many responded with blank stares of confusion and, occasionally, overt expressions of anger.

They repeatedly used words like "inspiration," "connection," "relevancy," "purpose," "understanding," "wonder," "awe," "joy," and "love."

They also voiced questions which I considered profoundly spiritual: "What is the purpose to all of this learning? What does it mean to be an educated person? What does my learning have to do with my living? How is my learning relevant to the lives of others?"

Based on these conversations, I settled on a definition of spirituality in education as that which animates the mind and body, giving meaning, purpose and context to thought, word and action — or, more simply, the meaning-making aspect of learning.

Faculty responses

Since arriving in the wondrous and strange world of higher education, I have sensed a deeply spiritual dimension to the educational process. And yet when I tried to speak about this to faculty members, many (not all) responded with blank stares of confusion and, occasionally, overt expressions of anger at the presumption of speaking about spirituality and education in the same breath. But now I decided to approach faculty members with the stories told by their students. I contacted each with an instance of a student in their class who had described having a moment of meaning which they connected to a spiritual dimension of their education. I then invited these faculty members to a discussion about such moments in the learning and teaching process. Over the course of the next month, I met with 55 faculty members to discuss moments of meaning in the classroom and share similar stories with one another about such moments from their own learning and teaching.

Eventually the discussion got around to the reasons for their original choice to become a scholar and a teacher. Some spoke of a passion for seeking truth, others of a desire to kindle a fire within their students. Many told stories of having been affirmed as a person whose ideas were of value by a faculty mentor in their own life. Most spoke of the joy of watching students come alive in their classes as connections between self and world began to be made.

For more information on the Education as Transformation Project contact Margaret Kowalsky of the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life at Wellesley College,Wellesley, MA 02181; phone 781 283-2659; email: <T1mkowalsky@wellesley.edu>; Web Site: <www.wellesley.edu/RelLife/project>.

Victor Kazanjian is Dean of Religious and Spiritual Life and Co-Director of Peace and Justice Studies at Wellesley College in Wellesley, Mass., <vkazanjian@wellesley.edu>. Artist **Cathey White** is a 1996 graduate of Philadelphia's Moore College of Art and Design. She continues to live in Philadelphia, where she teaches art to court-adjudicated male youth aged 13-18.

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Pursuing the soul of the whole

As I listened, I was reminded of Ralph Waldo Emerson's words when he spoke of such a journey as "the pursuit of the soul of the whole which lies within us; the wise silence, the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is related ... which when it breaks through our intellect, is genius; when it breathes through our will, is virtue; and when it flows through our affection, is love."

In describing moments of meaning in their education, both the students and faculty I spoke with affirmed a vision of education as liberation from the bondage of ignorance — or what bell hooks calls "education as the practice of freedom" in her book *Teaching to Transgress*. This challenges the notion that colleges and universities have become simply dispensers of marketable skills which enable people to gain power, prestige and material wealth. This is a vision which sees education as enabling people to engage the world in a heartful way, a vision which echoes T. S. Eliot's haunting questions, "Where is the knowledge that is lost in information? Where is the wisdom that is lost in knowledge?"

Representing the full diversity of religious traditions and cultural backgrounds, today's students are seeking an educational experience which enables them to integrate their lives and their learning. This calls for a revisioning of the educational process in a way that would represent a more holistic educational experience, one where the life of the mind is not separated from the life of the spirit.

Education as transformation

This month, on September 27 and 28, presidents, administrators, faculty, students, religious life staff, and trustees from many of the nation's colleges and universities will come together at Wellesley College to explore the challenges that religious diversity holds for the educational community — and to address the role of spirituality in higher education. Coordinated by Brown University and Wellesley College and planned by representatives of 27 colleges and universities, this national gathering will kick off a three-year project entitled Education as Transformation: Religious Pluralism, Spirituality and Higher Education.

Have you ever wore a mask? **by Cathey White**

As humanity moves into a new century and a new millennium, the effects of globalization, particularly the rapidly increasing ethnic, cultural and religious diversity within American society, are nowhere more prevalent than on college and university campuses. One of the central questions facing educators is the role of colleges and universities in shaping the moral and spiritual character of their students in the context of a pluralistic society. America's institutions of higher learning were originally founded on religious (essentially Protestant Christian) roots, providing a value system based on the assumption that the religion of the majority was the religion of the nation. As the movement toward religious liberty grew in this country and the demand for separation of church and state increased, religion began to disappear from the educational process and many colleges and universities gradually became secular institutions.

Crisis of institutional identity

For many colleges and universities today, this collision of past practices with present multi-religious, multi-spiritual realities has precipitated a crisis of institutional identity and educational priorities. The Education as Transformation project emerged out of a conviction that neither the original homogeneous religious orientation of the past nor a model devoid of spirituality will adequately serve the current situation.

Issues of religious diversity, in fact, afford a valuable opportunity to reexamine questions about religious life and spirituality in higher education.

In his book *To Know as We are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey*, educator and author Parker Palmer speaks of a process of rethinking our educational experience in a way that includes spirituality. He writes: "We have an opportunity to revision education ... [in a way that] would result in a deeply ethical education, an education that would help students develop the capacity for connectedness that is at the heart of an ethical life. Such an education would root ethics in its true and only ground, in the spiritual insight that beyond the broken surface of our lives there is a 'hidden wholeness' on which all life depends. ... In this education we come to know the world not simply as an objectified system of empirical objects in logical connection with each other, but as an organic body of personal relations and responses, a living and evolving community of creativity and compassion. Education of this sort

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means more than teaching the facts and learning the reasons so we can manipulate life toward our ends. It means being drawn into personal responsiveness and accountability to each other and the world of which we are a part."

Vision of a transformed world

For me, Palmer's call for a new vision of education has reawakened a vision of education that I had learned as a child.

I am the grandchild of survivors of the Armenian genocide, raised on the stories of the atrocities committed against the people whose body is mine. I carry these stories as memories etched upon my soul, always to be remembered as the evil of which human beings are capable. Yet my grandfather, a man who had experienced the depths of human cruelty, believed that the possibility for the healing of humankind lay in the potential of education to inscribe on the heart a vision of a transformed world — and to offer the tools to attain this vision.

Another formative influence in my life and learning was the friendship between my maternal grandfather, who was president of Boston University, and Howard Thurman, then dean of the university's chapel. It was their work together, along with one of their students, Martin Luther King, Jr., which set before me a vision of the role that educators and educational institutions might play in transforming and healing the world. I carry a poem of Thurman's with me always which speaks of this holistic vision:

As the movement toward religious liberty grew in this country and the demand for separation of church and state increased, religion began to disappear from the educational process and many colleges and universities gradually became secular institutions.

There is a sense of wholeness at the
core of humanity
that must abound in all we do;
that marks with reverence our
every step,
that has its sway when all else
fails;
that wearies out all evil things;
that warms the depths of frozen
fears
making friend of foe;
and lasts beyond the living and
the dead,
beyond the goals of peace, the
ends of war!
This we seek through all our
years;
to be complete and of one piece,
within, without.

As we move from conversations among a few students and faculty about moments of meaning in the classroom to a national dialogue on spirituality and higher education, we are entering a new era when spirituality and education need not be seen as enemies, but as partners in a conversation about what constitutes a more complete picture of the educational process. TW

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Offering a treasury of stories

by Sam Portaro

My ministry is conducted among a learned, literate culture of sophisticated women and men. Yet when the subject of faith arises, they describe themselves as "spiritual, but not religious." Woody Allen once described sleep as "death without the responsibility," a pretty apt analog to a religionless spirituality — faith without the responsibility. It's not that this spirituality is shallow; I've no doubt these young adults are sincere. And to a point, their spiritual posture is appropriate to their young adult status. It reflects a spirituality in process, in formation, like the other important facets of their lives. Their intellect, politics and intimate relationships are all in a state of flux.

But a religionless spirituality is often inchoate, voiceless, lacking vocabulary and referents to common experience. When we seek and discern divine intimations in our lives, we need words and stories that help us locate and articulate whatever faith is in us. For this reason, *catechesis* — instruction in the faith — represents a substantial and important part of ministry with young adults.

The academic context of our ministry actually supports this task; students understand that a thorough grounding in classical discipline is a prerequisite to intellectual creativity; jazz improvization, for example, often proceeds from a solid grounding in classical music. Moreover, a catechism (unlike a creed) is a thesis. It's a proposition put by a community of faith with a vocabulary and a treasury of stories. Rather than treating catechism as an instrument of indoctrination, we employ it as a teaching tool.

Like many congregations, we offer an annual class for "inquirers." But we honor the status of inquirer; we do not assume that all who engage in the study will commit to baptism or confirmation. Some do, some don't. But all who complete the journey gain a rudimentary vocabulary and sufficient familiarity with the stories of the faith community to equip them for continuing exploration. And they are invited to consider their place in a larger and older family.

For many young adults today, reared outside religious institutions and denied even rudimentary education in a specific faith tradition, the torment of unbelieving is the isolation of a voiceless spirituality.

Alex Haley's *Roots* awakened a similar sense of connectedness among African Americans who realized, some for the first time, that negotiating one's life in a pluralistic culture is strengthened by a personal sense of rootedness in the particulars of people and place. Genealogy is not just the idle pursuit of lost privilege; it's the necessary equipment to self-understanding and social communion.

One's spiritual sense of self also wants grounding, some sense of belonging to the larger and longer history of faith. Catechesis opens us to the study of a people's faith history. Like any such family history, we find both the good and the bad mingled. But in the affinities and antipathies we encounter, we learn more about who we are and how we are related to the worlds — physical and spiritual — around us. Without this sense, we are vulnerable.

This is one reason, perhaps, why young adults can be quite touchy, even hostile, about attempts to engage their spiritual interest. Awakening to spiritual self-awareness for the first time or questioning and even abandoning assumed values and practices inherited from one's family is a safari into wild and wonderful places where the unwary are easy prey to exploitative religion. At least the guarded and hostile have sense enough to know they are vulnerable; their defensiveness demands respect, which is always the prelude to any trusting relationship.

For a few, a foundation was laid in childhood — like Rose MacCauley's youthful character, Laurie, whose own spiritual journey is mapped in *The Towers of Trebizond*: "It would be a refuge, that agnosticism into which I was slipping down. But it would always be an anglo-agnosticism, and Mass would always torment. Once Anglicanism is in the system, I think one cannot get it out; it has been my familiy heritage for too many centuries."

But for more young adults today, reared outside religious institutions and denied even rudimentary education in a specific faith tradition, the torment of unbelieving is the isolation of a voiceless spirituality. Theirs is the hunger of the mute, the straining for syllables, the words and stories that connect us. The eternal Word had no beginning, for us at least, until words changed breath to bridges, where the separated meet and work and laugh and play and love until words are no longer necessary. We give them the words, trusting that they, and God, will do the rest. TW

Sam Portaro is chaplain at Brent House, the Episcopal Center at the University of Chicago, <http://student-www.uchicago.edu/orgs/episcopal-ministry/>.

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What kind of life do I want to live?

'Self-knowledge is a spiritual pursuit'

Ophira Edut, 25, is an Israeli-American Jew who graduated with a major in computer graphics from the University of Michigan in 1994. She is editor and founding publisher of HUES, a multi-cultural magazine for women in their late teens and 20s.

I come from a bi-cultural family. My father is an immigrant from Israel and my grandmother was a holocaust survivor. So I've seen and heard a lot about struggle.

I also experienced a self-awakening when I was younger. I would read magazines and I would feel bad about myself because I wasn't blonde-haired, blue-eyed, six feet tall and Barbie thin. When I was a teenager, I blamed myself for not measuring up. Then when I got a little bit older I decided that there was nothing wrong with me, but there was something wrong with the magazines and the culture that expect girls and young women to live up to impossible standards so that they will keep buying products.

At that point I said, rather than wait around for the magazine and the media to change, why not try to do something different myself? My twin sister and a friend and I started HUES as a class project at the University of Michigan and we just kept going with it. When we finished school, we made it national.

Gloria Steinem is on our advisory board and I've also been helped by other older women. But there's still a lack of trust between the two generations. Our strategies are different. In the last generation there was a lot more unity, but unity was more useful then. I mean people needed to band together under one political label or title and now in this generation we're trying to expand on that and encourage diversity. The older generation sees us as frivolous or silly or not serious or not political. That's not true. They just don't understand that we do things differently.

My perspective is not so much religious as spiritual. Part of self-knowledge is spiritual and that's what we're striving for in HUES, encouraging women to trust their instincts and to discover who they are without the image and the clothes and the delusions. We're trying to get women to go back to the core of who they are and develop a confidence in that and I think that's a spiritual pursuit.

'You don't have to be a priest or a nun to live in community'

Jeff Nelson, 26 and married, is currently a volunteer in a year-long Passionist Lay Missioners program in Detroit that brings young adults from across the nation to inner cities and involves them in social justice work, living in community, simplicity and spirituality. He is working at Big Brothers, Big Sisters.

We are living in a neighborhood where people are committed — committed to staying in the city when they don't have to and committed to living out their life in a way that is just and compassionate. That has so much to do with how I want to live my life now. It's not necessarily going out and doing extraordinary things, or flashy things, but it's being a presence and going about your life in a just way, in a quiet way and in ways that show your respect for your neighbor.

It has also been a real breath of fresh air to find people of faith who are committed to working things out with each other and to not letting those differences separate them, but strengthen them. You really get a chance to be who you are. And not just in the Catholic Worker church we attend, but you find that in a lot of people that run the social justice activities here in the city.

I should say that a conversion experience for me in college was Campus Crusade. It was a more exclusive type of spirituality than I've been finding here. You were either in or you weren't and there were certain things you had to do to get in. Just being you wasn't enough to get in, you had to be "saved." Ultimately, I think that meant changing who you were. In the beginning there was a lot of talk like, "God accepts you where you're at." Then it was, "Jesus accepts you as you are, but we're going to work on some things, won't we?" As much as I really needed a spiritual dimension, I found that to be very controlling. I also found myself wanting to control other people to be part of that club, which I just don't think was good. You miss out on people's gifts when you expect them to act or behave a certain way.

I didn't grow up Catholic, but through this Catholic volunteer program I've been really inspired by the priests and nuns who have given their lives to this kind of work. But this experience has taught me that you don't have to be a priest or a nun to live in community with people and you don't even have to live in the same house with people to live in community.

My parents have always known that I've been pulled towards something like

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Artist **Marka Suber** lives in Philadelphia, Penn.

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this, that normal mainstream life just never quite suited me although I tried real hard to make it work — my first two years out of college I was a regional sales manager for a company. I was good at it, but I didn't like it. I do struggle, though, with the way middle-American thought affects my desire to do social justice "right," to the point of doing it all, making a job rather than a lifestyle out of it and working long and hard hours at it to save the world and climb the ladder within that community as well.

'It is hard to justify just surviving if there's nothing that ever brightens it'

Elisia Gurule, 19, writes for The Michigan Citizen *and is a student at Henry Ford Community College in Detroit, Mich. She plans on a career in photo journalism.*

Most important to me is that everyone's most basic needs should be taken care of — everybody needs to eat and some place to live and clothes to keep them warm. But people also need access to good education and, if you're sick, you should be able to go to the doctor. You should also be able to enjoy things — like art, literature and music. And it shouldn't really be seen as such a luxury or so inaccessible to so many people — particularly poor people, because it's one thing to just get by, but it is hard to justify just surviving if there's nothing that ever brightens it! If you're trudging along and there's never anything nice or beautiful or good or kind it's a lot harder to remember to keep trudging along.

I wouldn't say I have a religious perspective because I don't go to church every Sunday and I barely make it on holidays. But I think there is some kind of God. I read about a woman in a novel once who was arguing about God with another character. She told this person, "It's not for me to say that there is a God or not, but if it gives somebody a sense of inspiration and aspiration, then I don't really see how that could be bad." I think that hits the nail on the head.

Untitled **by Marka Suber**

My Mom has been the biggest influence on my choices in life. And I come from a long line of really good, strong women —my mother (who persevered even though we were really, really broke when I was little), my grandmother, even my great-grandmother, who is still perfectly alive and kicking. They have all set really good examples for me to try and follow in terms of taking care of other people that need to be taken care of and just being good in a simple sense.

'Becoming educated is not only for myself'

Hugo Ramirez, 20, moved to the U.S. from Mexico City when he was 11. He is a third-year mechanical engineering student at San Jose State University in California, where he is president of the Episcopal campus ministry.

My ultimate goal is to get a Ph.D., but my parish priest has suggested I consider becoming a priest and right now I'm dealing with the issue of whether I should. If I do decide to become a priest, I'm still going to keep studying engineering. It's going to be hard, but I think there's room for everything if you can make the room and if you can make the sacrifice.

Becoming educated is not only for myself. I think it's very important to give something to the community around you, not just keep it all for yourself.

I'm the first one in my family to go to a university and to actually get this far. My mom only got to fourth grade and my Dad only got to sixth grade.

We all know in ourselves what to do without having somebody tell us, "Oh yeah, you should do this." That can be helpful, but often I don't think it's necessary, because we know the bad and good implications of what we're going to do.

The whole idea of making money is not something that appeals to me at this moment. Right now my economic condition is not great, but it's not bad either. I'm not becoming an engineer for the money, I'm doing it because I like science.

I'm lucky to have very good friends with whom I can share things and I like reading and writing poetry. For me that's very important. TW

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A chance to be 'ruined for life'

by Marianne Arbogast

In the lower flat of a house in a westside Detroit neighborhood, 11 people — most in their early 20s — are gathered for a meal. Only one is seated at the large dining room table. Two servers hover over him, offering drinks, appetizers and numerous appealing dinner courses. In the adjacent living room, the TV is blaring, absorbing the attention of a woman whose meal consists of barbeque potato chips and red pop. But most of the diners are seated on the floor. One eats a tortilla with beans, another curried rice, and a third dry bread and water. The sharing of food is forbidden.

This peculiar dinner party is a "community night" activity for young adults who have given a year after college to faith-based service and justice work as Jesuit Volunteers and Passionist Lay Missioners. They have spent their day working with homeless Detroiters, economically disadvantaged children, and HIV-positive shelter residents. After their meal, volunteer "support people" will facilitate reflection on the global economic system. ("And who told you you couldn't share?")

Jesuit Volunteer Corps

The 40-year-old Jesuit Volunteer Corps (JVC) is structured around four "pillars": community, spirituality, social justice and simple lifestyle. Over the course of a year, weekly community nights and quarterly retreats offer volunteers the chance to explore each of these commitments in depth. Volunteers receive a small stipend and health insurance from the agencies where they work, and live together in communities of three to nine men and women.

A JVC advertising motto — "Ruined for Life" — expresses the hope that the JVC experience will have a lifetime impact — and, in fact, it is common to find "FJVs" (former volunteers) in Catholic Worker houses and other contexts of long-term, justice-oriented commitment.

Episcopal Urban Interns

JVC is a model for many similar programs sponsored by Roman Catholic religious orders, as well as a number of Protestant denominations. The Los Angeles-based Episcopal Urban Intern Program is an Episcopal Church example. Interns have worked in programs for the homeless, educational programs for children with special needs, and an AIDS project. They meet regularly with program director Gary Commins for life sharing, prayer, study and reflection.

"We read Dorothy Day, Oscar Romero, Martin Luther King and William Stringfellow," says Commins, who is a former campus minister. "Stringfellow's work offers a good commentary on nonprofits — the interns are always trying to understand why a nonprofit, which is supposedly there to do good, is really more concerned for its own survival, or why people are paid poorly and there is injustice within the institution.

"Having been a chaplain, I knew that there was a real need to connect students with the 'real world,' and especially with the oppressed," Commins says. "Especially for people from privileged backgrounds, there is a need to connect to some other reality before going on in life."

Detroit Summer

But for other young people, there's an equal need for new perspectives on familiar realities. Growing up in Detroit, Julia Pointer felt that "everyone always talked in the past tense. They talked as if the city was worthless now — and they thought it was a shame, but there was nothing that could be done about it. I felt that I had no say in what happened around me."

What made all the difference for Pointer was Detroit Summer, a community involvement program modeled after Mississippi Summer of 1961, when college students traveled to Mississippi to register people to vote. Inspired by long-time community activists Grace and Jimmy Boggs, Detroit Summer emphasizes the importance of calling young people to meaningful social involvement.

"Jimmy believed that because we don't give our children any responsibility, they don't have any self-worth," says retired teacher Jane Kyriacopoulos, who works with Detroit Summer. "And the fact is that we desperately need them."

For Pointer, who took part in the first Detroit Summer in 1992 when she was 16 and now works as a youth coordinator for the program, this was energizing.

"I finally found my voice," Pointer says. "I found adults willing to listen, and to help me know that I could make some kind of impact. Hope is such a loaded, cliché word, but I think it does offer that, to know that there are people out there working who still feel involved in a movement, who care about what happens to the city and who are asking young people, 'What do you think? What do you feel is important?'"

Run by a small group of community activists, Detroit Summer meets for four weeks each year. Many volunteers live in Detroit, but they are joined by others from outside the city and even out-of-state. Some participants stay the whole month; others — like a group that comes for a week each year from Antioch College — commit to shorter blocks of time. Each day, teams of young people clean up vacant lots, help plant community gardens, paint murals and collaborate with neighborhood resi-

Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of *The Witness*, <marianne@thewitness.org>. Artist **Linda Oliver** lives in Pennington, N.J.

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dents on other projects they identify. Evenings are given to socializing, relaxation and "intergenerational dialogues" with community leaders. Topics range from the global economy to gender issues to the role of the press.

"It's usually the most popular part of the program," Pointer says. "We get civic leaders and people who were involved in the labor or civil rights movements to tell about their life choices and to talk to young people about their lives.

"I know that the people I've met from Detroit Summer will always be in my life," Pointer adds. "They are my mentors now."

Alternative spring breaks

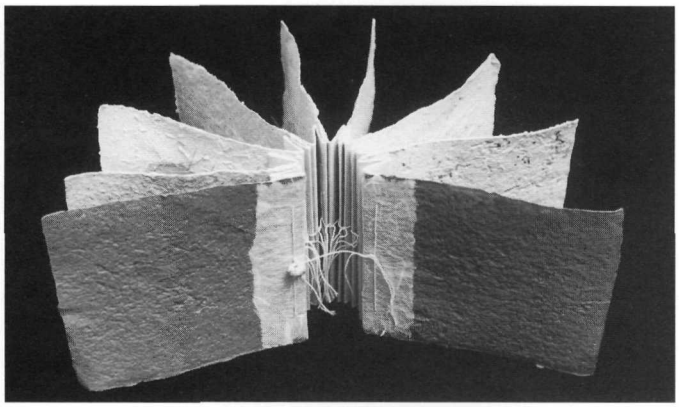
An increasingly popular option for college students seeking short-term but potent social involvement are alternative spring break experiences. Kevin Roberts, executive director of Break Away, a national organization which promotes and facilitates alternative spring breaks, says that over 300 U.S. colleges now offer such opportunities. Break Away advocates student-led programs.

"We want students to be invested as much as possible in the alternative break program," Roberts says. "If faculty or staff are doing all the planning or logistics, they will have the ownership and the students will merely be participants."

To assist students in developing their own programs, Break Away maintains a national data base of community organizations looking for volunteers, as well as offering training and assistance in networking with students on other campuses.

"I think that giving students an opportunity to serve is paramount," Roberts says. "We foster the development of a service ethic that will last far beyond graduation. More than that, we want to create active citizens who don't operate in a vacuum."

Jen Seamans testifies to the life-changing impact of an alternative spring break. A 1998 Kalamazoo College graduate, Seamans came to Michigan four years ago with plans for an engineering degree and a reasonably conventional life. Then she attended a conflict resolution training session sponsored by the Nonviolent Student Organization (NVSO).



Handmade book, handmade paper by Linda M. Oliver

"It sounded innocent enough," Seamons recalls. "I'd always been a peacemaker on an individual level."

Shortly afterwards, she signed up for an NVSO-sponsored alternative spring break at Jonah House, a Baltimore, Md. resistance community.

"At that point I would have called it charity or volunteer work," Seamans says. "I never thought of it as affecting the majority of my life. Being at Jonah House was an experience in itself, but there also were people in NVSO at the time who asked some really important questions about social justice. There's something about active nonviolence and active love for one's neighbor that you just have to see in action, rather than reading books.

When NVSO was allowed to set up a Peace House as a living/learning unit on campus, Seamans moved in.

"It was an environment where we got a chance to think critically about what we were going to do in the next few years," she says. "I've realized where my priorities are in life — obviously, making a lot of money working a nine-to-five job isn't much of a priority any more."

At some colleges, alternative spring break programs include overseas experiences. Melissa Daly, a senior at Marquette University in Wisconsin, traveled to Jamaica through the Marquette Action Program (MAP), a campus ministry-sponsored service organization.

"We went to a part of the island on the opposite side from the resorts, where there were no Americans," Daly says. "There were four different sites — two schools, a nursing home run by Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity, and another home where about half of the people had had leprosy.

"We were prepared for the big shock we would have going there, but it was harder for me to come back. I would get so angry when people complained. My roommates would complain that we don't have air conditioning — and in Jamaica it is so hot, and people don't even have someplace they can go that is air-conditioned.

"Before I went, pictures of third-world countries didn't faze me, because I'd seen so many of them in my lifetime. Now, when I see or read something, it takes on more significance. I have a poster of Jamaica in my room — it keeps me focused on my real needs and what I do have."

Whether for a week, a month, or a year, such experiences of direct, hands-on service in arenas outside one's familiar life context are proving life-altering for many people at the threshold of adult decisions and commitments.

"Life was easier when I was allowed to view it naively, but experience is knowledge," says a former Jesuit volunteer who spent two years in Belize. "Life would have been easier without this knowledge, but it would not have been richer." TW

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Lambeth 1998: a call to awareness

by Ian T. Douglas and Julie A. Wortman

In the ancient choir of Canterbury Cathedral, Simon Chiwanga, Bishop of Mpwapwa in the Anglican Church of Tanzania, challenged his 750 colleague bishops in the opening sermon of the 13th Lambeth Conference, with an almost Buddhist mantra: "awareness, awareness, awareness." Chiwanga, an acknowledged leader in both African Anglicanism and the London offices of the Anglican Communion Secretariat through his role as chair of the Anglican Consultative Council, was offering a hopeful and life-giving way to live into the pain and difficulties of becoming a genuinely post-modern and post-colonial Anglican Communion.

If Chiwanga's words were lost on his brother and sister bishops, the opening celebration of the eucharist using a Kenyan rite, said in five languages, with music and dance from South Africa and Korea to Panama, was hard to miss. Still, there are those in the Anglican Communion who refuse to acknowledge the radical transformation of Anglicanism today. Such would require a loss of power, a loss of stature and a loss of colonial identity that has been fundamental to many in Anglicanism, especially many in the West who wear Episcopal purple.

What holds Anglicans together?

The transformation of Anglicanism is occurring on many planes (a superficial but significant sign of this was that references to "bishops' wives" this year were carefully corrected to "bishops' spouses" in recognition of the husbands present), prompting considerable discussion about what, if anything, holds Anglicans together. At the center of this debate is *The Virginia Report* produced by the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission under the watchful eye of Robert Eames, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, a document whose view of communion was widely touted by conference leaders as (perhaps literally) seminal.

At the heart of the struggle to become a post-colonial Communion is the economic disparity between West and South that breeds paternalism and dependency.

"*The Virginia Report* is the blueprint for the future of Anglicanism," Eames told us with apparent pride. "Unity in diversity is the one lasting principle and bottom line."

The opening plenary addresses by three different British male academics echoes this view of an open diverse community of faith. Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey suggested in his presidential address that Anglican tradition celebrates difference. "In a world where so many people talk in extreme terms, and claim that their perception of truth is the only one that counts," he said, "let us remember that we have always been a Communion where diversity and difference have been cherished, and indeed, celebrated."

A similar note was rung by David Ford, Regis Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, in his plenary address on "The Bible, the World and the Church," where he suggested that the Bible is "no tidy map to be consulted" but rather a living reality that can continually guide the community of faith in its interpretation and reinterpretation.

Likewise, in a presentation on moral decision making, Rowan Williams, Bishop of Monmouth in Wales, argued against a priori standards of truth in ethical discourse, promoting instead a relational theology of moral reasoning in which truth emerges in the course of encountering "the other" (not news to feminists and communities in the South).

Why can't we all just get along?

The commonality of the let's-celebrate-diversity theme of the opening plenary presentations led one conservative writer to conclude that the organizers' dominant hermeneutic was: Why can't we all just get along? But the organizers' liberal pitch for a church of forbearance and collegiality did not go unchallenged. A significant number of African, Asian and South American bishops — some of whom were fearful that the conference would take an accepting stance toward homosexuality and thereby give Muslim extremists back home an excuse to intensify anti-Christian violence — lobbied against tolerance and ambiguity in favor of a neo-colonial emphasis on centralized, English-based authoritarianism.

At the other end of the spectrum were those who complained that the Western men steering the conference were trying to manage a post-colonial future in a colonial way. "The organizers are not looking at other models," said Massachusetts' suffragan bishop, Barbara Harris, who attended the 1988 Lambeth Conference as a highly controversial episcopal nominee/observer. "You can't get to a post-colonial Anglican Communion using a colonial model and that's all they have in their

Next month's Vital Signs section will provide more Lambeth coverage, including the conference's final statements and decisions.

Vital Signs

Ian Douglas is Associate Professor of World Mission and Global Christianity at Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass., <idouglas@episdivschool.org>. **Julie A. Wortman** is co-editor/publisher of *The Witness*, <julie@thewitness.org>.

knapsacks."

Glauco Soares de Lima, Primate of the Episcopal Church of Brazil, echoed Harris' analysis. Identifying himself as among the "unaligned" in a gathering dominated by Africa and the West, he regretted the conference's "over-institutionalization" and "the colonialistic way we do things here," noting especially the predominance of English academics in the plenaries.

Struggling with economic disparity

For Soares de Lima and the majority of other bishops from the Southern Hemisphere, there are more pressing matters to tackle than figuring out how to get along, namely how to alleviate the crushing weight of poverty at home, poverty exacerbated by the international debt crisis. The fourth conference plenary on international debt — augmented by a meeting between some bishops and representatives of creditor countries at Lambeth Palace — underscored that at the heart of the struggle to become a post-colonial Communion is the economic disparity between West and South that breeds paternalism and dependency.

Clearly defensive about claims made in a Christian Aid video that current World Bank policies are partly to blame for the debt crisis, World Bank president James Wolfenson (who flew in to address the bishops as a favor to George Carey) petulantly chastised the bishops at length for their seeming ignorance of, and naive approach to, the world economic order. Likening some borrower countries to womanizers, drug users and gamblers, Wolfenson haughtily challenged bishops from the World Bank's 180 member countries to address their concerns to their own governments, not the bank.

Following the Lambeth Palace meeting, Njongonkulu Ndugane, Archbishop of Capetown and Chair of the Conference's section dealing with questions of peace and justice, rebutted: "I am constantly being told that there is a lack of political will to write off these debts. Yet in May of this year Jubilee 2000 gathered 70,000 ordinary British people in Birmingham to put pressure on the G8 leaders. Clearly the people have shown the will." Noting South Africa's decision to write off all the debt owed to her by Namibia, Ndugane called on the rich nations to follow his country's example.

"In writing off Namibia's debt the new South African government did not ask whether we could afford to offer such relief; we did not wait to reconstruct our own economy before offering debt relief; we did not ask whether the debt was payable or unpayable. Nor did we impose any conditions on our neighbor. We merely declared those debts as immoral, odious debts incurred while Namibia was occupied by the apartheid regime." Noting that Western allies wrote off Germany's debts after the Second World War, Ndugane asked why it was not possible to forgive "the odious loans given to dictators like Suharto of Indonesia, Marcos of the Philippines; to Mobutu of Zaire and to the various military regimes of Brazil and Nigeria."

Julie A. Wortman

Jane Dixon, Suffragan Bishop of Washington, prepares to take her place in the official conference photograph during the 13th Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops. This was the first Lambeth Conference that included women bishops. The conference, however, urged freedom of conscience on women's ordination.

Marking change?

According to Penelope Jamieson, Bishop of Dunedin in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, the bishops' Lambeth Conferences do not so much make change as mark change. The struggle to transform the Anglican Communion from a collection of provinces dominated by white men from England and North America, to a *multicultural, multi-*racial, plurality of interdependent churches clearly marked this 13th decennial gathering of bishops from around the Anglican Communion. The question that remains: Will this Lambeth be primarily about well intentioned white men from the West attempting to manage diversity — without giving up power — or will it mark the ascendancy of a church committed to solidarity with the marginalized and to confronting the powers and principalities of modernity and paternalism?

The answer, in part, will depend on whether the bishops take Simon Chiwanga's call to awareness to heart. Evidence that they have will be unmistakable, Chiwanga told us during a conference interview.

"My problem is not colonialism," he said. "My problem is the inequality of resources, the problem of poverty versus affluence. The key to taking pluralism seriously is the way we address poverty."

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No young adults in the pews? We told you so!

by Jacqueline M. Schmitt

The most recent statistics from the Freshman Survey administered by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA (see *Plumbline*, Winter 1998) reveal a picture that most of us already knew: The Episcopal Church, and all of mainline Protestantism, fail to attract young people in great numbers. Indeed, by the time many of our children grow up, they are already gone to another, or to no, spiritual home.

We in campus ministry regret to say it, but, "We told you so." Years of attrition in our ranks, funding virtually eliminated from national church and diocesan budgets, a discounting of the value of campus ministry as "real" (meaning parish) ministry, among other factors in the church and society, have lead to this malaise in the church where a priest or lay person under the age of 35 can barely be found. Calling attention to these cuts and their implications has been a repeated refrain of individual chaplains and of ESMHE, the Episcopal Society for Ministry in Higher Education. (ESMHE's founding in 1968 was in response to major cuts in college work on the national level.)

Church growth people now realize that the loss of this age group in parish life leaves a devastating hole in membership, pledging levels and healthy, multi-generational activity. Demographic surveys of northern Illinois used by the Diocese of Chicago reveal that the most rapidly growing age group in the city and suburbs is the 18-35 crowd — and that they (churched and unchurched alike) are the most likely to be predisposed to the kind of things the Episcopal Church has to offer. The one thing most parishes can't offer, however, are people like them — young — in the pews.

Chicago delegation to 1995 Province V student retreat

For me, these declines are most frustrating for theological and spiritual reasons. The Anglican tradition provides a way to faith that embraces mind and spirit, that affirms the goodness of the material world, that speaks to the value of work and worth and community. Campus ministers use a lot of catchy phrases like, "You don't need to check your brains at the door," or "Jesus came to take away your sins, not your mind," to point out to the students we reach that this church has a theological tradition that respects and can be respected by the academy. Questions can be raised, concerns can be voiced, the contradictions found in scripture can be confronted and engaged, as we read the story of faith in which we find our stories lifted up.

In the Episcopal Church's Province V (encompassing the Midwest), our annual spring conferences are planned and led by students. The past three years they followed variations on a theme: What is the Episcopal Church? Where did it come from? What does it offer me? The usual conference liveliness, heartfelt worship services and Episco-disco were balanced by serious conversations about the history, theology, liturgy, ethics and ethos of Anglicanism. Newcomers as well as those raised in the Episcopal Church, having found a community that embraces them, a spiritual tradition that nurtures them, a liturgy that engages them, now want to know more about where all this comes from and where they fit in. They want to know whether they can believe the words on the sign: "The Episcopal Church Welcomes You."

To emphasize these aspects of young adult ministry is not class or intellectual snobbery. Developing a critical consciousness is common to the faith development of all young adults. Sharon Daloz Parks calls 18-25 the "critical years," when we evaluate the world around us, test the trustworthiness of authorities, claim our place in the world. During the young adult years we are particularly engaged and cognitively alert, whether we're auto mechanics, geophysicists or dancers. We in the church lose all of that life experience when few young adults are active in our midst.

So, yes, we in campus ministry are angered and saddened when there are few colleagues in our field, when money is short and diocesan authorities see us as second-class ministries. Ever-shrinking budgets force us to use our time doing fundraising rather than expanding ministry with students. Our graduates report finding few comfortable places in the church and young adults with vocations for ordained ministry continue to receive discouraging messages from Commissions on Ministry. Young adults are bright, fun, wonderful, lively folk; who wouldn't want to go out of their way to invite them to church? Kortright

Jacqueline Schmitt is Episcopal chaplain at Northwestern University and editor of *Plumbline*, a journal of ministry in higher education, <JackieS@nwu.edu> and <http://nuinfo/episcopal>.

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Davis, Professor of Systematic Theology at Howard University Divinity School, offered this analysis a few years ago:

"The church which was founded by a band of young people, and whose pioneer died at a very early age, is now completely dominated, controlled and defined by those who no longer claim to be such. Qualification for entry into the Kingdom was described as being similar to being young, but we have overturned such a criterion by insisting that the young must imitate the old. The future of campus ministry is inextricably bound up with the future of the church, and I do not see how either will have a future unless we are rescued by the younger generations, however much we kick and scream about holding onto power and traditions of our authority. Let campus minsitries become more subversive of the growing gerontocracy in the church. Let them infiltrate all the pews, pulpits and vestry rooms with younger blood, fresh commitments, unspoilt religious habits and new visions of God's beautiful world."

Don't take just my word for all this. A book recently published by Cowley collects similar arguments, passions, experiences and quotes (including the one from Kortright Davis above). *Disorganized Religion: The Evangelization of Youth and Young Adults*, edited by Sheryl Kujawa, former 815 staffer now teaching at the Episcopal Divinity School [*TW* 4/97], provides a wide range of experience and opinion on the challenges and rewards of this ministry. Steven Charleston, chaplain at Trinity College, underscores students' widespread interest in volunteer service. The point of campus ministry, he says, is to help them make the connection between action and faith, witness and worship. Jane Gould, chaplain at MIT, talks about the spiritual lives of engineers and scientists. Several essays deal with the challenge of working with young adults from a variety of cultures and circumstances. Several others voice concerns of campus ministers, including the abandonment of the minstry by diocesan funders and the challenges of thinking up entirely new ways to do evangelism with this generation. Many start out by remembering experiences they had in the Episcopal Church as young adults — Ed Rodman running a youth center in New Haven in the riot-torn 1960s; Cathleen Chittenden-Bascom being startled and delighted by a long-haired, motorcycle-riding chaplain in Kansas. Old ideas of youth ministry are evaluated and new models suggested.

There is an urgency to these essays but not desperation. The authors convey a deep respect for the young adults they minister with, and they also reveal how fun and energizing it often is.

A highlight of our Province V conference this year ("The Episcopal Church Welcomes You ... Now What??") was Ted Jones, retired Bishop of Indianapolis. As the keynote speaker, he sat in a chair with 100 students in rapt attention on the floor around him. He told stories — of his first church service (he was the teenager with the car on a snowy Christmas Eve) — and sang songs (Garrison Keillor's parody, "Episcopalian — Savin' My Love for You"). He was charming, friendly, accessible, a good story teller. I was struck, however, that most of these young adults, especially those new to the Episcopal Church, until now had not had the lore of our tradition passed on to them by a wise and loving older adult, by a mentor, in Sharon Parks' definition, who cares about their souls.

At the heart, that's what young adult ministry is: reaching out to the souls of those younger than we are, encouraging them to make the connection between faith and work, worship and witness, love and commitment, passion and prophecy. It is passing on to them the parts of the tradition that have nourished us, especially the part that lets them know they can, and have to, make up their own minds. It is making room for this new generation in our community, with all the change, freshness, disruption and continuity they bring to our emerging vision of what God intends for us and this world.

Penthouse admits error

Penthouse magazine has admitted that most claims made in a 1996 article by Rudy Maxa, "The Boys from Brazil," about Long Island priest William Lloyd Andries cannot be substantiated. The scandal that resulted from publication of the Maxa article led to the deposition of Andries and the firing of an Episcopal Church employee mentioned in the story.

"*Penthouse* has now had an opportunity to obtain information ... that was not previously available and to read the diocesan report of the Episcopal Church of its investigation," the magazine's editor said. "Had this information been available to *Penthouse*, we would not have published the article that appeared in the December 1996 issue."

The Maxa article claimed that Andries, an Episcopal priest, was involved in licentious and exploitative sexual behavior involving two Brazilian men and several other Long Island clergy. Some of the incidents described were alleged to have taken place in the Brooklyn church where Andries served as rector. A report issued a year ago following a lengthy investigation by O'Kelley Whitaker on behalf of the Diocese of Long Island found that 22 of the 38 separate allegations in the story were completely untrue or unproven and nine more were largely untrue.

Penthouse issued the statement in response to a lawsuit brought by Andries.

Howard Williams, a priest on the national staff of the Episcopal Church, was fired from his job as coordinator of children's ministries after he was identified in a photo of guests at a service blessing the relationship of Andries and one of the Brazilian men.

— based on an ENS report

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Former 'Red China' is the color of money

By Norman Solomon

Many of us can remember a time when "Red" seemed to be China's first name. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Red China was such a media villain that it often looked like the world's bastion of ultimate evil.

That's why, for Americans, one of the most astounding photos ever to appear on front pages was a picture of Richard Nixon and Mao shaking hands during the president's historic trip to China in February 1972.

More ice melted between the two countries after Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping gained power in the late 1970s — and promptly set a new tone with a proclamation that became an official Chinese motto. "To get rich is glorious."

For American mass media, that's an applause line.

Red China has pretty much disappeared from sight. But it's not exactly clear what is taking its place.

These days, even more than usual, the U.S. press coverage of China keeps oscillating between strong attraction and high anxiety. With its enormous population, China comes across as a beast that could be a great help or a terrible foe — a fabulous marketing opportunity or a horrendous threat.

Since America has a habit of striving to remain at the center of its own psychological universe, China routinely serves as a huge screen for American projections. "A balanced view of China as just another country — with its own pattern of development, its own problems and its own contradictions — is difficult to get from the U.S. media," scholar Robert Weil comments.

"We're always projecting on China a role, an image," says Weil, who taught at a university in northeastern China for several months in 1993. "What I found when I went there is that, in many cases, it has very little to do with what people there are thinking or how they see the world."

Zigzagging between awed commendations and righteous condemnations of present-day China, news coverage and commentaries mirror the splits that exist in Washington. Along Pennsylvania Avenue powerful politicians are divided on policies toward China — and U.S. media reflect those divisions.

When President Clinton was in China a few months ago, such ambivalence was on full display. So, while noting "the natural suspicion and swings in sentiment that always affect U.S. attitudes toward China," the June 29 issue of *Time* made sweeping statements in opposite directions.

"Chinese citizens today lead remarkably free lives, as masters of their own fates and fortunes," the magazine reported. Yet, a few sentences later, the same article declared: "Although the record is improving glacially, administration officials and human-rights observers agree it is still quite bad."

The ongoing abuse of basic human rights in China is truly horrible. Meanwhile, similar — or even more severe — repression continues in numerous U.S.-allied nations that get scant media criticism. As *Newsweek* briefly noted: "There are countries whose record on fundamental civil and religious freedom is no worse than China's; Hollywood stars have not, so far, launched a Campaign for a Free Saudi Arabia."

For the U.S. media, what's now great about China is the transformation of its economic system. A headline in *Newsweek* provided a gleeful summary: "Communism is dead. Crony capitalism lives. Today, this is a country of cell phones and pagers, McDonald's and bowling alleys." News accounts rarely mention the rampant unemployment.

Weil, who authored the recent book *Red Cat, White Cat: China and the Contradictions of `Market Socialism*, points out that China is now undergoing "massive displacement of labor." He reels off some grim statistics.

"The official number of surplus rural laborers is an extraordinary 130 million, and is rising rapidly," Weil says. "Meanwhile, in cities, there are at least 9 million unemployed and a projected 15 to 20 million more in the near future, with millions more losing wages and pensions."

Photos of Bill Clinton and Jiang Zemin shaking hands did not shock anyone. They're big men in an elite global fraternity. And you can bet that not much got lost in the translation: It's glorious to be rich. TW

Norman Solomon is co-author of "Wizards of Media Oz: Behind the Curtain of Mainstream News" and author of "The Trouble With Dilbert: How Corporate Culture Gets the Last Laugh," <mediabeat@igc.apc.org>.

Keeping Watch

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Plumbing the rock-n-roll pose

by Karl Meyer

The Witness asked me to review some of the magazines that people aged 18 to 25 olds are reading these days. So I went down to Border's Book Store and searched the racks for those demographically targeted periodicals, secure in the knowledge of my eventual reimbursement. I found six magazines for the hip and sassy: *Bikini, Siren, Surface, Swing, Deluxe*, and *George*.

Bikini, the magazine of "action, film, anarchy, rock, (and) roll" is not a swimwear magazine (maybe it is named for the island where the first hydrogen bomb was exploded). *Bikini* delivers a rapid-fire succession of images and articles featuring Generation-X role-models. The writing is almost completely in the second person familiar, each article beginning with a brazenly pithy zinger that conveys the author's smugness in knowing the readers better than the readers themselves. The advertising has the same tone and is somewhat indistinguishable from the rest of the magazine's content.

Siren, "for women who get it," is a low-budget style and fashion magazine out of New York for young women with attitude, which is to say, women who make no apologies for their heterosexuality. Yet for all the many picutres of tattoo-laden, scowling "riot grrrls" and the liberal use of the f-word, *Siren* has a sort of prepubescent quality. There are heart-throbbing odes to actors John Cusack and Johnny Dep and googly articles about sky-diving and puppies and women entrepreneurs. Just when you are thinking you are reading *Seventeen* magazine, there's an ad for Beefeater Gin and a picture of a pierced navel.

Karl Meyer, 28, is a musician who lives in Detroit .

Surface, by far the most soul-searching of the fashion magazines, attempts to wrestle the angel of beauty (with one arm tied behind its back, clutching fashion industry cash in its hand). *Surface* tries, while selling clothes and make-up, to deconstruct beauty into its many postmodern faces. Through compelling photography it presents beauty as health, status, a kind of Darwinian truth, sickness (cf. "heroin chic," hemophilia and anemia makeup), and even as a kind of self-loathing, a fearful search for symmetry in the face — beauty as the beginning of terror.

And yet with one eye covered there is no depth perception, so we are apt to mistake mere images for the real world.

Swing is a life-style magazine for the young career-minded. It would seem that where one lives, having nothing to do with commitment to people or loyalty to a place, is of no more import to *Swing* than one's clothes, to be worn or shorn at whim. There is a palpable undercurrent of anxiety running through the magazine that plays on the perennial hipster fear of obsolescence.

Deluxe for Men presents reality as a stream of fast-clicked websites for one's shopping pleasure. There is the flashcard approach to the "Choosing my Religion" article where the relative merits of Presbyterianism, Catholicism, Druidism, Buddhism, Islam, Christian Evangelism, Judaism, and Satanism are assessed. A longer article on the mysteries of the vagina and one on Ally McBeal have relatively more theological content.

George is John F. Kennedy Jr.'s crusade to make politics sexy and thereby reinvigorate political participation by the young. The cover has Johnny Dep gesturing to his crotch behind the words "Political Animals—What Makes Men Wild." *George* is essentially the "*Cosmo*" of government. It details an Olympian drama starring a pantheon of elites who are the quirky, go-getting, rock-n-rollers of the political universe. While making no mention of history, ideology, or the role of the people, *George* slavishly celebrates these gods and goddesses, praising them for their ability to shapechange at will. There is even a column on the colognes favored by various world leaders.

A recurrent image in these and other magazines deserves mention—I will call it the rock-n-roll pose. The artist/model stares into the camera, a lock of hair covering one eye. There is a look of the hunt, or of sorrow in the exposed eye, indicated by a twinkle, a starry point of infinite regress suggesting inner depths or an inner daemon, but which is really the reflected flash from the camera. The duality inherent in this pose is emblematic of the kind of image addiction from which my generation suffers. We would both see and be unseen, be known and be mysterious all at once. And yet with one eye covered there is no depth perception, so we are apt to mistake mere images for the real world. We use these images as mirrors, compulsively staring at them not to know ourselves, but to search for a witness or a kindred who would undergo the pain of knowing for us. Strangely, it is only with the imagination, a faculty usurped by these officially mediated images, that we can begin to see the world for what it is, and ourselves for who we are. TW

review

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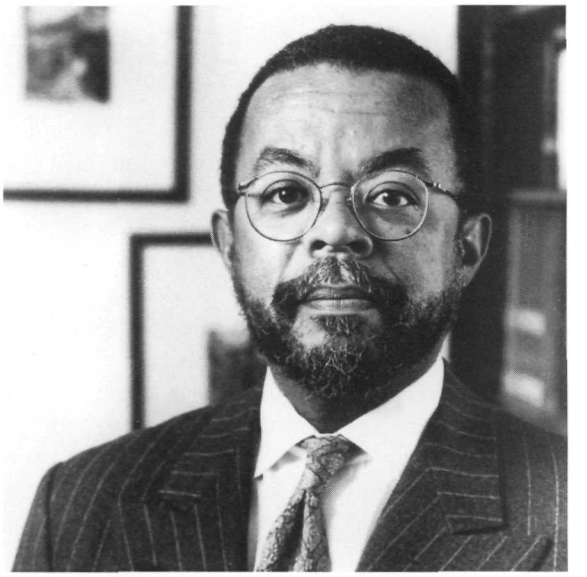
Explicating responsibility

by Jane Slaughter



Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

"Class is as important, often it's more important in one's daily life, than race, even within the black community."

The platform he enjoys is unprecedented: As chair of Harvard's Afro-American Studies Department, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., 48, has ambitions to create a great center of African and African-American studies. It should be sufficiently endowed, he tells me, "so that a hundred years from now, your great-granddaughter and my great-granddaughter are having this conversation." Gates is known not only for his scholarly work on African-American literature — he discovered, for example, *Our Nig*, the first novel in the U.S. published by a black person — but also for writing about a wide range of themes for a popular audience. He co-edited the *Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, providing assigned reading for tens of thousands of college freshmen, and is co-editor of the *Encyclopedia Africana*, intended as the definitive guide to Africa and the African diaspora. And he is the recipient of a MacArthur "genius" grant. No wonder that *Time* magazine put "Skip" Gates on its list of 25 Most Influential Americans.

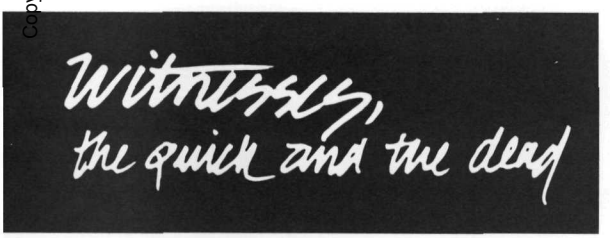
With such a high profile, Gates is often called on to speak his piece on issues affecting Black Americans — although he explicitly rejects the role of spokesman for the race, citing the increasing diversity of the African-American "community." One of his consistent themes is the widening gap between the black middle class — people like himself who "can live like white people" — and what he calls the "underclass." "Class," he insists, "is as important, often it's more important in one's daily life, than race, even within the black community."

In his 1994 memoir, *Colored People*, Gates pinpoints the two weeks he spent at an Episcopal church camp in West Virginia as a life-changing experience. He was 14. Earlier, he had embraced a much more hard-shell brand of Christianity, but he had begun to find the literalism of the evangelical Methodist church oppressive. When he was in the hospital earlier that summer, an Episcopal priest visited him regularly. "The word he bore," writes Gates, "was that I could drink, smoke, curse, and still be a good Episcopalian. I could even date girls. ... I wanted to learn how to be in the world and with God, how to question values and tradition without being kicked out of the fold [and without having] to suppress my uncertainties, doubts, ambivalences in order to be accepted."

At Peterkin church camp, he writes, "I felt I had died and gone to Heaven. ... [The kids] were rebellious, worldly, questioning, cosmopolitan, articulate, bold, and smart. ... We drank ideas and ate controversy. Is God dead? we asked."

A priest gave him James Baldwin's *Notes of a Native Son*; it was the first time he had heard the African-American experience named. He loved the theological freedom and the social activism of some of the young priests of the day. He was confirmed the next year.

Gates's academic background is in literature, specifically in literary theory — a pretty rarefied discipline. Although he'd always thought he would be a doctor — that was the definition of success in his small town — a community college teacher helped him fall in love with writing. He earned degrees at Yale and at Cambridge, and at first was content to live in the world of academia rather than activism.



Jane Slaughter is a writer living in Detroit, <janesla@aol.com>.

"If you want to change the world," he notes wryly, "you don't think of getting a Ph.D. in English as the most direct route to doing that."

He debated the notion that black intellectuals have a duty to put their talents to the good of the race through political action, writing in 1985 that it was not his "task as a critic to lead black people to freedom. My task is to explicate black texts." He added that if Jesse Jackson kept his nose out of literary criticism, Gates would leave it to Jackson to speak for him in the political realm.

These days, that's changed. Gates now sees the need to use his "bully pulpit" to give a lead where he can. He'll still defend scholars who don't want to be politically involved: "I don't think it necessarily comes with the territory. But a handful of black people who teach at places like [Harvard] have a tremendous amount of public visibility and a lot of potential authority. I'm called upon a lot to make pronouncements about things, often which I don't know anything about. So I try and use that access carefully and wisely and enabling other people to speak who know a lot more about these things than I do." In op eds and articles he has defended affirmative action, criticized anti-Semitism among blacks, and questioned the narrow parameters of President Clinton's "conversation on race," among many other topics.

Given his myriad commitments outside Harvard — last year, he was a consultant for the movie Amistad, about a slave rebellion, and he hosted a six-part BBC-PBS documentary on the civilizations of ancient Africa — it's perhaps remarkable that Gates finds time to teach undergraduates and oversee dissertations (he does employ lots of assistants). When he thinks about today's students, he's surprised by the number of devout Christians on campus, given the skepticism that prevailed in his own student days. But he sees the majority of students — both black and white — at elite schools like Harvard as focused first on their own economic success.

Though he's seen protests around Bosnia, Tibet, the environment and diversifying the faculty, "there's nothing like the sort of things that we did [in the 1960s]," he notes philosophically. "There are no overwhelming, ongoing, overriding political issues that consume their energy like Vietnam consumed ours, or the civil rights movement. The black kids are more concerned about race because it's a fact of life, but they're not more socially conscious and socially committed than their white counterparts except about race. It's not like the experience of race and racism has made them more service-oriented."

"The black kids on campus today are more concerned about race because it's a fact of life, but they're not more socially conscious and socially committed than their white counterparts except about race."

Rather than political activism, Gates sees students as taking up "service." "You have a lot of volunteer work done," he says. "People take that as part of their commitment to being a well-educated, well-rounded human being."

One campus movement widespread in the 1990s was to pressure college administrations to enact "hate speech" codes, that is, to prohibit certain forms of speech demeaning to women or to minorities. While he sympathizes with proponents' motives, Gates feels speech codes are dangerous and wrong. "Trample all over the First Amendment," he calls it, "because we decide that using certain language hurts our fellow human beings, it demeans their humanity."

Despite the relative quiet on campuses today, Gates foresees that "the next movement will be a concern to redress the imbalance of class in America," fueled by "compassion." "The gap between the haves and the have-nots is just so dramatic," he says. "I think it's going to shock even the hard-hearted among us. It's certainly that way in the African American community. Forty-five percent of all black children live at or beneath the poverty line, almost identical to the figure the day King was killed. Yet the black middle class has quadrupled."

To help him figure out how to "humanize capitalism — de-race it, de-sex it" — a task some would call quixotic— Gates has assembled a "dream team" of scholars at Harvard: philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah, sociologist William Julius Wilson, and philosopher Cornel West. "I want to create a place where really smart people can interact," he muses. "My Ph.D. is in literature, you know — reading poetry. I'm not trained for public policy analysis. But William Julius Wilson is, Cornel West is. And bringing people together like that who are very smart, very fertile, it's something I think I can do. I might not get to the mountaintop with 'em, but I want to pave the way and provide the trucks.

"It's welcome to have the American public talk about racial differences and discrimination, but the real issue is scarcity, and that's an economic issue that's masking itself often in America as a racial issue. I'd like to see the President convene a conversation about jobs and full employment. And how can we move people from the no class to the working class and from the working class to the middle class. If we can't do it now, given all this prosperity we're in, we can't ever do it." TW

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Letters,

continued from page 3

It was sent to me by a friend who thought I would like it. It rang so many bells that I feel a bit of an idiot at not having subscribed to *The Witness* before this.

Neville Watson
Wembly Downs, W. Australia

Contradicting values

I DO NOT KNOW WHY YOU THINK I requested a copy of your magazine, *The Witness,* as I certainly did not. Please remove my name from your mailing list immediately. I am not Christian and your magazine contradicts all the values I hold dear, especially the Bill of Rights and the separation of Church and State.

Eileen Lynx
Chicago, IL

Witness praise

ONCE AGAIN, I HAVE GREAT PLEASURE in renewing my subscription to *The Witness.* I have been a reader of the magazine since 1989, and I am happy to report that *The Witness* remains my most thought-provoking and challenging read.

Socialists and left wing radicals of all kinds often forget to celebrate fullness of life, preferring dry analysis to dancing. Of course, analysis is critical for liberation struggles but at *The Witness*, you balance analysis with the beauty, celebration and struggle of being human in art, poetry, good humour, and a healthy dose of self-criticism! Keep on Keeping on!

Paul D. Butler
London, England

I HAVE STOPPED several subscriptions over the past 1 1/2 years, but find *The Witness* important to my spiritual and intellectual life.

Sally Schwartz
Milwaukee, WI

THE WITNESS REMINDS US that the church can be and indeed is quite relevant to our contemporary society. The Witness(es) are present and active.

Jose E. Vilar
St. Just, P.R.

I LOVE YOUR MAGAZINE. Perhaps too liberal for some folks, it's just right for my taste. In this cynical world, it's a pleasure to read articles by people devoted to socially responsible action rooted in faith.

Carry on the good work.

I'm enclosing names of two individuals who may be interested in a trial subscription.

Sara Lappi
Woodside, NY

MY DAILY TRIP TO THE MAILBOX can be such an adventure for the spirit! Will I face that wave of disappointment in finding it empty? More likely my mood will be annoyance at reams of junk mail and business correspondence. But a bit more often I find something there that makes my heart race a little bit in happy anticipation...such as a card or note from a loved one...or a special magazine such as *The Witness.*

Please process the address change I've included on my contribution form. I don't want to miss a single occurance of what is one of the high points of each month

Maggie Ritchey
Bethel Park, PA

THE WITNESS IS WONDERFUL—though sometimes I fear it is a "voice, crying in the wilderness." Keep up the good work!

Marian Pressler
Truro, MA

AS A COLLEGE CHAPLAIN, I depend on your magazine to inform my work, and my own spirituality. In fact, I just quoted from *The Witness* in an article that appeared in this month's edition of our "Episcopaper."

Thank you for your always-intriguing and informative publications. If you don't do it, who will?

Susan Carrell
Springfield, MD

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Can Christians learn the earth's song?

The Witness

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Trickster spirit

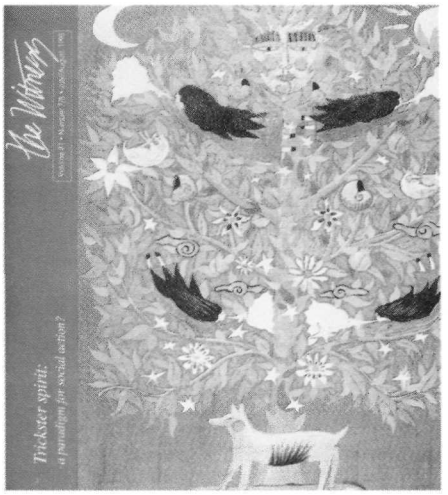
THE TRICKSTER ISSUE WAS absolutely one of the best ever. You lucky wag, to interview Michael Moore. He makes me laugh. I loved that show where he got the CEO to change oil in a car! And will never forget the *Roger & Me* portion about the lady who raised rabbits for food. One neat guy.

Dierdre Luzwick
Cambridge, WI

P.S. You are funniest when you're crabby.

MANY, MANY THANKS for the questions you're willing to consider and the views you present — *The Witness* is really needed.

The most precious thing I got from



Stringfellow was that being a human is enough — God is God and we are human — and that's what we choose in favor of — to preserve and enhance humanness — not success or being wonderful — just faithfulness. *The Witness* supports that job of remaining human.

Willie Righter
Dayton, OH

I ENJOYED SO VERY MUCH your July/August issue on the trickster. Our age challenges us to rethink our way to God — maybe even starting with a different Name. Perhaps the best starting place would be a sense of the beautiful - aesthetics. (Thomas Aquinas had such a beautiful definition of beauty — "that which when seen pleases". The comic, along with the tragic, the Scholastics listed among the aesthetic categories. (I would define the comic as that which when seen pleases by relief.)

A sense of the tragic is so much a part of serious social awareness: the experience of noble man laid low by our failings.

The comic, laughter, I believe, always contains the intuition of a transcendent dimension to our existence and a sign of the virtue of Hope, a free and surprise Gift.

That noble man can be brought low slipping on a common banana peel. Tragic! Within a Scriptural perspective — serious work, dignity, nobility ... Yes!

But laughter intuits that the banana peel can't keep me down. I will rise again with nothing lost but a false sense of dignity. What

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a relief that we don't have to keep "trying to be angels" as Cox says.

Aquinas' definition of beauty is beautiful. My letter on the comic is not very comical. But neither does a letter from the North Pole have to be cold.

George McMahon
Detroit, MI

I ALWAYS READ *THE WITNESS,* usually with great interest and profit. The 7-8/98 issue on alternatives to "activism" raised my hopes but then shattered them.

In her opening editorial JWK writes, "The activities of people of faith seem pretty tame and predictable. We write checks, write letters to the editor, sign petitions, join boycotts, participate in vigils, occasionally go to jail." (She forgot to mention lying down in front of nuclear trains and pouring our own blood on draft files, which are not exactly tame or predictable.) "These activities don't seem, these days, to have the edge needed to really challenge the powers.' (Of course, because they never did.) My heart leaped up, because I thought she was about to announce that what is called for is what has always really challenged the powers that be, namely, electoral-legislative activism and the legal remedies which accompany it (running for public office, or finding good candidates, campaigning for them, leaning on them after election to get the right laws and budgets passed, boycotting or suing corporations with bad environmental and labor policies, and so forth).

But then my hopes crashed. What is it that she claims really challenges the powers? "Periodic mischief," "something quirky," "coyote," "the trickster." Please! The "powers" will have a good laugh over that. Furthermore, she ignores the advice of her one main example of the trickster, Michael Moore: "We all have to run for precinct delegate; we have to go in and take over the local party apparatus. It's there for the taking. Once we elect enough people ..." (His example is applied to corporate downsizing and moving abroad.)

Let's have an issue on the possibilities of the kind of electoral-legislative activism which millions of "people of faith" have always been involved in.

Owen C. Thomas
Berkeley, CA

YOUR ISSUE ON TRICKSTER reminded me of a piece of verse I wrote a few years ago. During a day of recollection, the leader asked us to reflect on how God seduced us. I enclose the piece for your enjoyment.

The root meaning of "seduce" is "lead astray."

You used, I think, deception
to seduce me.
Coyote Trickster is your
name.
A hundred little jokes—
a larger joke or two—
you handed me, laughing as
I turned to you,
opening your arms to me,
tickled when I said:
"You? It was you? Oh, for
heaven's sake!"
And I, sophisticated, so superior to the practical joke,
I have to smile, as they say,
despite myself.
I feel my heart skip —so banal and trite an
image.
But it does. It does.
The solemn promise, the solemn, unrelenting
program
that I thought I'd had from you,
and found I'd made up by myself,
and so discarded, to discover not the emptiness I supposed,
but your warm, welcome, loving, laughing self.
Coyote, I'm catching on to you.
I'm suspicious, now, of every solemn thing.
Beneath the solemn thing I hear a self-delighted smile
leading me astray.

Pat Chaffee
New Windsor, NY

M. Wuerkes

YOUR JULY/AUGUST ISSUE "Trickster spirit: a paradigm for social action" helped me recall the following example: In '74, I received a call from my prophet, Jack Pratt, who was in South Dakota to defend the Wounded Knee Indians in court. His clients had received a call from an Indian in the San Diego jail (alcohol related) who had an abscessed tooth and hadn't eaten in several days. Jack told me "to take care of it!"

With my God-given authority, I called the jail and said: "I understand you have a prisoner, Tosh Steppenwolf, who is suffering with an abscessed tooth. Either you will take care of his tooth immediately, with your own staff, or The Episcopal Church will come with a dentist to do it!"

Then I wrote Tosh about what I had done. Tosh wrote back that the jail dentist came the day I called, livid to have been beeped on the golf course!

Soon Tosh was transferred to an Honor Camp where AA teams visited regularly and he could have visitors. So we did meet.

Having advocates outside, who demand prisoner needs be addressed, and invoking the prestige of The Episcopal Church is a case of tricking that worked.

Mary Eunice Oliver
San Diego, CA

THANKS FOR THE JULY/AUGUST issue. I'd like three more copies.

Richard Deats
Fellowship of Reconciliation
Nyack NY

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The Witness

Volume 81 • Number 10 • October 1998

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Cover: Earth goddess, Watercolor with Japanese papers, by Anna P. Oneglia

The Witness offers a fresh and sometimes irreverent view of our world, illuminated by faith, Scripture and experience. Since 1917, *The Witness* has been advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those people who have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." We push boundaries, err on the side of inclusion and enjoy bringing our views into tension with orthodox Christianity. *The Witness'* roots are Episcopalian, but our readership is ecumenical. For simplicity, we place news specific to Episcopalians in our Vital Signs section. *The Witness* is committed to brevity for the sake of readers who find little time to read, but can enjoy an idea, a poem or a piece of art.

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

The editor whose editorial appears on page 5 crafted this issue.

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Where do you like to pray?

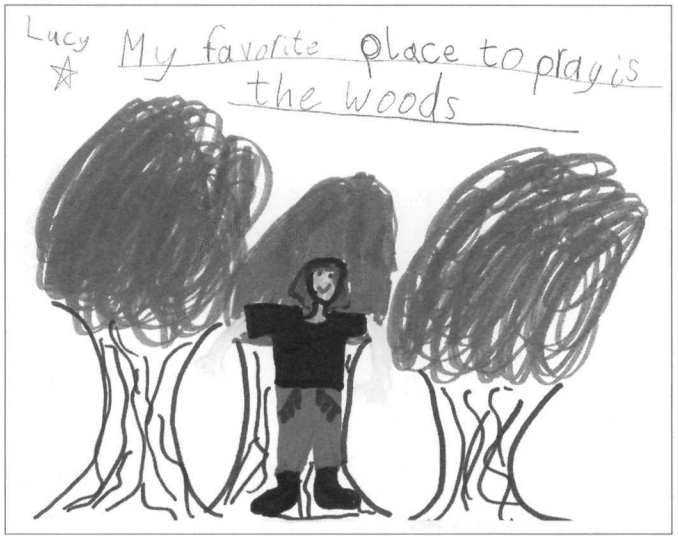
by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

I've been chronically ill for over a decade. I've lived off decongestants, ibuprofen and antibiotics, managing symptoms so that I've rarely been unable to get out of bed and yet never recovering. In fact, some would say my symptom management has been costly to my immune system.

I'm hyper-sensitive to a variety of chemicals: perfumes, cigarette smoke, diesel. When exposed to these, I get pounding headaches. I feel like I've been physically assaulted. I feel angry. Within my immediate family, I get understanding and support. It's when we are with friends and I have to relocate within a movie theater, restaurant or church that I begin to feel crazed.

Meeting and reading about others with multiple chemical sensitivities has helped. Some churches even have perfume-free sections. The Methodist annual conference in 1997 asked participants not to wear perfume or cologne because, within the first session, someone had already been hospitalized. On the Internet <www.best.com/~immune/articles/perfume.html> I found a list of the 21 most common chemicals found in 31 fragrance products. Most of these are derived from petroleum-like benzene derivatives and aldehydes, known to be capable of causing cancer, birth defects, central nervous system disorders and allergic reactions. Cumulatively, they can cause problems — deodorizers, shampoos, "air fresheners", cleansers, furniture polish, laundry additives.

My partner Bill says I'm kind of like the Bubble Man on *Northern Exposure* who lived in a special hypo-allergenic home and tracked weather maps to decipher when wind-blown toxins would put his health at risk. Or like a canary in a coal mine. Or like the mutating frog. Not what I was hoping to be.



Lucia Wylie-Kellermann

During the same decade I've been learning a spirituality that may be leading toward my health although I hadn't known the two might connect.

In 1992, I dreamed that I stood with a friend and we heard the earth singing. In the dream I remember thinking, "I didn't know the earth could sing!"

Soon thereafter a friend took me to a moon lodge. For hours women sang chants about the earth, about the grandmothers. I was transported. I felt time open up. Stress that I had been carrying floated away. I could sing the repeating lyrics. I could feel the weaving harmonies. I could keep silent and let the music wash over me. During one song I started to weep. I felt connected to both my grandmothers. One had lost a baby girl and had buried her in China in 1917. The other had died in NYC in 1924 leaving behind a little son and a husband, lost to pneumonia. The grief was huge. And yet it felt restorative, like I was back in my blood line.

I began to feel differently about the earth too. I noticed and gave thanks for (most) weather, for the four directions, for the wind. So when I learned of a vision quest, titled "Dancing with the earth," I leaped at it.

I didn't overanalyze the traditions from which I was learning. The woman at the heart of it is a disciple of Harley Swift Deer, condemned as a New Age profiteer by some elders, but her heart and her teachings were pristine and I was grateful to be in her hands. I especially liked the way she prayed, upright, clear, with a tone of voice that anticipated response. She wasn't apologetic or solicitous like so many Christians are when they pray. She was utterly forthright. "Sacred Ones, this is ...." Shoulders straight, she called out with dignity and authority for the wisdom to learn the teachings in her life and the strength to act with courage to break old patterns.

For several days, I fasted and slept in my circle on the earth. I realized I had never stayed put on one piece of earth before. By the second night I knew that what had sounded like rain was insects

editor's note

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is co-editor/publisher of *The Witness*, <jeanie@thewitness.org>.

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dropping from a nearby tree at nightfall. I felt grateful when the sun rose. I felt cared for by the earth itself. Always intuitive, I began to remember a connection I felt as a child to rocks and trees and creatures. I started to talk to everything: rocks, flowers, insects.

I stayed in these women's circles for three years, learning a lot about myself and more about ritual, chanting and intent. At length I felt a need to return to my own Christian tradition. I had always been upfront about my Christianity even though many of the women had a strong animosity toward it. But now I longed for a way to pray these prayers, feel these connections and sing these chants in the company of people who also cared about Christ.

Growing up in New York City, I had been familiar with the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, but it took my breath away to return in the 1990s. The chapels were filled with ecological experiments and memorials for firemen, for those who died of AIDS, for artists. The bookstore was eclectic, overflowing with music tapes, including chants, and cards with vibrant full color images that evoked all kinds of spirit.

"That place is alive!" I found myself remarking as I left, only realizing by inference, that I must have expected cathedrals to be dead. (Graham Nash has an incredible musical indictment of cathedrals in which he sings, "Too many people have died in the name of Christ for anyone to heed the call!" And, indeed, St. John was compromised when after Gulf War I, a victory parade ended with a celebration within the cathedral.)

Honoring my ancestors, sustaining my marriage, knowing my own soul requires that Christianity can be braided through a love for the earth and an acknowledgment of the elemental spirits. Plenty of people have been attempting this same synthesis — I think of *Gaia and God* by Rosemary Radford Ruether [*TW* 6/93], the first Reimagining God conference [*TW* 7/94] and Matthew Fox's Creation spirituality work. But the backlash in each case has been intense.

Elemental spirits would have been second nature to people in Christ's time. So would many of the patterns of the earth. I'm startled at how deep my ignorance runs. After 40 years in major cities, I know practically nothing about rural life.

When the air is toxic and the well water poisoned, a religion cut off from the earth is a mind game of little consequence.

I spent this summer in a small town in Michigan, close to Lake Huron, deep in the woods. I loved seeing the stars. I began to pray for rain since my neighbors crops were in jeopardy and our well nearly dry. I got our daughter Lucy to help me pray over the well — to say thank you, to welcome any underground caches of water, to honor the cycle. We tied a twine belt around the concrete cylinder, decorated with beads and praying hands — a shrine, dedicated with Celtic prayers.

Would it be so radical for Christians to acknowledge that our liturgical year is rooted in the harvests and seasons of the earth? Some of our most powerful holy days are outright stolen from the pagans. They are now imbued with the life of Christ, but could we also acknowledge that they have to do with the cycles of the earth? All Saints Day is pegged on the highest Celtic feast Samhuinn, the occasion when Celts felt closest to the dead. The early Catholic Church was shrewd in its decisions about when to make it possible for indigenous people to continue some facsimile of their own worship under the banner of a Christian feast. (The Catholic cathedral in Haiti has fabulous and controversial paintings that integrate voodoo and Christianity.)

Reading Starhawk's new introduction to her 15-year-old *Dreaming the Dark,* it is clear that the rituals in her circles have grown and taken strong root — they are no longer experimental. The Internet reveals the same abundance of pagan worship. And I'm constantly surprised to hear of yet another friend celebrating the solstices. Elemental worship is alive and vital and all the more so given the deadly assault on the earth and on our collective health.

When the air is toxic and the well water poisoned, we need strong medicine, we need to be nurtured by mother earth and to become more aware of what her needs are. In this era, a religion cut off from the earth is a mind game of little consequence.

Such an awareness is behind a series of issues which *The Witness* will do on bioregions — knowing your watershed, your locale, its ecological issues and needs, its foods and seasons. A Roman Catholic friend, a nun who also went on a vision quest, has a Michigan cookbook written by an indigenous woman which speaks of vegetation that you can hope to harvest "just after the geese fly south." Its instructions are not bound by the monthly calendar, but rather by cyclical events.

And for me and my own nuclear family, this decade of frustration, learning, joy and prayer has become a commitment to spend more time in the woods. It's teaching me. I like the learning. And it pleased me when my daughters' Catholic school asked its second graders "Where do you most like to pray?" that Lucy answered in words and a drawing, "In the woods!" TW

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A Song of Creation

Benedicite, omnia opera Domini

Song of the Three Young Men, 35-65

Invocation
Glorify the Lord, all you works of the Lord,
sing praise and give honor for ever.
In the high vault of heaven, glorify the Lord,
sing praise and give honor for ever.

I The Cosmic Order
Glorify the Lord, you angels and all powers of the Lord,
O heavens and all waters above the heavens.
Sun and moon and stars of the sky, glorify the Lord,
sing praise and give honor for ever.

Glorify the Lord, every shower of rain and fall of dew,
all winds and fire and heat.
Winter and summer, glorify the Lord,
sing praise and give honor for ever.

Glorify the Lord, O chill and cold,
drops of dew and flakes of snow.
Frost and cold, ice and sleet, glorify the Lord,
sing praise and give honor for ever.

Glorify the Lord, O nights and days,
O shining light and enfolding dark.
Storm clouds and thunderbolts, glorify the Lord,
sing praise and give honor for ever.

II The Earth and its Creatures
Let the earth glorify the Lord,
sing praise and give honor for ever.
Glorify the Lord, O mountains and hills,
and all that grows upon the earth,
sing praise and give honor for ever.

Glorify the Lord, O springs of water, seas, and streams,
O whales and all that move in the waters.
All birds of the air, glorify the Lord,
sing praise and give honor for ever.

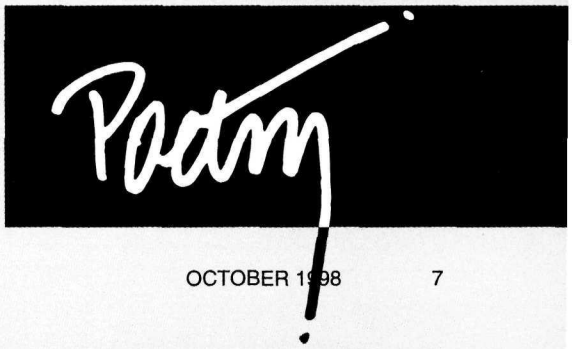
Glorify the Lord, O beasts of the wild,
and all you flocks and herds.
O men and women everywhere, glorify the Lord,
sing praise and give honor for ever.

III The People of God
Let the people of God glorify the Lord,
sing praise and give honor for ever.
Glorify the Lord, O priests and servants of the Lord,
sing praise and give honor for ever.

Glorify the Lord, O spirits and souls of the righteous,
sing praise and give honor for ever.
You that are holy and humble of heart, glorify the Lord,
sing praise and give honor for ever.

Doxology
Let us glorify the Lord: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;
sing praise and give honor for ever.
In the high vault of heaven, glorify the Lord,
sing praise and give honor for ever.

— Canticle 12, Morning Prayer. This translation is from the Supplemental Liturgical Texts, *Canticle 12A. It is taken from The Prayer of Azariah, also known as The Song of the Three Young Men, from the Apocrypha.*



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The Bible and earth spirituality

by Ched Myers

"How awesome is this place! This is none other than the House of God, the gate of heaven!" (Genesis 28:16-17)

"You need make for me only an altar of earth and sacrifice on it your offerings of well-being. If you make for me an altar of stone, do not build it of hewn stones; for if you use a chisel upon it you profane it." (Exodus 20:24-25)

I didn't grow up in the church. When I came to faith at age 18, I had no experience with the Bible. I still remember my first connection with scripture. I was reading about Jesus' feeding with the loaves and fishes, and was excited by the fact that what was left over was gathered up. I was passionately concerned for the environment, and thought we should all "re-use and recycle." This passage, I suggested to a friend from a fundamentalist church, seemed to affirm that idea. "I guess this means that Christians are environmentalists, right?" I asked. He dismissed this first hermeneutic foray as innocent but wrongheaded, and proceeded to correct me with the properly spiritual meaning of the gospel passage. I shrugged, and kept my excitement to myself. I have had a sort of personal alliance with scripture concerning love for the land ever since, despite the hostility or ambivalence of the church.

In college I dutifully read Lynn White's famous 1967 polemic, "The Religious Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," which laid the blame for all environmental crimes at the door of Judeo-Christian monotheism. That modern Christendom had failed miserably to love and protect the earth seemed as inarguable as it was regrettable, I thought at the time. What I found unpersuasive was White's contention that the Hebrew-Christian scriptures both inspired and justified such neglect.

The last 20 years of biblical study have persuaded me that it is not the Bible that hates nature, but rather the culture of modernity. Of course that culture has shaped how we read the Bible. I have thus experimented with a different approach to scripture. I begin by acknowledging that the problem may well lie more with my urban, non-earth-literate eyes and ears than with the biblical storytellers. By exercising a "hermeneutics of suspicion" first toward my own modern alienation from nature, I am freer to approach these stories as the revered wisdom of old, indigenous cultures that were far more dependent upon and attuned to the land than my own.

It is not the Bible that hates nature, but rather the culture of modernity.

This helps me look harder and listen better for strands of earth spirituality in the very tradition that has been accused of being hostile toward nature.

For example, let us suspend for a moment the shrill hermeneutic tradition that reads the garden of Eden story as justification for human exploitation and domination of the earth (a philosophical position, Doug Meeks has pointed out in his excellent book *God the Economist,* that goes back to John Locke, not the Bible!). What we find in the account of creation is a portrait of human beings utterly and intimately embedded in and among the whole of living Gaia (Gen. 1-2). Indeed, the moral tale of the Fall in Genesis 3 defines human sin as alienation from the earth. Not content with living from and with "everything that has the breath of life" (Gen. 1:30), humans instead lusted after the inanimate (in the organic sense) "tree of knowledge."

Thus the vocation of "naming" creation (Gen. 2:19ff) — that is, living in a loving relationship with it — is corrupted into the dominating role of "adjudicating" the world, a stance of control and instrumentality (Gen. 3:4-5). This desire for power has truly generated the culture of death about which this ancient tale wisely warned us (Gen. 2:17). In the primeval narrative of Genesis this slow "descent into madness" culminates in the building of alienated and alienating metropolises such as Babel (Gen. 11).

In our own time the reach of Babel — even though we call it "civilization" — has become global and lethal on a cosmic scale.

The real "plot" of the Bible, of course, is about the liberation of humanity from this archetypal Babylonian captivity. It is thus no accident that right on the heels of Babel we meet Abram and Sarai who are called to forsake "civilization" for the wilderness (Gen. 11:31ff). This feral movement into undomesticated space establishes the enduring counter-history of YHWH, from the Exodus journey of Israel to the discipleship journey of the church.

The story of early Israel is full of wild landscapes: rocks and desert, rivers and

Ched Myers is a contributing editor. A writer, teacher and evangelist, he is currently a Fellow in Urban Theology at the School of Theology at Claremont. You may reach him at <chedmyers@igc.apc.org>. Artist **Meinrad Craighead's** work appears in *Woman Wisdom: A Feminist Lectionary and Psalter,* Crossroad, 1991.

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springs, clouded peaks and pastured hills, caves and forests. YHWH is comfortable in nature, appearing to Abram under oak trees (Gen. 12:6f; 18:1), and later to Gideon (Jud. 6:11) and Elijah (I Kg. 19:4; see 13:14). The voice of this God comes to Moses from a burning bush (Ex. 3) and on a mountain top (Ex. 19); heroes of the community are "born" in rivers (Moses, Ex. 2:3) and buried under oak trees (Deborah, Gen. 35:8; Saul and his sons, I Sam. 31:13).

These ancient traditions portray a God who can and should be encountered through the creation. Abraham plants a tree and calls on the name of YHWH (Gen. 21:33). Torah enjoins the community to celebrate God and the harvest by dancing while waving branches from all the local trees (Lev. 23:40).

Jacob has a vision of heaven while sleeping in the desert, his head on a dreaming stone, and awakens exclaiming: Surely YHWH was in this place—and I did not know it! "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the House of God, the gate of heaven!" (Gen. 28:16-17).

Such ecstatic communion hardly bespeaks a "biblical hostility to nature."

The overlooked commandment of Ex. 20:24f cited at the outset of this article perhaps best reflects the nature spirituality of early Israel (see also Dt. 27:1-8). Thought by scholars to be one of the oldest literary strands in the Hebrew Bible, the instructions to build a simple altar of stone implies that nature is quite adequate as a setting for the worship of YHWH. Moreover, no work of human hands (much less technology) can "improve" on it. Thus Joshua seals the covenant of the people of Israel not only in the words of the Law, but also by taking a large stone, setting it up under an oak tree, and proclaiming: "See, this stone shall be a witness against us; For it has heard all the words of YHWH (Josh. 24:27).

The warning against building altars of "hewn stone," however, as an elaboration on the first two commandments of the Decalogue (Ex. 20:2-6), also represents the basis for the well-known biblical critique of idolatry.

Noah's Wife **by Meinrad Craighead**

It is important to note — particularly in light of the witch hunts of the medieval church — that most of the Bible's concern is with manufactured fetishes, not with pantheistic tendencies (see the classic polemic in Is. 44:9-20). This means that we ought to be much more suspicious of modern commodity fetishism than of contemporary neopaganism. Still, for ancient Israel, Canaanite shrines, which were often associated with local grottos or hilltops, represented the primary media of political and economic control by the Egyptian-allied city states. Insofar as Egypt and its Canaanite satellites had expropriated nature to serve the imperial ideology, the biblical injunction to worship the Creator and not the creation was a crucial form of resistance:

"When you look up to the heavens and see the sun, the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, do not be led astray and bow down to them and serve them, things that the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples everywhere under heaven. For YHWH has taken you and brought you out of the iron-smelter, out of Egypt."

The cosmos (which is to say, symbols believed to represent the gods of Egypt) was not something to "serve," but a gift of the true God to all people.

If idolatry is a problem, nature is not. In addition to talking bushes, listening stones and sacred trees, the Bible offers numerous paeans to a creation that reflects the glory of the Creator (most notably in Psalm 104 and Job 38-41). YHWH is imagined as a roaring lion (Hos. 11:10), a nursing eagle (Dt. 32:11) and an angry mother bear (Hos. 13:8). Some of the tribes seem to have animal totems: Joseph is "like an ox" and Gad "lives like a lion" (Dt. 33:17,20). And Israel's ritual life is in tune with the seasons (the harvest festivals of Lev. 23) and the rhythms of nature: "Raise a song, sound the tambourine, the sweet lyre with the harp; blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our festal day" (Ps. 81:3).

Nature, of course, can be an adversary. It is significant that Pharaoh's imperial civilization buckles under YHWH's siege of natural disasters (the "plagues" of Ex. 7-10). As in all tribal societies, there are tales of dangerous adventures with wild animals, from Jonah's whale to Daniel's lions. But there are also surprising attempts to constrain the ecocidal tendency of fallen human beings, who in our insecurity try to "tame" nature. Examples are

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the Deuteronomist's prohibition of eating both mother and young birds that have been hunted as game (Dt. 22:6), or the remarkable rule of warfare: "If you besiege a town for a long time, you must not destroy its trees. Are trees in the field human beings that they should come under siege from you?" (Dt. 20:19-20). The Hebrew prophets, meanwhile, recognized that the natural world was out of balance, and envisioned the reconciliation of creation, as in Isaiah's famous vision of peace between wolves and lambs and between cows and bears (Is 11:6-9).

Also part of the biblical story is Israel's abandonment of the spirituality of the unhewn stone (along with many of the other characteristics of its wilderness faith). Under David, Israel aspires to "civilization," and Solomon builds a massive temple. The narrator reports (no doubt ironically) that this institutional cultic edifice has a massive foundation made of "dressed stone" cut by slave labor (I Kg. 5:13-18). Yet this sanctuary, however much a departure from the wilderness altar of Jacob's dream, was nevertheless richly adorned with nature symbols, such as carvings of local flora (I Kg. 6:18,29) and fauna (7:29).

The Jesus story introduces a prophet who is enlightened after ritual immersion in a river, and who then seeks to reanimate the liberation journey into the wilderness by embarking on a kind of vision quest (Mt. 3:13-4:11). As in the Old Story, significant gospel moments occur atop a mountain (Mk. 9:2-9) and on the sea (Mk. 4:35-41), in fields (Mk. 2:23-27) and gardens (Jn. 18:1). Jesus invites us to learn about reality from seeds (Mk. 4), trees (Mk. 13:28), birds (Lk. 12:24) and rain (Mt. 5:45). Indeed, Jesus intensifies the ancient biblical struggle between nature and civilization in his observations about the "great economy" of creation (Lk. 12:22-31).

"Consider the lilies, how they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these" (12:27). Often trivialized as some benign "St. Francis" moment, this text is utterly subversive if Jesus means what he says: namely, that the apex of Israelite national power (that hewn-stone Temple of imperial Solomon) was, in the eyes of God, of less consequence than one wild flower!

The far more formidable enemy of the land is global capitalism itself, which demands the objectification and commodification of nature.

These few texts suggest that the Bible can hardly be accused of promoting contempt for the natural world. The fact remains, of course, that the church in the modern era has fallen prey to the "perverted gospel" (Gal. 1:7) of a technological capitalism that values forests primarily in terms of board-feet, rivers in terms of gigawatts and mountains in terms of ski resorts. It is hardly surprising therefore that so many of those who are struggling to reconnect with nature and defend the environment have turned to so-called "new cosmologies" and neo-paganism (so-called because in fact they are quite ancient). I understand the reaction; I just don't think it is helpful or even accurate to blame the Judeo-Christian tradition for the present global ecological crisis. The fact that modern Christianity danced around the golden calf of Progress while abandoning its own roots in the land-based culture of the Bible makes the church a legitimate target, if an easy one. But is it the right culprit?

The far more formidable enemy of the land is global capitalism itself, which demands the objectification and commodification of nature in ways that the pre-capitalist Judeo-Christian tradition simply never could have. Christianity may have been complicit in the ascendancy of capitalism in the 18th and 19th centuries, but as the 20th century has shown, Christianity has also been one of secularized capitalism's victims. This is not to excuse the church, but rather to suggest that Christians must take a hard look at the Faustian bargain we made with capitalist modernity.

Fortunately, calls to move from the notion of domination over to stewardship of the earth are now increasingly common in Christian theologies, stressing the inherent value of creation over its utility. We should listen to the "deep ecology" philosophers as well as to the eclectic "creation spirituality" movement in our attempts to recover earth symbols and spirit in the church. At the same time, we must ensure that this new orientation inspires concrete politico-economic struggle in defense of the land, and not merely flight from alienation into suburban nature-mysticism (a trend in creation spirituality threatening to make it nothing more or less than the contemporary equivalent of 19th century bourgeois transcendentalism).

In the long run, we Christians probably do not need to seek a new cosmology so much as to re-claim the biblical one (David Abram's brilliant *The Spell of the Sensuous* argues that traditional cosmologies were more properly earth-centered than our modern one and should be reconsidered). It is the mechanistic, instrumentalist worldview of capitalist modernity that has put us at war with creation, not the Bible. A re-grounding in biblical nature-spirituality will give us eyes to see, like John of Patmos, that the true "city of God" is a place where the river of Life runs right down Main Street, and where the Tree of Life erupts right through the asphalt, for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22:1-2). TW

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GM vs. Microsoft

At a recent computer expo (COMDEX), Bill Gates reportedly compared the computer industry with the auto industry and stated: "If GM had kept up with technology like the computer industry has, we would all be driving $25 dollar cars that got 1,000 miles to the gallon."

This response to Gate's comments [here abbreviated] soon began circulating on the Internet:

If GM had developed technology like Microsoft, we would all be driving cars with the following characteristics:

1. For no reason whatsoever your car would crash twice a day.

2. Every time they repainted the lines on the road you would have to buy a new car.

3. Occasionally your car would die on the freeway for no reason, and you would just accept this, restart, and drive on.

4. Occasionally, executing a maneuver such as a left turn would cause your car to shut down and refuse to restart, in which case you would have to re-install the engine.

5. The oil, water temperature and alternator warning lights would be replaced by a single "general car fault" warning light.

6.The airbag system would say "Are you sure?" before going off.

7. Occasionally, for no reason whatsoever, your car would lock you out and refuse to let you in until you simultaneously lifted the door handle, turned the key, and grabbed hold of the radio antenna.

8. GM would require all car buyers to also purchase a deluxe set of Rand McNally road maps (now a GM subsidiary), even though they neither need them nor want them. Attempting to delete this option would immediately cause the car's performance to diminish by 50 percent or more. Moreover, GM would become a target for investigation by the Justice Department.

9. Every time GM introduced a new model car buyers would have to learn how to drive all over again because none of the controls would operate in the same manner as the old car.

— Morrie Kleinplatz

Pirate radio and the FCC

Although the FCC is aggressively enforcing the law banning low-power community radio stations, averaging two arrests a week nationally, Kate Duncan reports that the federal agency has finally recognized that the radio pirates of the microbroadcasting movement are addressing a real problem: "In a recent Radio World interview, FCC chairman William Kennard stated that '[microbroadcasters] have a legitimate issue in that there are, in some communities, no outlets for expression on the airwaves, and I believe that is a function, in part, of the massive consolidation that we are seeing in the broadcast industry.'"

Up until this point, media accounts have given pirate radio's struggle for community-based broadcasting what Duncan calls "an underdog 'David and Goliath' spin." But since Kennard has said he is "receptive" to discussing possible models for legal microbroadcasting, Duncan writes, "the microbroadcasting movement is taking a turn. 'The FCC has suffered at our hands up to this point because they refused to be reasonable,' says Pete TriDish [of Radio Mutiny]. Hence, the sympathetic public and press. But, continues TriDish, 'a likely scenario is that in the next few months the FCC will offer something that the press thinks looks okay, but will be grossly inadequate and bureaucratic. Some in our movement may grovel for the scraps and start going through the legalization process, and will ultimately get little or nothing out of it.'"

Duncan points out that microbroadcasters are divided on their aims. Some, like Steal This Radio, are pushing for constitutional protection for all broadcasting under 100 watts. Others want some form of low-watt licensing or general decriminalization of low-power broadcasting.

Duncan believes that if the FCC approves anything, it will likely be a compromise between microbroadcasters' demands, pressure from the National Association of Broadcasters to protect their market dominance and the belief that high-power stations reach the most people and therefore best serve the public interest. A one-watt license, "nine watts less than the one they abolished in 1978 and far less than most microbroadcasters' power," might be the unhappy result. TriDish and others say what is needed now is a movement "strong enough to reject, with solidarity, a bad offer from the FCC and continue to defy the law until we get a fair settlement."

***— Z Magazine*, 7-8/98**

A devil gets a halo

Items bearing the logo of the Blue Devils of Duke University, one of the most popular names in sports, bring in some $20 million a year into that university's coffers. When a group of Duke students called Students Against Sweatshops protested contracts with manufacturers, such as Nike, who have a history of exploiting the labor teenage Asian girls, they eventually won the day.

"The university's head of marketing now says, 'We cannot tolerate having the sweat and tears of abused exploited workers mixed with the fabric of the products which bear our trademarks,'" reports commentator Jim Hightower.

"Not only has Duke adopted a 'no sweatshop' code of conduct for its suppliers but, much more significantly, it provides for a tough enforcement mechanism. To sell to Duke, Nike and the rest must open their factories to Duke-financed, independent inspectors."

***— Detroit Sunday Journal*, 8/16/98**

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Pollution is political

by Camille Colatosti

"It's not uncommon for me to miss at least one day a week because I'm overall sick," says Ellen Phillips, a city councilperson in Hamtramck, Mich., an urban community located in the heart of Detroit. Phillips, like many people today, suffers from environmental illness. Her world — and the pollution in it — makes her sick.

On a bad day, she feels as if she has a severe cold. Her head is congested. Her eyes and ears hurt. Her face is swollen and may hurt. "Cognitively, I can't focus well," says Phillips. "I have an overwhelming feeling of sickness."

Phillips' problems seem to have begun from what is now termed "sick building syndrome." She first noticed her symptoms when she attended Wayne State University in Detroit. "In certain classrooms," she says, "I would have headaches which would lead to sinus infections and perpetual congestion. These symptoms increased to the point where I was getting sick all the time. Then I developed asthma, and I noticed that different cleaning solutions or even perfume would set off a reaction."

Sick building syndrome is an illness resulting from tightly sealed, poorly ventilated buildings. Poor design leads to the entrapment of the chemicals used for cleaning, the gasses in carpets and furniture, and the pollutants spewed by office equipment such as copiers and computer printers.

The World Health Organization estimates that as many as 30 percent of new or newly renovated buildings, those constructed to be airtight to save on energy costs, cause these same symptoms. Especially disturbing are the results of a 1995 report by the U.S. Government Accounting Office. This concludes that approximately 25,000 or one-third of U.S. schools, serving more than 14 million students, may also qualify as "sick."

"Ultimately, everyone should join some environmental organization — local, state or national. It is virtually impossible for individuals to play a role pressuring corporations and legislation absent some organization that has the resources to do this."

— Lana Pollack

Phillips explains that "only in the past several years has there been a body of material coming together and physicians who recognize that there is environmental illness going on. I do feel sort of like I am a canary. My reaction is a warning that we can't look at hazardous elements in isolation. Once you start combining things, we can't know the results."

To protect herself, Phillips tries to "live green." She's careful about what she buys. "The more natural the better," she says. She is especially cautious about household cleaners and warns against using products with chemicals. "Use borax, baking soda and vegetable-based soaps," she suggests. "Sometimes it makes it a little harder to clean, but it has been better for me and the environment."

Former Michigan State Senator Lana Pollack, now president of the Michigan Environmental Council, agrees that consumer practices are important. "The taste for big gas-burning vehicles, like sports utility vehicles, is harmful. About one-third of the environmental problems we face are from vehicular use."

She also warns people to watch their utility use. "I know people who keep their air conditioners at 70 or 72 degrees in the summer and their heat on 78 in the winter. This is just plain foolishness."

Still, Pollack believes that there is only a limited amount that individuals can do on their own. "Ultimately, everyone should join some environmental organization — local, state or national," she says. "People need to get more information than they can ferret out of the daily paper. It is also virtually impossible for individuals to play a role pressuring corporations and legislation absent some organization that has the resources to do this."

Pollution is ultimately a political problem, not a scientific one, says Pollack. Scientists understand the effects of pollution, she argues. Alternatives are often available that will protect the environment. But these are not embraced by the people capable of making changes — owners of corporations and government officials.

Lead poisoning

To illustrate her point, Pollack points to lead poisoning — the most serious environmental threat to young children in the U. S. today. Such poisoning, she says, is entirely preventable. "We know where lead poisoning is coming from, and we know how it affects children behaviorally and developmentally, but we still have exposures." The lead that affects children comes not only from paint, but also from lead-contaminated soil. Urban areas are at greatest risk from soil contaminated with

Camille Colatosti is an environmental activist in Hamtramck, Mich., and teaches English at Detroit College of Business. Cartoonist **John Jonik** lives in Philadelphia, Penn.

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lead from paint, gasoline and industrial sources. About 20 percent of all lead exposure comes from drinking water. Lead leaches into water from lead-bearing materials in home plumbing and municipal distribution systems.

The Environmental Protection Agency, the federal agency put in place to protect people from the dangers of pollution, estimates that 15 percent of all children under age six have blood lead levels higher than the 10 milligrams per deciliter considered "acceptable." Yet, even lower levels may cause problems such as subtle brain damage. Children who have been exposed to lead have I.Q.s six points lower than average. Exposure also elevates blood pressure and increases the risk of heart disease and stroke. It may also damage the male reproductive system.

"We put lead in the environment; we should be able to take it out," says Herbert Needleman, a professor of psychiatry and pediatrics at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, and co-author of *Raising Children Toxic Free.*

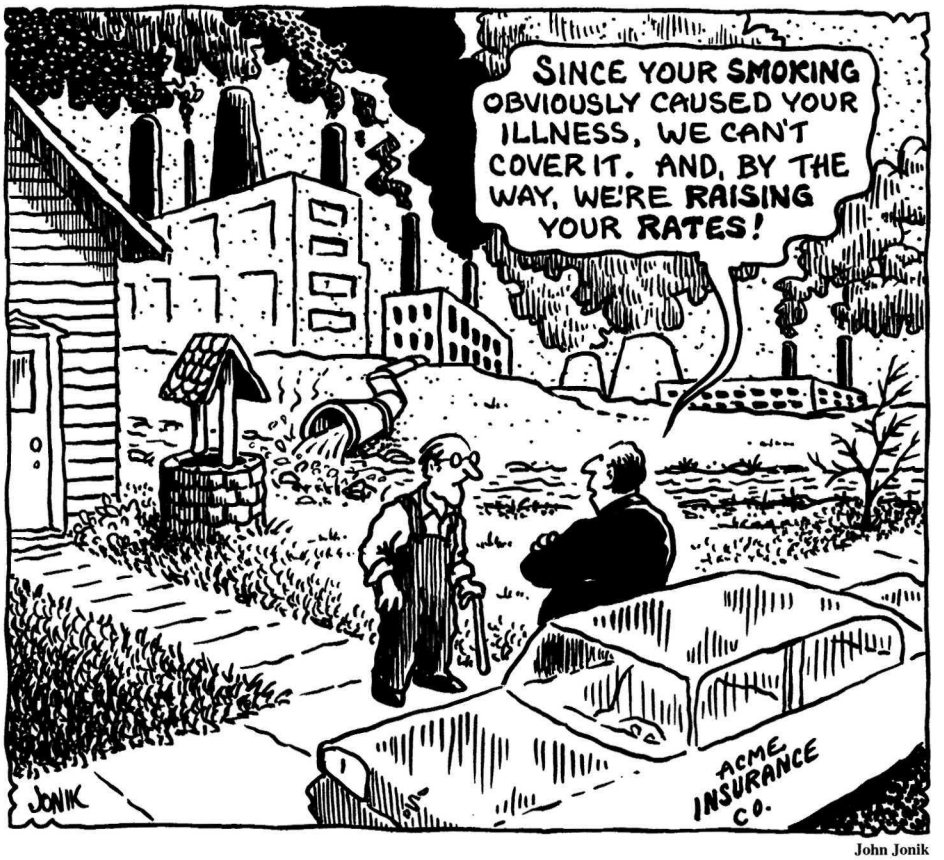
Why has society been so slow and done so little to address the lead problem? "First," Needleman explains, "is the belief that lead is an inner-city problem; second, the notion that it is the mother's fault; third, the belief that the problem was solved with removal of lead from gasoline and paint; fourth, the disinterest of academic pediatricians; fifth, the activity of the lead industry; sixth, the neglect of government enforcement agencies; and, seventh, the belief that the problem is too large to handle."

Pollack is more direct in explaining our inability to stop lead poisoning. "We still have lead exposures because we haven't spent the money needed to abate lead. This has nothing to do with medicine or science, and everything to do with economics."

Environmental racism

"Environmentalists and people of good will," says Pollack, "very often don't want to be involved in politics. But a political system in a free society is really the only place where these issues get mediated. The reason we're in such a pickle is that the special interest groups who want to make a fast buck are not showing a responsibility to the community. It takes political pressure to force these companies to be responsible."

Craig Harvey of the Green Party agrees. As he sees pollution, "It's all about money, and most of that money comes from the rich and the even richer corporations, with the prime interest of furthering their power and control, with the resulting ever-increasing gap between the rich and the poor."



John Jonik

Since the mid-1980s, it has become increasingly apparent that the worst pollution exists in poor and minority neighborhoods, in neighborhoods whose residents seem to lack political clout. Environmental racism is the term used to explain why most incinerators, hazardous waste sites and industrial polluters are located in poor, often minority, communities. More than a decade ago, in 1987, a study conducted by the United Church of Christ concluded that in communities with two or more commercial hazardous waste facilities, the number of minorities was three times higher than in communities without hazardous waste facilities.

A 1992 study by Paul Mohai and Bunyan Bryant, two University of Michigan professors in the School of Natural Resources, found that the closer homes are to a polluter, the more likely it is that the residents are minorities. For instance, a survey of three Michigan counties found that 48 percent of those living within a mile of a hazardous waste facility are minorities.

The location of hazardous facilities in minority communities has spurred devel-

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opment of an environmental justice movement, an alliance of civil rights and environmental activists working to ensure that everyone has access to clean water, air and land.

In 1994, President Clinton validated the cause of environmental racism when he issued an executive order directing the EPA to protect minority communities from pollution. The order, based on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, emphasized that federally regulated programs that affect "human health or the environment" cannot discriminate on the basis of race, color or national origin.

Unfortunately, the executive order has had little impact. Receiving over 50 environmental racism complaints in the past five years, the EPA has not yet acted on any of them. Thirty-two have been dismissed and 18 remain under investigation.

EPA:
Environmental Protection Agency or Every Permit Approved?

Why has the executive order been so ineffective? Many activists believe that the fault lies in the EPA itself. They accuse the EPA and state environmental agencies of shirking their responsibilities to inform and protect the public.

Denise Lee is an activist in Stanly County, N.C., who has been fighting for more than 10 years to close Carolina Solite, a manufacturer that burns chlorinated solvents and other hazardous waste as fuel.

Lee notes that "as recently as June 1998, Solite could not demonstrate they complied with toxic emissions standards. Yet the state issued the company a new permit, which allows it to emit over six million pounds of annual air pollution, including nearly one ton of mercury and unknown amounts of dioxin." For Lee, "EPA does not stand for Environmental Protection Agency, but for Every Permit Approved."

The Solite example is not unique. Community after community can point to a plant or incinerator that emits chemicals that exceed EPA standards and yet remains in operation. In Hamtramck, Michigan, for instance, the largest medical waste incinerator in the region has never met the pollution emission guidelines identified in its operating permit. Yet, in the incinerator's seven year history, the state has not forced it to close. Why not?

For Rob Cedar, organizer of the Hamtramck Environmental Action Team, the grassroots group working to shut down the medical waste incinerator, the answer reveals another failure of the EPA. Just as the agency seems unable to protect people from the dangers of known environmental pollutants, like lead, it is also incapable of reacting to emerging scientific data. The dangers of dioxin, one of the chemicals released in waste incineration, have not been fully explored. "Yet," says Cedar, "they may be some of the scariest stuff out there."

"We need to rethink the process or the product so that we create fewer pollutants in the first place."
— Tracey Easthope

Dioxins

Dioxin is the common name given to a group of persistent, toxic chemicals known as "organochlorines," including DDT, and PCBs. With no commercial use of its own, dioxin is an unwanted by-product of industrial processes that combust chlorine. The production of pesticides, plastics, solvents, dyes, and paper all yield dioxin. Another large source of dioxin results from garbage and medical waste incineration.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer links dioxin to liver, lung, stomach, and soft and connective tissue cancers. Dioxin exposure also causes reproductive and developmental defects, damages the immune system and disrupts hormones. As Pollack explains, "Hormones are the gatekeepers of everything."

The damage caused by dioxins and other "endocrine disrupters" is clear in animal life. "We are seeing frogs disappear," says Pollack. "We are also seeing testicular malformation in many animals, especially alligators. In humans, we are seeing estrogen mimics—chemicals that act like estrogen. It is thought, though not fully understood, that the dropping age of the onset of puberty in girls is caused by this. Even girls as young as four, five and six are reaching puberty. And this may be caused by exposure to chemicals."

According to activist Lois Marie Gibbs, a housewife from Love Canal, N.Y., the site of one of the first known and most horrible dioxin exposures in this country, dioxin does not go away easily, and it affects everyone. As she explains, "The dioxin that begins in the incinerators in Detroit and the pulp mills of Maine ends up contaminating the food that all of us eat."

Dioxin in the air settles onto soil, water and plant surfaces. It accumulates in grazing animals. People then ingest dioxin from meat, fish, and dairy products. It is believed that over 90 percent of human exposure to dioxin comes through foods derived from animals. The June 1998 issue of *Consumer Reports* included dioxin test results on baby food that contains meat. The tests found that a baby who eats one 2.5 ounce jar of any meat-containing baby food receives nearly 100 times the EPA's daily standard for "safe" dioxin exposure.

"To see any dioxin exposure as 'safe' is extremely doubtful," says Cedar. Like many environmentalists, he questions the EPA practice of setting so-called "safe" pollution standards.

Nevertheless, to ensure that polluters contain emissions to so-called "safe" levels, the EPA does require industry to provide annual "Toxic Inventory Release" information. That is, industry must report

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on the toxic chemicals it releases into the environment. However, industries do not need to report on all toxic chemicals that they use, only on those that are released in sufficient quantity. Likewise, small manufacturers are not required to report emissions.

The EPA does make this information available to the public. In fact, you can access it from the EPA's web site (<www.epa.gov>). By typing in your zip code, you can learn about the emissions that come from the biggest polluters in your neighborhood. Unfortunately, the information is not current. The EPA only recently released statistics from 1996.

Pollution prevention

Despite the weaknesses of the EPA, many environmental activists believe that regulatory agencies, no matter how good their mandate and how sincere their efforts, cannot solve the pollution problem. For real improvements to occur, they argue, we have to stop thinking about controlling pollution and instead concentrate on preventing it in the first place.

Tracey Easthope, the director of the environmental health project of the Ecology Center in Ann Arbor, Mich., explains. "The way that we normally regulate industry and chemicals is by saying, 'How many cancers—and the EPA looks just at cancers caused by chemicals, not other health effects—are we willing to take?' Currently, the EPA says that one cancer for every 100,000 people is acceptable. (The standards used to permit only one for every one million people.)"

The cancer rate used to regulate pollution, then, is based on one compound coming from one facility. This means that the state or federal regulatory agency looks at each facility, and each compound from that facility, in isolation. The agency asks, how many cancers will be caused by that one compound? The answer determines the regulation.

"This method ignores a basic fact," says Easthope. "The risks of contamination are cumulative. People may not get cancer from one compound from one factory, but there may be a few problems in a community and these all impact people. There may be problems in your water, something in your indoor air, a few facilities in your neighborhood, and then you go to the gas station and breathe the fumes. All of these pollutants affect you."

Because regulatory agencies permit each facility in isolation from its surroundings, explains Easthope, "they look at what can be allowed out the end of the stack. The environmental regulatory solution has been to smack some sort of control device at the end of the stack so that it reduces what comes out, but we've still got that filtered stuff."

Instead of pollution control, we need pollution prevention, says Easthope. "We need to rethink the process or the product so that we create fewer pollutants in the first place."

She compares the pollution problem to a bathtub that is overflowing. "Some people might take a bucket and empty the tub, bucket by bucket, while water from the tap still pours in. But most people would go to the faucet and turn the water off. This is what we need to do. If a company, for example, uses mercury in a switch, we need to see if there is another device that serves that same purpose and does not require mercury. Incineration of medical waste is another good example. Right now, regulatory agencies try to control the dioxins that are released through incineration. But there are alternatives to incineration that don't create dioxins. So the solution should be to re-think the process and stop all incineration."

She continues, "Pollution prevention is upfront preventative thinking. Instead of thinking of how much we can take, we need to think about what we can avoid. We must stop accepting the unacceptable and start avoiding what is unnecessary." TW

For more information:

- *Raising Children Toxic Free: How to Keep Your Child Safe from Lead, Asbestos, Pesticides and Other Environmental Hazards,* by Herbert L.Needleman and Philip Landrigan (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1994).
- Harmony Corporation offers a number of recycled, alternative and green household products. For a catalogue, contact the company at 360 Interlocken Boulevard, Suite 300, Broomfield, CO 80021; 800/869-3446.
- HSH Associates, a publisher of mortgage and consumer loan information, supplies fact sheets about environmental hazards in the home. This information can be found on the web (<www.hsh.com>) and includes home-buying considerations, with a special focus on researching the risks of radon, asbestos and lead.
- You can purchase an EPA- or state-approved radon testing kit at your local hardware store. You may also get free information from the National Safety Council, at 800-SOS-RADON.
- The Children's Environmental Health Network provides information about environmental risks to children, <www.cehn.org.>
- See also the web site of the Environmental Protection Agency (<www.epa.gov>). This site provides access to the Toxic Inventory Release, an annual listing of the chemicals that industries release into the environment. You can research the TIR for your zip code. Unfortunately, the most current TIR is at least two years old.
- The Environmental Defense Fund is a national non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the environmental rights of all people, <www.edf.org>.

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Evangelicals and the environment

by Mark Walden

Many have been surprised by the growing number of evangelicals, both leaders and laity, responding to the biblical mandate to care for the earth. This movement has matured to include publications, training programs, political action and more, but it's not been an easy path. The dilemma of evangelical environmentalism — preferably, "creation care" — can be boiled down to the title of preacher and professor Tony Campolo's 1992 book: *How to Rescue the Earth Without Worshipping Nature.*

Two challenges in particular face the movement. Probably the more difficult is the need to distinguish creation care from the theological unorthodoxies of secular or New Age environmentalism. Evangelicals tend to be concerned about clearly maintaining God's sovereignty, and balk — at best — at language about "Gaia" or "Mother Earth" that threatens the distinction between Creator and creation. One solidly evangelical speaker and writer I know of had to ask that she be removed from any environmental mailing or contact lists because the word was going around that she had "gone New Age." Creation care advocates thus make very sure they are clear about their biblical grounding and avoid referencing such divergent thinkers as Thomas Berry, Rosemary Radford Reuther, or Matthew Fox; more acceptable are farmer and writer Wendell Berry, who last year had a pro-life article in the Sierra Club's magazine, and Wes Granberg-Michaelson, General Secretary of the Reformed Church in America.

Evangelicals concerned about the health of creation also face the apocalyptic attitude that, since this world is temporary, the saving of souls trumps the saving of species as a priority. Thankfully, the biblical treatment of the issue addresses this false dichotomy fairly clearly. Careful scholarship has been done on the stewardship role assigned to humanity in creation, and University of Wisconsin professor Cal DeWitt (recently profiled in *Christianity Today* for his work in creation care) has spoken widely about Noah's ark as the biblical precedent for the Endangered Species Act. While the naysayers keep publishing, creation care advocates seem to be on ever-more-solid ground.

One evangelical writer had to ask that she be removed from any environmental mailing or contact lists because the word was going around that she had "gone New Age."

While it has grown significantly in the 1990s, the creation care movement among evangelicals can be traced back a few decades. Francis Schaeffer's book *Pollution and the Death of Man* (1970) was among the first in what is now a burgeoning field of literature. Cal DeWitt has directed the Au Sable Institute, an environmental studies center in Mancelona, Mich., since 1979; each year it trains over 5,000 school-age and college students, as well as members of the surrounding community, in field ecology and environmental stewardship.

Creation care has long been part of the work of Christian relief and development organizations. Floresta, a Christian agency based in California, does tree-planting work with local farmers to boost economic self-sufficiency in Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti (where they collaborate with an Episcopal priest). Target Earth works in 15 countries to study and address the relationship between environmental degradation and poverty. Bethel New Life, a community development corporation in Chicago, began its now well-established work with a recycling business.

Creation care among evangelicals is becoming more visible at all levels and in all areas in the U.S. Members of the evangelical Episcopal church of which I was a part in Minnesota began a community garden in a low-income area of St. Paul. Radio Bible Class is printing over 400,000 copies of a Bible study on creation care. The headquarters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, in Chicago, features rooftop gardens on its parking garage. The Pennsylvania-based Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN), part of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment,

Mark Walden works with the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education (SCUPE) in Chicago. Artist **Diana Bryer** lives in Michigan.

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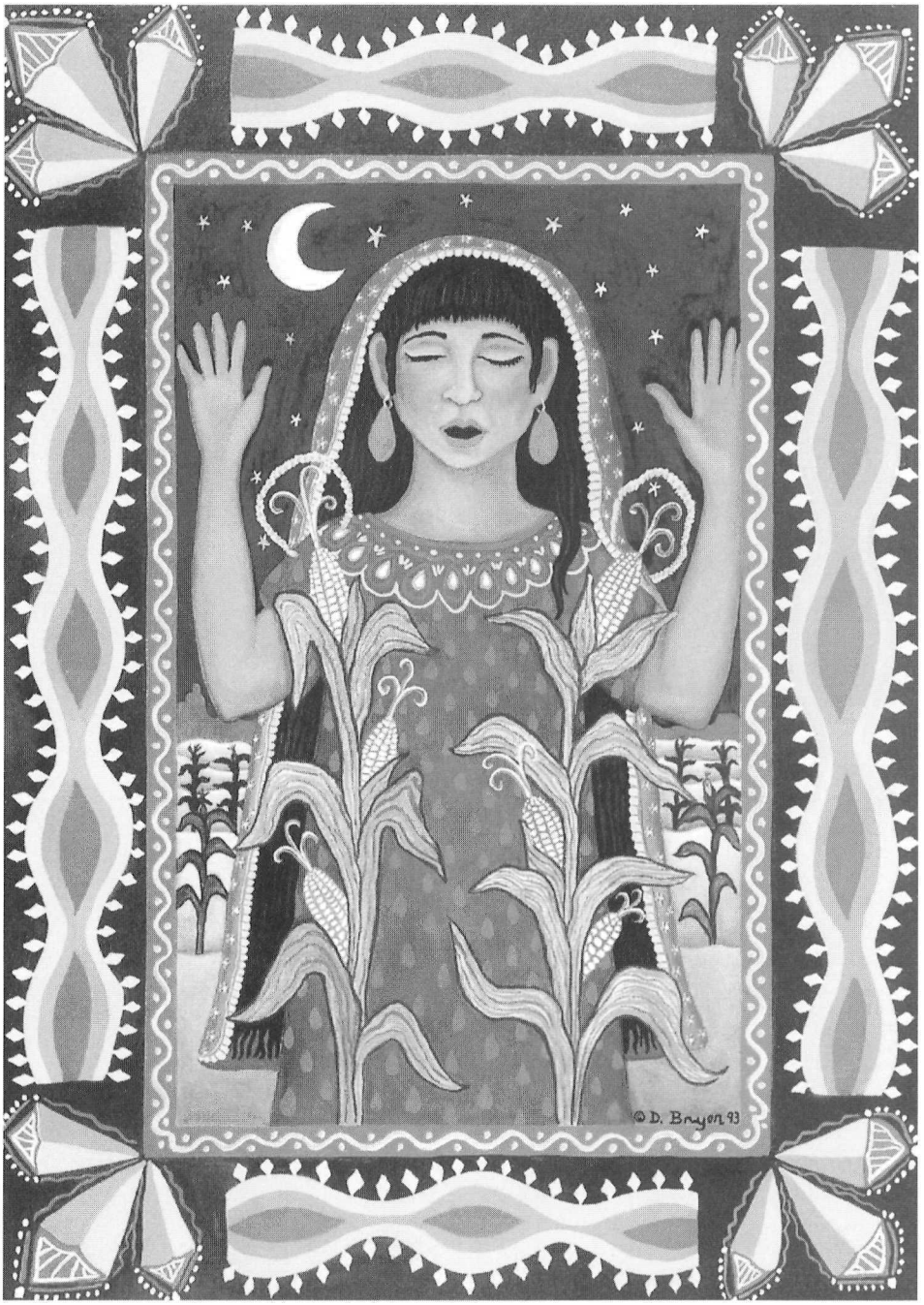
works with pastors fighting toxic sites in minority neighborhoods through its Amos Initiative. *Christianity Today* has had a conference, a cover article, and an essay contest on consumerism, and EEN publishes the quarterly journal *Creation Care.* The National Association of Evangelicals plans a conference on environmental issues for the spring of 1999. Evangelicals involved in domestic missions to college students, Wiccans, and others hope their own environmental concern and credibility will help spread the Christian gospel among environmentalists outside the church.

Evangelicals made the national news a few years ago when they lobbied successfully for preserving an effective Endangered Species Act. Peter L. Kelley, communications director of the National Environmental Trust in Washington, D.C. says "that was a critical point in the endangered species debate. The conservative Republicans, and others who joined them in the Contract for America, heard from one of the groups whose support they took for granted — namely, evangelical Christians — that they wanted God's creation protected, and that they saw a strong Endangered Species Act as the way to do that." Work on the political front goes on, currently in addressing private property rights and global climate change.

The work of education, biblical reflection, organizing and direct creation care continues, and even in sometimes rocky soil the message about creation care seems to be taking root. Says Michael Crook, Director of Grassroots Outreach for EEN, "We're in a time of slow and steady growth in the evangelical world. We're seeing constant reactions of surprise and gladness from evangelical Christians who already care about creation, but aren't hearing about stewardship from the pulpit unless it's about the church budget. Also, we're seeing glimmers of hope that the leadership of very significant evangelical constituencies are seeing the rightness of creation care."



Blessing the corn **by Diana Bryer. The spirituality in this art can strike fear in some hearts.**

Adds Stan LeQuire, EEN Director, "We hope that our efforts in the area of creation's care will revitalize worship in evangelical churches as Christians rediscover that Jesus is truly Lord of all, including creation itself." TW

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Native traditions; Christian fear

by Steven Charleston

It was during the General Convention in Phoenix that I first understood the depth of anxiety some Christians have about worship with Native Americans. Two dioceses were jointly welcoming us to Phoenix, Arizona and Navajoland. Due to the nature of this partnership the convention planners sought to integrate Navajo spirituality and culture into the gathering. The symbol for the convention was drawn from Navajo images of sky and Earth. The worship experiences were interwoven with the spiritual fabric of the Navajo People, including the presence and participation of Navajo religious leaders who blessed our event and called for us "to walk in beauty" one with another.

It was the presence of Navajo elders that seemed to cause the confusion. Using abstract symbols was one thing, but somehow the active presence of a Navajo elder, praying in the Navajo traditional manner with a prominent role during Christian worship, was too much. The "medicine man's" prayer became a liturgical lightning rod, attracting flashes of anger and distrust from those unfamiliar with Navajo culture. There were questions raised during the convention about the appropriateness of this kind of inter-cultural/ inter-religious celebration. What was the elder really saying in his prayer? Was he invoking pagan gods from the earth? Could we accept a blessing from a religious figure outside the Christian community? Harsher critics went further: They implied that mixing Navajo spirituality with Christian worship was syncretism at best or heresy at worst. Critics argued that it was wrong to allow Native American medicine people to mix their traditional ways into Christian liturgy because, as benign as it might seem on the surface, there were deep theological currents between the two religions which should never mingle for fear of watering down the Christian message.

The irony of this fear is that far from "watering down" the Christian message, traditional Native American theology supports the Gospel by offering us a vision of the Earth which celebrates God's incarnate love in creation. Native theology gives us a vocabulary that allows us to speak of an intimate relationship with the Earth. This relationship deepens our Christian understanding of stewardship by grounding it in the same personal love that Christ commands for human interactions. Our obligation, therefore, is not only to love one another as Christ loved us, but also to love all life in exactly the same way. While it may sound strange to Western ears, attuned to more sterile scientific descriptions of the Earth, the passionate accent of Native America speaks personally about the family bond which unites all of the creatures whom God has parented. That bond is a love lived out in the same terms as human relationships: with respect, with compassion, and with devotion. In other words, we can fall in love with the Earth just as the Earth loves us each and every day.

Far from "watering down" the Christian message, traditional Native American theology supports the Gospel by offering us a vision of the Earth which celebrates God's incarnate love in creation.

In my own experience, this single recognition of intimacy with the Earth is one of the most profound gifts Native People have to offer to the Christian faith. As a child I would sit in Sunday schools and never hear of the Earth. As an adolescent I found the Christian teaching on stewardship of the Earth already watered down because it was so thin in its theology: The church struggled to express a creational theology that sounded more like the gospel of love than an article in *Scientific American.* As an adult I have witnessed the renewal and energy that Native thought brings to Christian communities when they accept a more personal relationship with the natural world around them. These communities, taking the risk of both hearing and speaking in personal ways about their connection to the Earth, suddenly discover what Saint Paul means when he says that Christ came not only to deliver humanity but all of creation into the joy of God's redemption. And yet, there are still moments like Phoenix, moments when some Christians draw back from the invitation of Native People and retreat into a suspicion of any language that speaks of the Earth as a living embodiment of God's love. Perhaps the distrust of the Navajo elder betrays a deeper rift in the Western psyche: the religious autism of a

Steven Charleston is Episcopal Chaplain at Trinity College in Hartford, Conn. He is the former Bishop of Alaska.

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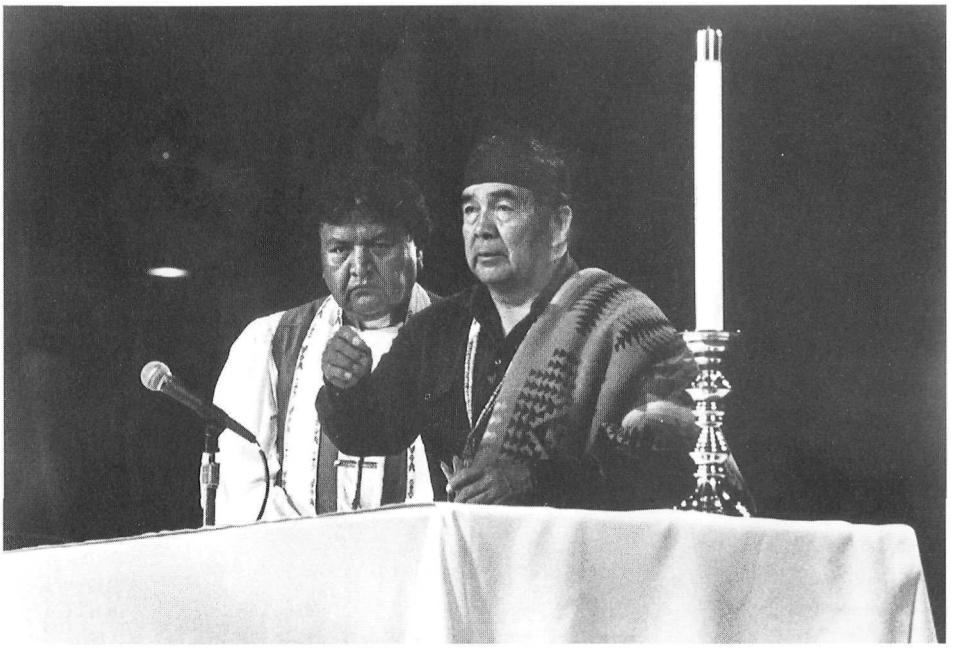
culture that cannot express love for the Earth for fear of being loved in return.

Today I doubt that there are many people who still recall the debate about the "medicine man's" prayer in Phoenix. But I believe it is worth remembering because it illustrates a fundamental question regarding Christian worship: how far can we go? How far can we, as Christians, go in creating, planning, and carrying out liturgies that integrate us into cross-cultural/ inter-faith expressions of religion? How far can we go in incorporating the symbols, language, and theology of other traditions? How far can we go in welcoming the active presence of persons who may share our vision, but not our doctrine? And finally, how far can we go in praying with the earth before we are in scriptural jeopardy of praying to the Earth?

All of these questions are interconnected. They are also symbolic. They embody a tangible expression of the anxious efforts of any human community to identify itself by establishing limits. They define how far the people standing within the limits are willing to go in expressing their religious beliefs. These are not just theological or liturgical questions. They are boundary questions. They are lines we draw in the cultural sand around ourselves to identify who we are, what we believe, and why we consider some people to be within our circle and others to be "outsiders." Consequently, these are profoundly powerful questions because they represent our identity, our security, and our self-image. While these boundaries may be relatively quiet and unpatrolled during most of our lives, they emerge vividly in moments of conflict or uncertainty when the lines seem threatened. At Phoenix, when a Navajo elder took center stage and began to pray, he became a catalyst for



Navajo Alfred Yazzie of Fort Defiance blessed the 1991 Episcopal General Convention before the opening eucharist with "prayers of the blessing way." He was joined by Bishop Stephen Plummer of Navajoland. Greta Huls/ENS

fear because he seemed to be erasing the cultural lines which define the church for some Christians. He had crossed over. He had gone too far.

Was the fear justified? Had the Navajo man crossed over beyond the outer limits of our sense of Church?

Looking back, it seems strange to me that so much heat was generated over such a small gesture. In fact, the Navajo elder was praying to God for a blessing on our convention. It was hardly a quantum leap into the religious unknown. And yet, the negative reaction was felt by some because clearly this man had come into our circle from somewhere unfamiliar. He had spoken with an equally unfamiliar voice: words that were not easy to understand or translate; images that were slightly alien; a vision of the Earth that arose outside the Western tradition. Consequently, he had violated the invisible lines in the sand drawn around Phoenix, and by so doing, had appeared threatening simply because he was who he was.

Is the stranger a threat or a blessing? Consider this Christian view: the Bible bids us to always practice hospitality toward the stranger. Why? The reason is deeper than just having good manners. The ancient wisdom which gave birth to our modern faith understood a fundamental reality of human culture: isolated communities atrophy while open communities grow.

Welcoming the unknown is a risk worth taking because the rewards of renewal are so rich and sustaining. The Phoenix convention would have been diminished without the presence of the Navajo elder. If he had not been present, even though his presence made some of us uncomfortable, we would have missed receiving the gift he had to share. And that gift was nothing more than himself. It was not anything he may have said or done, it was not some secret knowledge from the mythic spiri-

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tuality of Native America: it was just him. Even if he had stood in silence he would have been eloquent in testimony. His presence alone witnessed to the truth, the truth that we Christians honor as the source of all doctrines and all creeds.

Real spiritual identity is not defined by erecting walls of doctrine to isolate believers and keep them pure. Christian identity emerges from an encounter with the truth. This is why Jesus so clearly described the Holy Spirit as the guide and counselor — because the Holy Spirit is the truth, not a static truth carved into stone, but a living truth that expresses itself in human encounters. Christian truth is more than a claim. It is a call. Theology is the search for this truth just as worship is its celebration. If we remain hidden, cloistered within the cultures we create for ourselves, then we will never fully engage this living truth, but only preserve its image, a kind of dim reflection of ourselves, a face in a faded photograph. But if we are willing to be alive to the truth, to welcome the stranger, to step out of our own familiar settings to encounter others, then we have a chance of discovering the truth in the journey we all share together.

How far can we go? We can go as far as we are willing to go together. We can go as far as the truth guides us. We can go as near to God as we can, celebrating God in all the Earth around us. And along the way, we can travel beside men and women of many cultures and many traditions. Their presence among us is not a threat, but a reminder; it calls us to humility and to curiosity. It enlivens our imagination and tests our limits. It invites us to learn and to grow. We must never be afraid as Christians to welcome the stranger even if it means standing on a line drawn in the sands of time. For in the end, our own spiritual identity will not be defined by the truths we have jealously guarded, but rather by the Truth we have welcomed in countless forms from journeys far beyond the borders of our wisdom. TW

The One who took such care in creating even the most minuscule of bugs with intricate, delicate wing patterns ...
... is certainly revealed as one in whom I can put my trust.

The One who knows when a sparrow falls, and the One who took such care to create such extraordinary diversity ...
... certainly must delight in our diversity as humans.

The One who can somehow hold together the molecular complexity of this mass of matter ...
... can certainly hold together the pieces of my life.

The One who creates with extravagant expressions of color, like the giant orange burst on the face of a toucan ...
... unveils humor at the source of creation.

That we could even have receptors capable of fathoming the beauty that awaits us in every micro and macro view of this world ...
... further reveals the benevolent nature of the Giver of Life.

Not a single molecule has been created with carelessness, but rather every minute expression of life reveals a spirit of loving care, joy, humor and at its very core ... an explosion of pure generosity!

The One whose signature is written all over this planet and beyond, is clearly the One of whom Jesus spoke ...
... the One worthy of all honor and glory and praise.

— Nancy Cannon

Witness study groups

Issues of *The Witness* are the perfect focus for study groups. Packets of eight copies (of one issue) and a study guide cost $25. Contact *The Witness*, 7000 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210-2872; 313-841-1967, 313-841-1956 (fax). VISA or Mastercard orders are accepted.

The following back issues of The Witness contain articles which may relate directly to Earth, or simply to the spirit of this month's topic:

- *The communion of saints (11/93)*
- *Fasting in Babylon (12/96)*
- *Resurrecting Land (4/95)*
- *Trickster spirit: a paradigm for social action? (7-8/98)*

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Who is my neighbor?

by Carolyn Irish

Carolyn T. Irish, Utah's bishop, espouses a theology that is thoroughly grounded in the earth. Her earliest understanding of evil was focused in a magazine picture of dead horses in World War II. As a child, she kept the photo under her bed trying to make sense of it. A Utah native, her appreciation of God's grandeur was nurtured by her love of the state's mountains.

"Who is my neighbor?" Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan to help people realize they had a too-limited idea of their neighbor, an idea based on likeness to themselves. The point of the parable is that our neighbor is whoever is in need, and we prove ourselves as neighbors in responding to that need.

We also have a too-limited idea of our neighbors. We use this term typically for other human creatures who live near us. But today the idea of spacial proximity must give way to the fact of the global village where we live; and the idea that humans can conduct their lives without regard for non-human neighbors must also give way to a larger and deeper sense of the community of creation.

Our neighbors — the soil, air and waters; the grasses, dunes and rain forests, the mollusks, warblers, and elephants — all are in trauma, not through their own failings, nor because God did not provide for them well, nor because of some particular thing recently gone wrong — but because the human species has not been a good neighbor to these non-human creatures. For generations, we have done billions of small (and sometimes big) things heedlessly, irreverently, selfishly — damaging and destroying millions of creatures and ecosystems within the great natural order that we profess as God's creation. Too much and too long, we have exploited and abused the conditions of our neighbors' life and health.

It will take as many billions of things done faithfully to restore all the small communities of nature that, together, sustain us and all other life on this planet. Faithfulness in creation means a willingness to begin now with these small tasks, as well as engagement with the larger moral, spiritual, and political issues facing our planet.

What can help us? Sometimes we wait for leaders to emerge. This is probably a misguided hope, however, for everywhere there is great investment in what is wrong: A person seeking to change that, or to confront us with the seriousness of our situation would likely be, if not crucified, at least not called, not elected. Perhaps it is not leaders we need anyway, but communities — faithful, caring, reverent and inclusive communities.

Our neighbors — the soil, air and waters; the grasses, dunes and rain forests, the mollusks, warblers, and elephants — all are in trauma.

How can our parishes become such communities? Inspiration and discernment is a responsibility we all share. A few people in each parish can make a great difference, and faithfulness there can "ripple out" to other family, civic, and work communities. Above all, we must not let ourselves be overwhelmed or paralyzed by the immensity of problems viewed abstractly, for small communities "grounded in love" are in fact ideally situated for the healing work that must be done. As the prophetic naturalist and poet, Wendell Berry, writes:

"Our understandable wish to preserve the planet must somehow be reduced to the scale of our competence—that is to the wish to preserve all of its humble households and neighborhoods.

"What can accomplish this reduction? I will say ... without overweening hope but with certainty nonetheless, that only love can do it. Only love can bring intelligence out of the institutions and organizations ... into the presence of the work that must be done. Love is never abstract. It does not adhere to the universe or the planet or the nation or the institution or the profession but to the singular sparrows of the street, the lilies of the field, 'the least of these my brethren' [sic]. Love is not, by its own desire, heroic. It is heroic only when compelled to be. It exists by its willingness to be anonymous, humble, and unrewarded.

"The older love becomes, the more clearly it understands its involvement in partiality, imperfection, suffering, and mortality. Even so, it longs for incarnation."

These words "have our name on them." Christians are people who profess love as the highest norm of their personal and common life, as the light and salt and bread of life. While we are not exactly front-runners in the environmental movement, as communities of love we have our contribution to make. As people who proclaim a Kingdom of God within and beyond this world, we may be heirs of the only vision or "economy" comprehensive enough for all God's creation. But good preachers must themselves incarnate good news; they prove themselves good neighbors before they try to reform others. Let us begin. TW

Carolyn Irish is Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Utah.

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Making a neo-pagan brew

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

Raised by two Episcopal priests, Sarah Chandler-Reed is in training as a Wiccan high priestess and is hoping that the work of today's neo-pagans will restore an ancient tradition to prominence. The church tradition that shaped her childhood couldn't hold her heart nor her intent as she became an adult.

"Both my parents were priests. My mother worked just as hard as my father, but she didn't get as much recognition, pay or respect. That's what first made me think that there was something wrong with the way the church had set up its hierarchy."

Chandler-Reed adds that she was also bothered by the image of God as "a vindictive punishing God" who cared primarily about rules.

"I personally didn't like to confess my sins every Sunday — whether or not I had sinned." Then, too, Chandler-Reed regretted that the Christian Church didn't recognize the earth in its liturgies. Chandler-Reed sees very little Christian respect for the earth. "There are church groups that go out and clean up parks, but the religion has nothing to do with it.

"The earth is what sustains us all. We live from the earth and we need to pay more attention. The earth is sacred."

After researching a variety of spiritual traditions, Chandler-Reed says she selected witchcraft because it is an earth-based tradition that integrates truths held by indigenous peoples around the world — truths like the power of "circles and fire and cycles."

Sarah Chandler-Reed

"I ended up kind of where I think my ancestors came from. I tripped on Wicca in a book initially. Traditional Wicca is very easily practiced by yourself. It doesn't require that you connect with other people. At the time I was living in New York City and feeling kind of xenophobic and it just made sense that I could practice by myself."

Now living in Massachusetts with her husband Peter and four-year-old daughter Haley, Sarah Chandler-Reed has sought out a coven with which to worship.

"What led me to join a coven as opposed to practicing solitary is that I missed the church," she explained. "I missed the community, having people of like mind."

A coven, Chandler-Reed explains, is a group of not more than 13 gathering regularly — on the "eight sabbaths" the solstices, the equinoxes and at the midpoints — and on the full moons to "raise energy" for particular purposes. Practicing "open trad," which means her coven feels free to adapt elements from other traditions into their worship, they honor the earth's cycles and worship the goddess, whom they address by many names.

"Living in cycles that my body was already doing by itself has brought me closer to the cycle everything has. If things look horrible, there's a cycle to it. It's going to get better. Everything has its positive and negative side. There's nothing that's all good or all bad.

"Wicca is an animistic religion. We believe trees have spirits and rocks and the earth itself. Everything is connected in the web. What could be more divine than that which sustains us? You can't act without affecting everyone in the web."

Which brings us back to sin. In Wicca, there is no emphasis on sin as such, but there's is an injunction, "Harm ye none, do as thou wilt."

In fact the process of self-examination and accounting for harm done is more exhaustive in Wicca than the weekly confession of sin in Christian churches.

As Chandler-Reed prepares to become a high priestess, she works at degrees within a process, the first degree being to deal with her own inner work. Only after she has passed through the first degree will she be trained in "group dynamics and directing the energy of others, which is very important because in a ritual we raise energy and then the high priestess directs it. It takes a very stable person to direct all the energy we raise."

Chandler-Reed meets once a week with the high priestess of her coven.

"You can't teach someone to find herself, but she's been very good at pointing out places where I could use some work. Taking responsibility for your own actions is a very big Wiccan thing. When I've hurt another member of the web, I need to figure out why and how to avoid that in the future. People who don't do that, don't last long in the Wiccan Church."

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is co-editor/publisher of *The Witness*, <jeanie@thewitness.org>.

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The openness of the process involved in reclaiming an ancient religion appeals to Chandler-Reed.

"What's kind of neat about this neo-pagan thing is that we are creating something hopefully that will be around for a while and trying to make this ancient religion work in a modern context."

Moving beyond fear and secrecy is critical to Chandler-Reed. (Her coven advertises on the Internet.) In fact in a class for new members, which Chandler-Reed calls Wicca 101, new members read about the history of witch persecutions and also study the current laws in their locale concerning public ritual.

"Hiding makes it feel like we're doing something wrong. I want to stay as above board as possible."

Chandler-Reed writes for neo-pagan publications and gives thought to Wicca's public image versus its actual content. She's well aware that witches are often imagined to be devil worshipers. As a result she has researched satanist practices so that she can be clear about the distinctions. She believes Satanism is a result of a fractured Christianity.

"We're not Satan worshipers. We don't burn babies. We don't do sacrifices. The roots of our religion predate any kind of mention of a devil at all. We don't believe in any supreme good or any supreme evil. We think everything is a mix. Satanism is more a reaction to the Christian movement. The fact that Satanists say the mass backwards is an indication that they're reacting towards Christianity more than trying to evolve on their own. It's more Christian than pagan. I feel the people who are Satanists are just really disgruntled with the world and have to find a way to make themselves feel powerful.

Asked about her coven's rituals, Chandler-Reed says that the full moon gatherings are presided over by a different woman each month, so they vary. But they always take into account the ebb and flow of the moon. Often witches will take the time of the dark of the moon to consider goals for the coming 28 days and will then raise up their experiences at the time of the full moon — "That's the time of increased energy when everything is at its peak.".

Asked about magic, Chandler-Reed described it as "praying with props." She will "charge an object with her intent" and then keep it as a reminder of the prayer. Secondly, she said that chanting, dancing and drumming help people reach an alpha state, a spiritual state in which she feels both detached and very alert to the energies around her. She believes that deep change is more possible in the alpha state.

Chandler-Reed selected witchcraft because it is an earth-based tradition that integrates truths held by indigenous peoples around the world — truths like the power of "circles and fire and cycles."

"It affects you deep down on a subconcious level, more than just repeating a daily affirmation or something on a more alert level."

Chandler-Reed's first ceremony was one of protection for her New York City apartment.

"It was a lot of cleansing and purification. I used salt in all the corners of the apartment. I marked with sage and made a talisman for the door. A lot of it has to do with making psychic tools, making things in the physical plane that will manifest change inside you. It kind of reduced my fear quotient is what it boils down to."

Now, when the coven "raises energy" for the high priestess to direct it's often in response to requests for healing. In fact, Chandler-Reed says she's thinking of creating an equivalent of a Roman Catholic "mass card" to let people know they've been mentioned in the circle.

"Magic to me is tapping into that energy, that web, that connects us all and using it to effect change either in ourselves or in our surroundings."

Chandler-Reed added that the most frequent prayer requests are for love and money, about which Wiccan folks are reluctant, partly out of concern for the ethics: Is it okay to cast a spell for one person to suddenly feel love struck by another? Many witches think not.

Asked if they direct energy toward world crises, like events in Bosnia, Chandler-Reed said their intentions are usually broader.

"We try to keep it more general, because it's all in cycles. We see the earth as a big organism and we're all cells. Things like Bosnia are like cancer in the body and they do need to be acknowledged and reckoned with, but we try to send out energy to promote the healing of the earth in general. If we concentrate on this one thing, then the forces that caused it aren't being reckoned with."

Reckoning with powerful forces seems to be at the heart of Chandler-Reed's interest in organizing Wicca, although she adds that folks drawn to Wicca are extremely independent and difficult to organize. "They say organizing pagans is like herding cats," she laughed.

"I went to a conference this year. The title was, "Pagan Community: an Oxymoron." We all sat down and tried to figure out what kind of common threads we held and also how we appear to other people. We decided it would be a good thing to have some people to talk for us and to be taken seriously as a religion. There was a Parliament of World Religions in the early 1990s and paganism was included. That was kind of a first step." TW

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Lambeth commentary

Sex, debt and God's new thing

by Julie A. Wortman

Anglicans will be digesting the numerous resolutions and other documents of the 1998 Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops for many months to come, but from the U.S. church's perspective it is immediately apparent that the big winners here were two very different, somewhat marginal, constituencies: the church's ultra-conservative Right wing and its radical Left. The Conference firmly endorsed the Right's positions on homosexuality (love — well, sort of — the sinner, but hate the sin) and women's ordination (bishops opposed to women clergy should not be forced to ordain any), while strongly ratifying and committing itself to the Left's Jubilee 2000 call for immediate debt relief for third-world nations.

Both groups owe these victories to the fact that the long-anticipated shift of power from the bishops in the West to the bishops of the South and East finally occurred. But only one group, the progressives, is going to enjoy any long-term benefit from this shift, however deliriously overjoyed the Right now feels about the bishops' vindication of biblical orthodoxy.

I say this not because I am a partnered lesbian committed to economic justice, though I'm not immune to the need to find some positive spin to put on the sexuality/women votes. I say this because I think even the bishops know that the sexuality vote was about straightforward church politics while the debt vote — made in the face of daunting anger and resistance from those who pull the world's purse strings — was a free-fall act of faith in God's life-giving power to do a new thing.

We must remember that when people invoke scriptural authority to bolster their positions — as the bishops did during the sexuality debate and in the resolution they passed — they are looking for a stop-gap way to prevent change. When this tactic works, it is usually because, although there may be plenty of discomfort with the traditional stance on the issue at hand, there may not yet be enough clarity about what should replace the old teaching to galvanize the shift. As my friend Verna Dozier is always reminding me, "God is not static; God is always moving on" — but we aren't always ready to follow.

For the bishops of the South/East, the morality of homosexual relationships is a throw-away issue. Their mostly evangelical upbringing, against a cultural background of patriarchy and, in many cases, within a climate of persecution, made the anti-gay, pro-conscience votes predictable — with or without the mentoring in political strategy offered by Western conservatives. The bishops of the South/East needed no justification except scriptural chapter and verse for a topic which occupies them so little — especially in the absence of a clearly articulated sexual ethic that goes beyond making uneasy, second-class room in the traditional ethic for gay people (Patricia Beattie Jung spoke about this at length at the Beyond Inclusion conference sponsored by All Saints church in Pasadena, Calif., in the Spring of 1997 — see *TW* 6/97). If anything, it was a miracle that the morality of homosexual relationships got the hearing it did in a communion where women have been bishops for less than 10 years and where only recently the number of member churches ordaining women topped the halfway mark.

Significantly, none of the bishops from the South or East felt the need to invoke the authority of Scripture in proclaiming God's overriding intention for a good creation in which "the healthy pattern for relationships is of mutual giving and receiving of God's gifts."

But for most of these same clerics, bone-crushing national debt is a matter of life and death. They and their people are dying because of the economic disorder of these times. Significantly, in this instance none felt the need to appeal to the authority of Scripture — nor is Scripture invoked in the debt resolution they passed — in proclaiming God's overriding intention (clear from the biblical witness taken as a whole) for a good creation in which "the healthy pattern for relationships is of mutual giving and receiving of God's gifts."

Importantly — and this is where they will expose themselves — despite their alliance with the South/East on the sexuality issue, it is unlikely the Right in the U.S. church will advocate strongly for enhanced Episcopal Church endorsement of Jubilee 2000 or actively

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

Vital Signs

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support the long struggle ahead for debt relief. Conservatives opposed the church's disinvestment in business concerns in apartheid South Africa in 1988 and they will not be prominent in the struggle to expose the fundamental evils of market capitalism now. Indeed, Stephen Noll, a member of the faculty at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Penn., who has tirelessly argued that homosexual relationships are immoral, openly scoffed during the plenary on debt, "Do they really think the clergy back home would welcome a cut in their pensions in exchange for debt relief?" To him, debt, unlike sex, apparently seemed a doubtful candidate for serious consideration back home.

Noll may be right, but taking on the debt relief issue — and wrestling with its immense implications for the church in the West, whether in terms of church investments, personal investments and spending habits or business practices — is perhaps one of the clearest opportunities the Episcopal Church and other mainline denominations today have to save themselves from irrelevancy. By acting in solidarity with the churches in the South and East on this issue we will have the opportunity to begin taking responsibility for ourselves as Christians in this consumerist, profit-obsessed culture. A stepped-up commitment to charitable support for "needy" overseas dioceses — as those on the Right are advocating in post-Lambeth commentaries — would be an outrageous, if all too likely, cop-out.

I care as much about this as I do about the church developing a sexual ethic that speaks to the realities of these times, based on a scriptural tradition that has life not in chapter and verse, but in its overriding themes of justice, love and mercy in human relationships and in our relationship to creation. Gay and lesbian people are still outsiders to power, it is true. The benefit in this is that we have a sustaining clarity about the source of our oppression. This is our life-and-death issue, and I do believe that when lives are on the line, God is always doing a new thing. Church politics will not be able to resist that for long.

A summary of resolutions passed by the 1998 Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops

Section 1 - "Called to full humanity"
This Conference:
1.1 affirms the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, urging extension of its provisions to refugees, uprooted and displaced persons.
1.2 calls upon all to promote and protect religious freedom and tolerance.
1.3 resolves that each member Church discover the ways women and children are affected and victimized by political, economic, educational, cultural or religious systems and work toward eliminating abuses.
1.4 commits its members to promoting active, non-violent means to end current conflicts and wars and to prevent others.
1.5 commits its members to working on behalf of uprooted and forcibly displaced persons, particularly through a revitalized Anglican Communion International Migrant and Refugee Network.
1.6 acknowledges the suffering of the people of Northern and Western Uganda as a result of continued civil war, and urges work for reconciliation, peace and justice in Uganda.
1.7 expresses its horror at the human disaster in the Sudan and Rwanda, and urges work with existing organizations to facilitate peace processes.
1.8 reaffirms the biblical vision that Creation is a web of interdependent relationships, recognizes that unless humans take responsibility for caring for the earth the consequences will be catastrophic, and prays for widespread conversion in order that humans will be restored to harmony with the rest of Creation.
1.9 calls upon all ecumenical partners and other faith communities, governments and transnational companies to work for sustainable society, the U.N. to incorporate the right of future generations to a sustainable future in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the appointment of a coordinator of an international ecological network within the Anglican Communion.
1.10 upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman, recognizes that some members of the Church have a homosexual orientation, rejects homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture, does not advise the legitimizing or blessing of same-sex unions, requests a means of monitoring work done on the subject of human sexuality in the Anglican Communion, and notes the significance of the Kuala Lumpur Statement on Human Sexuality.
1.11 calls on governments and the U.N. to urge all nations to agree to stop the production, testing, stock-piling and usage of nuclear weapons and to press for an international mandate to prohibit nuclear warfare.
1.12 calls for a commission on technology and ethics.
1.13 calls on all governments to sign and ratify the Ottawa Convention regarding landmines, to provide funding for landmine clearance, and to alleviate the consequence of landmine deployment.
1.14 resolves that euthanasia is neither compatible with the Christian faith nor should be permitted in civil legislation and distinguishes between euthanasia and withholding, withdrawing, declining or terminating excessive medical treatment and intervention, all of which may be consonant with Christian faith in enabling a person to die with dignity.
1.15 recognizes the destructive force of international debt and economic injustice; welcomes the framework provided by the Heavily Indebted Poor Country Initiative (HIPC) of 1996, particularly the approach of bringing all creditors together to agree upon debt relief, and the emphasis on debtor participation; and calls for negotiations to be speeded up so that the poorest nations may benefit from cancellation of debt by the birth of the new millennium.

Section 2 - "Called to live and proclaim the Good News"
This Conference:
2.1 reaffirms faith in the doctrines of the Nicene Creed and accepts the imperative character of our call to mission and evangelism.
2.2 suggests that the Lambeth Conference be recognized as a significant consultative body which gives a sense of unity and direction to the whole Communion.
2.3 urges participation by members in companion diocese relationships.

continued on next page

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2.4 requests the governments of nations where discrimination against or harassment of non-Muslim communities occurs to affirm their commitment to religious liberty and pledges to combat prejudice and ignorance about Islam.
2.6 urges that priority be given to reaching out to those who have never heard the gospel of Christ.
2.7 asks for the formation of an Anglican Urban network to share information on urban mission, and supports establishing a "Faith in an Urban World" Commission.
2.8 resolves that the bishops will commit themselves to ensuring that the church is a safe, healthy and spiritually enriching place for children and young people and to strengthening international Anglican networks of young people.

Section 3 - "Called to be a faithful Church in a plural world"
This Conference
3.1, 3.5 reaffirms the primary authority of the Scriptures and invites its provinces to promote biblical study.
3.2 calls upon the provinces of the Communion to affirm that those who dissent from, as well as those who assent to, the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate are both loyal Anglicans and recognizes that there is and should be no compulsion on any bishop in matters concerning ordination or licensing.
3.3 affirms that mission and ministry should be performed at the most immediate or local level.
3.4 accepts and endorses the Eames commission report regarding women in the episcopate.
3.6 reaffirms a collegial role for the Primates' Meeting, recommends that one presbyter or deacon and one lay person from each province join the primates in the triennial ACC gathering, recommends that there should be a change in the name of the Anglican Consultative Council to the Anglican Communion Council, and reaffirms the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury as a personal sign of unity and communion.
3.7 recognizes the increasing size and cost of the Lambeth Conference and requests that those planning for the next Conference actively consider the size, location, and design of the next Conference.
3.8 welcomes the 1997 Report of the Inter Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (The Virginia Report) as a helpful statement of the characteristics of the Communion and requests the Primates initiate and monitor a decade of study on the report.
3.9 requests that means be explored for bishops to gather in periodic inter-regional groupings.
3.10 believes that clergy and laity should be trained to give counsel and encouragement in Christian marriage and family life.
3.11 - 3.12 challenges Anglicans to respect religious freedom, and requests a body to monitor faith relations throughout the world.
3.14 - 3.16 encourages the inculturation of worship and calls on all provinces the keep the ACC informed about official liturgical revision.
3.18 encourages the Mothers' Union and related organizations in work addressing the needs of the disadvantaged in society.
3.20 urges the bishops to commit themselves, and to encourage their people and clergy, to daily prayer.
3.22 recognizes that all the baptized share in the common priesthood of the Church and that all should be given education and opportunity for ministries.

Section 4 - "Called to be one"
This Conference:
4.1 reaffirms the Anglican commitment to the unity of the Church.
4.2 reaffirms the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral (1888) as a statement of Anglican unity/identity.
4.3 - 4.4, 4.6 endorses the formation of an Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations, recommends it reflect upon the implications of being in communion with the See of Canterbury and welcomes ecumenical work at all levels.
4.5 rejoices at the emerging consensus that racism, inequality between men and women, global economic injustice and the degradation of the earth's ecology are incompatible with the Christian faith.
4.7 - 4.8 greets the 8th Assembly of the World Council of Churches and welcomes the work of the WCC on a common date for Easter.
4.11 believes important questions are posed by "continuing Anglican Churches".
4.12 encourages awareness of the implications of ecumenical agreements.
4.13 invites a means by which the Archbishop of Canterbury can exercise extraordinary pastoral oversight with regard to the internal affairs of a Province not the Archbishop's.
4.14 - 4.25 notes conversations between Anglicans and various other churches.

Section 5 and 6 (the regions and the inter-faith team)
This Conference:
5.2 calls on all concerned to explore cancellation of debt as well as other ways of enabling the poor to escape poverty.
5.3 - 5.4 calls on all to work for peace and reconciliation in the world and calls on the Church to work on transformation and renewal.
5.5 supports the Church of Ireland and the other Christian Churches in building bridges between the communities of N. Ireland.
5.6 - 5.7 continues to explore an Anglican provincial structure for Europe and an Iberian Forum.
5.9 reaffirms the condemnation and cessation of U.S. embargo of Cuba.
5.11, 5.27 requests a logo for the Anglican Communion to celebrate the millennium, and encourages all countries to celebrate the millennium by freeing all slaves.
5.12 calls for a 72-hour Global Cease Fire, December 31, 1999 to January 2, 2000.
5.13 reaffirms Resolution 72 of the Lambeth Conference of 1988, "Episcopal Responsibilities and Boundaries."
5.14 - 5.16A, 5.18 supports social and economic justice issues in the Oceania region, the Middle East and South Asia; and supports special initiatives to facilitate peace.
5.17 invites the ACC to consider setting up a Religions/World Faiths desk.
5.19 - 5.22 notes concern for the deterioration of Christian/Muslim relations in Pakistan, the tragic situation in the Holy Land, the situation of the church in Iran, and the effects of economic sanctions on Iraq and Libya.
5.24 - 5.26 encourages opportunities for young people to serve in the Churches of East Asia, supports economic justice initiatives in East Asia, and the efforts of the National Council of Churches in Korea to achieve reunification.
5.28 endorses Africa as weapons-free zone.
5.30 urges that full British Citizenship be granted to the citizens of all British Overseas Territories, esp. the islanders of St. Helena.
5.31 - 5.33 gives thanks for the end of apartheid rule in South Africa, for the decolonization process that led to freedom and independence in Namibia and calls on all involved in the political life of Angola to bring the peace process there to fruition.
5.34 notes that the experience of Christian-Muslim relations calls attention to the issue of appropriate relationship between politics and religion and supports freedom of religion.
6.1 recommends that the Network for Inter-Faith Concerns monitor Muslim-Christian relations.

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A pilgrim's way

by Ann Day

***A Pilgrim's Way* by Walter C. Righter, Alfred A. Knopf, 1998.**

"Wanted for heresy." I try imagining that caption under this book's cover photo of Walter C. Righter. "Wanted for mischief" or even "Wanted for rocking the boat," seem fitting as I look at this picture of a white-haired, clerically attired elder, who is grinning as he slyly glances sideways. But heresy? That's hard to believe.

Precisely because it was hard to believe, the story got attention around the world! As Righter says, "A retired bishop, living in the hills of New Hampshire with his wife and his golden retriever, being tried for heresy?In the 20th century? In the U.S.? It was incredulous enough to be news." And I was among those who followed that news as it was reported in print and on television. I was concerned for him, for friends throughout the church ... and for me.

The accusation, called a "presentment" in the Episcopal Church and brought against Righter by 10 other bishops, was that by ordaining a gay man, Barry Stopfel, who was in a committed relationship with another man, Righter had violated the doctrine and discipline of the Episcopal Church. Although not an Episcopalian, I knew that this "case" was a stone falling into the sexuality debate waters of the ecumenical church. It immediately splashed my United Church of Christ colleague, Will Leckie, who was in the thick of things as Barry Stopfel's life-partner. And I knew ripples would wash over my own life as a partnered, lesbian clergywoman in the United Church of Christ, as well as over the lives of others in similar circumstances. It would also touch people of all sexual orientations struggling for a more inclusive church, and those who believed that such inclusiveness should not extend to openly gay and lesbian people. What happened to Walter Righter was of interest to many, many people.

Articles and sound bites only told us so much about what did happen during the 15 months of Righter's blessed ordeal. For those who want to know more, *A Pilgrim's Way* offers glimpses into the relatively orderly but complex world of national church life. Those who wish to preserve the thought that the church is the Kingdom come and clergy its saintly inhabitants will want to steer clear of this volume. Righter commends visionary leaders in the church, both past and present, including former Presiding Bishop John Hines and John Spong, Bishop of Newark. But he also candidly portrays the potpourri of faith, ambivalence, courage, deception, timidity, and love that he experienced in committees, hearings, and personal relationships. We see, from his perspective, how power and principle sometimes combine and sometimes collide.

As Righter explains the "roller coaster" process that he and his wife, Nancy, lived through—answering correspondence and phone calls from around the world, giving interviews to newspapers, opening their home to TV crews, etc. — he very helpfully places this particular charge of heresy in a broader context. He provides background on decades of debate on and statements about human sexuality issues in the Episcopal Church, and relates the issue of gay/lesbian ordination to other "hot button" issues, including women's ordination. He also points out that he was not the first Episcopal bishop to ordain an openly gay man.

The book presses a myriad of questions, both familiar and unresolved. As advocates for any given position, do our actions and zeal reflect Christ's love? Can compromise be a way forward or is it inevitably just a way out? How do Christians who vehemently disagree remain united in Christ?

One of the most moving sections in the book relates to this latter question. Righter tells of going to one of the bishops who had brought charges against him, and saying, "I must tell you what this action of yours and your nine other compatriots has done. And I must tell you in order to be able to receive the eucharist with you ..."

Amidst the book's discussion of "reconciliation" and "unconditional love," I wished for more personal stories like this to effectively bring home the meaning of such concepts.

At the end of this brief, readable volume, Righter concludes, "A pilgrim's way always contains its moments of hesitation — even of full stop — before it accelerates once again." With the court's finding that Righter violated neither doctrine nor discipline, the Episcopal Church stopped short of a heresy trial. Inspired by his witness, the whole church may now accelerate toward fuller inclusion of all God's children.

Ann B. Day is the Open and Affirming (ONA) program coordinator for the United Church of Christ Coalition for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns.

Full inclusion our goal, say some Anglican bishops

As of September 7, 1998, 161 Anglican bishops, including eight primates had signed a post-Lambeth pastoral statement addressed to lesbian and gay Anglicans indicating their pledge "to continue to reflect, pray, and work for your full inclusion in the life of the Church." The bishops said that while they are not all of one mind about the sexuality issue and that there is much they do not yet understand about the issue, "we believe it is an imperative of the Gospel and our faith that we seek such understanding."

Signatories to date represent jurisdictions in Australia (10), Brazil (1), Canada (10), Central Africa (2), England (40), Ireland (3), Japan (1), New Zealand (8), Scotland (6), South Africa (6), the U.S. (70), and Wales (4).

The bishops said, "We must not stop where this conference has left off. You, our sisters and brothers in Christ, deserve a more thorough hearing than you received."

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Embassy bombings

by Charles E. Simmons

My thoughts at 4:30 a.m. are of the U.S. embassy bombings in East Africa. I have been to a number of the African embassies, including the one in Dar Es Salaam, Swahili for "Haven of Peace," now in ruins surrounded by rubble that has buried hundreds and wounded thousands.

On media assignments, I recall going there to cash checks while awaiting bank transfers. Today, on the other side of the Atlantic, and as a veteran war correspondent, I wonder with sadness about the desperation of a guerilla or freedom fighter who would choose to kill and injure so many innocent civilians. Would he/she have done this in any country, or did he/she consider the lives of black Africans insignificant?

Contrary to American belief, mass killings by bombs has become a habit that did not begin with Saddam Hussein. At least since WWI, populated urban centers have been the focus rather than the exception. How many major cities in Europe and north Africa were bombed by the Allies and Axis forces? How many in WWII?

Fast forward to the carpet bombing of Hanoi and other "targets" by U.S. Forces during the Vietnam War era.

Governments do it, now small groups and individuals armed with high tech explosives do it. Anyone can find the formula for do-it-yourself explosives on the Internet or in the public library.

One Washington reporter at the State Department said the U.S. has received over 30,000 threats. Which is the answer to the question, "Who are the suspects?"

But back to the U.S. Embassy in Dar Es Salaam.

It was also the subject of a story I did about the visit of basketball champ Lew Alcindor (later, Kareem Abdul Jabar) and another athlete to Africa on a State Department tour promoting the U.S. image abroad.

It was at a time when the U.S. was waging open war in South East Asia, and what was politely called "low intensity war" in numerous spots in South America.

In addition, Washington was openly supporting the British and Rhodesians against the African liberation movements to get free of colonialism. Among the official advocates of the freedom fighters was Tanzania, then under the presidency of highly respected and independence-minded Julius Nyerere. Upon the publication in Dar Es Salaam newspapers that the U.S. had contingency plans to invade or overthrow the government of Nyerere (which the State Department denied), masses of otherwise reserved Tanzanians conducted protests at the U.S. embassy and broke out some windows.

I couldn't figure out whether the two American athletes knew any of this background. I had hoped to be able to chat with Alcindor prior to the press conference but he was being kept so close to the U.S. embassy host that I couldn't pull him aside before the questions began to fly. "So you're on your own now," I thought, and took my seat in the second row.

The African press corps, or the Tanzanians in particular, were not accustomed to asking embarrassing questions nor scrutinizing public officials in the open like those of us in the U.S. had become so comfortable with during the Vietnam era. So I asked a series of questions: "Are you aware of the U.S. role in Southern Africa supporting the colonial powers? Do you think this is a good time for African Americans to take a State Department trip here?" Questions like that which seemed to baffle the athletes, and which embarrassed me because they couldn't or wouldn't answer. But they had made their decision and had to pay the price. This was no fan club they were addressing.

The lesson for Americans today is that we have to be the ones to make a people-friendly foreign policy which respects human rights and economic viability, and not leave it to the experts.

As I write this morning, I hear a radio statement from President Clinton: "The African blast won't change U.S. foreign policy ... or weaken our opposition against terrorism."

Twenty-five years have passed. The colonial powers have withdrawn their regular soldiers and now finance African militaristic regimes to do their bidding — to maintain an economic environment favorable for investments from New York, Paris and London, but which keeps the local population poor.

If there are no changes in policies of the wealthy nations, the current refugees and the wounded of Bosnia, Ireland, and the Sudan may grow up to prepare for combat tomorrow either as individuals, in small groups or armies. And let us not forget the home-grown U.S. private militia forces, well-armed and ready for explosive confrontations, as demonstrated in Oklahoma. Still we speak in the old fashioned language of war and tough military policies as though there could be victors, as though warfare was not obsolete. Thirty thousand threats ought to tell us something. TW

Charles Simmons is a journalism professor at Eastern Michigan University. A longer version of this article appeared in *The Michigan Citizen,* 8/98.

Keeping Watch

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The religion of technology

by Joseph Wakelee-Lynch

The Religion of Technology: The Divinity of Man and the Spirit of Invention, by David F. Noble, Alfred A. Knopf, 1997.

In *The Religion of Technology: The Divinity of Man and the Spirit of Invention,* David F. Noble warns us about the dangers of blind belief in technological advance. His is not a lone voice: Jeremy Rifkin and Jacques Ellul have done the same. But in his latest book, Noble reveals the religious underpinnings of that surprisingly religious rational faith.

It's probably an accepted axiom that in the modern era science and religion are unalterably opposed. After all, isn't science the force that has whittled down God to a more human size for at least four centuries? Nobles argues that underlying society's religious belief in technology is, in fact, a Christian worldview. This theology suggests that God's intention is for humanity to become God-like in its ability to exercise power over creation and all of the natural world.

For the first several centuries after Christ, Noble points out, humanity's ability to manipulate the environment — to farm, to make implements, to build shelter — was the price of the Fall, or our separation from God. As a result of our sinfulness, so the thinking and the Genesis story went, we were forced to work hard to scrape out an existence.

Beginning at about the year 800, however, humanity's understanding of its place in the created order began to change. The reason remains somewhat obscure, says Noble, but one factor may have been the invention of devices, such as the heavy plow, that allowed people to master nature, rather than adjust and complement it. Technological innovation becomes a sign of God's favor. By the 1300s, humanity's artifices were seen by some of the foremost technological innovators, who were also Christians, as the means to return to a pre-Fall state of equality with God. This technological triumphalism was proclaimed by such luminaries as Joachim of Fiore, John Scotus Erigena, Hugh of St. Victor, Roger Bacon, Robert Boyle, Isaac Newton, Joseph Glanville and, more recently, Werner von Braun.

Noble follows this religious-rational trail to today's innovators in artificial intelligence and gene research, such as Robert Sinsheimer, Francis Collins and Donald Munro, among others. Noble attacks the modern-day convergence of humanity's drive for technological advancement with the spiritual drive for God-like transcendence. Now, he says, it is time to remove our faith in the religion of the machine and to question whether technology can save us.

In Noble's view, for example, the uncontrolled manipulation of genetic material and knowledge is fraught with the prospect of eugenic engineering — genetic knowledge and technology to select desired traits for our offspring or to weed out our "defects."

Noble quotes V. Elving Anderson, genetics professor at the University of Minnesota: "A qualitative interpretation of the injunction [to fill the earth]," Anderson wrote, "appears to give us the permission — and perhaps more strongly, since it is a command, the obligation — to change the creation for the better. In the past we have focused on changing the environment for human betterment. Now we have enormous powers to begin to redesign the kinds of human beings we want on Earth" (p. 197). With the availability of such enormous power, how many parents would refuse to enrich their children with superior intelligence if a geneticist informed them that their own genes would produce offspring of average intelligence? What about shortness?

For David Noble, the problem with knowledge and technology is not so much what we will learn, but what we will do. Gene therapy promises vast profits for those biotechnology corporations that master it; the Internet and information technologies will produce millions in revenues for software corporations, while simultaneously harming education by rendering it less personal. We are facing the relentless commodification of more and more areas of our lives.

Noble is a professor of history at York University in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, and a visiting professor at Harvey Mudd College in Claremont, Calif. He has written several books about technology's ability to displace workers, and he has worked as an organizer in academia on the issue of intellectual property rights and new information technologies. Noble doesn't have a particularly religious outlook on the world. But *The Religion of Technology* is particularly valuable for Christians. If we have assumed that the religious sensibility may be one of the few brakes on society's technological imperative, then we need to understand that it also has been a crucial, if obscure, pillar of our technological edifice. TW

Joseph Wakelee-Lynch is a writer and editor in Claremont, Calif.

review

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Pursuing a 'direct route' to God

by Marianne Arbogast

Most of what passes for ecological awareness in church settings is "soft and fluffy," says Anne Cox, an Episcopal priest. "I think the church in general might be willing to relegate earth-based spirituality to 'Let's go sit on the ground, commune with nature and feel good.'"

What is called for, Cox believes, is radical conversion "not, 'It doesn't matter where your money comes from as long as you give 10 percent to environmental causes,'" but "totally changing our lives, calling into question all our decisions and choices, calling into question the corporations. Not living with the imposed grid of what our culture puts out there, but finding different rhythms."

For the past 18 months, Cox has focused on bringing her own life into harmony with larger, more natural rhythms, trading parish ministry in suburban Detroit for landscaping, gardening and commitment to the Greenfire community/retreat center on the coast of Maine.

The transition has felt like a homecoming, Cox says. Her earliest memories of community revolve around her family's involvement with a group of activists working to save the Eno River in North Carolina [*TW* 6/93], and the subsequent growth of her Christian faith was grafted onto this root.

"In my mind, they always fit together, although I was certainly well aware of strong threads of our tradition that are anti-environment. I also never saw the division that for awhile was seen as so classic — that you're either a starry-eyed environmentalist or a hard, committed justice person. It always seemed to me that the whole justice circuit was connected."

While a student at Union Seminary in New York, Cox gravitated toward ecological concerns, and wrote her thesis on a "theology of ecology."

"I tried to get away from the concept of stewardship as implying good management of the environment. When you are a manager you are separate from, as opposed to part of, what you manage. We are part of this earth, and not everything is here for our management."

As a parish priest in New Jersey, and later in Michigan, Cox frequently preached and taught in this vein. One Lent, members of her parish, Nativity Church in Bloomfield Township, Mich., participated in a study group on bio-regionalism.

"It became clear that if the people in my parish had any connection to the land, it was to up north where they had cabins. It occurred to me that we are going to keep trashing southeast Michigan until people understand that *this* was their land, too."

A parish garden project evolved, which drew young people into the work of planting, weeding and harvesting. "At the offertory the kids would bring up what they had harvested and place it on the altar, then at coffee hour we would take the produce out to the parish hall and people would leave with a cucumber or a tomato or a bunch of basil," Cox recalls. "It was a way of saying, this is sacred. When we come into church, we are not leaving the earth behind."

The landscaping I want to do does not include applying chemicals to lawns, but rather getting rid of lawns, letting them be meadows.

Anne Cox Julie A. Wortman

Witnesses, the quick and the dead

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

Yet Cox increasingly found institutional church walls too confining.

"I was so aware of how the main purpose of the institution is to perpetuate the institution, rather than to take the risks Jesus talks about," she explains. "I felt I was losing my creativity."

At Greenfire, Cox's creativity has blossomed. In addition to landscape design and gardening, she has begun to make rustic furniture out of branches collected from the woods near the home she shares with her partner Julie Wortman (co-editor of *The Witness*), three dogs and four cats. She feels she is now living — as opposed to ritualizing — the mysteries of Christian faith. More and more, she finds the meaning of eucharist in the very tangible connections she is forging with the human and earth community surrounding her.

"I believe that when Jesus said, 'Take, eat, this is my body,' and 'This is my blood,'" he was talking about the regular stuff of life. He was telling people that they didn't have to go through the rituals at the temple, which included offering the bodies and blood of sacrificed animals, through the agency of priests, to have a relationship with God. He was saying, your route to God is direct, in things as simple as the bread and wine at table. An earth-based spirituality testifies to the same stuff of life. As I have been learning about paying attention by being fully and physically involved in what I am doing, and working in concert with the systems and cycles surrounding me, I am also less compelled by a need to participate in the ritual of eucharist.

"The words of the Eucharist talk about our journeying, what we're yearning for, connection. At Greenfire we live with a community of women invested in remaining in community and sharing at a very deep, soul level. I feel that instead of talking about it, I'm trying to do it."

For Cox, the time and patience required to weed a garden, and the perspective that comes from relying on forces which don't bend to human will, have slowed her down and enlarged her perspective on life.

I tried to get away from the concept of stewardship as implying good management of the environment. When you are a manager you are separated from, as opposed to part of, what you manage. We are part of this earth, and not everything is here for our management.

"The enforced slow-down of gardening is a metaphor for all parts of life, an invitation to take the time to really see and really know," she says. "And it's not the sort of work that is finished: Even in the most established gardens, weeding is ongoing, along with dividing overgrown perennials and deadheading spent blooms."

Also, she recognized "a constant dance between my imposed design for a space, the plants I would like to see growing, and all other systems — water, sunlight, temperature, wind, tides, insects, deer and groundhogs.

"I'm able to take the time to be aware of rhythms outside of highways," Cox says. "I used to hear Interstate 696 in the background while at home in Michigan. Now I hear ocean waves. There is a different sense of being on the earth — there are patterns and rhythms bigger than I. I could build a road, but I can't build an ocean. We're able to ignore that in city life."

Cox recently left her landscaping job, and plans to spend the next three months helping with retreats at Greenfire, cooking for guests and taking part in "circle conversations" with retreatants. She hopes eventually to start her own landscaping company.

"I really want to do gardens, funky little gardens with a lot of color — not imposing something on this landscape, but paying attention to what's natural to this part of Maine," she says. "The landscaping I want to do does not include applying chemicals to lawns, but rather getting rid of lawns, letting them be meadows."

Meanwhile, Cox is working to discern her relationship to the church.

"It's the institution I wear loosely, not the Gospel," she says. "I profoundly believe in the Gospel, in the good news that death is not ultimate. I'm steeped in the tradition — its metaphors and images are as much a part of me now as the Eno River is a part of me."

Her questions revolve around how best to "tell the story." She leans toward the "Thomas Berry camp," after the eco-theologian who insists on the need to "pay attention to stories outside of our tradition" — in particular, the "universe story" revealed by modern physics.

"We've got this wonderful story of creation, starting with gaseous molecules that collide with one another, that's just as poetic and powerful and dynamic as the stories in the Old Testament," Cox says.

And every bit as "spiritual," she believes. "Knowing the tangible world around us is a route to the world of the spirit. Both are intrinsically connected, seen and unseen together." TW

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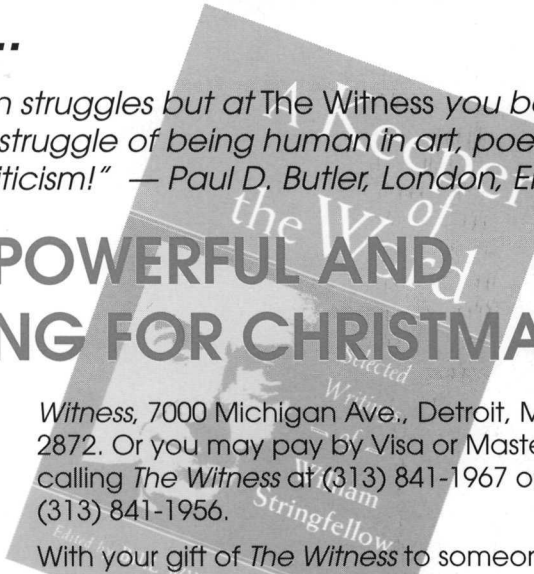
"Socialists and left-wing radicals of all kinds often forget to celebrate the fullness of life, preferring dry analysis to dancing. ...

... Of course, analysis is critical for liberation struggles but at The Witness *you balance analysis with the beauty, celebration and struggle of being human in art, poetry, good humor and a healthy dose of self-criticism!" — Paul D. Butler, London, England*



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the Witness

Volume 81 • Number 11 • November, 1998

The prison-industrial complex: counting the cost

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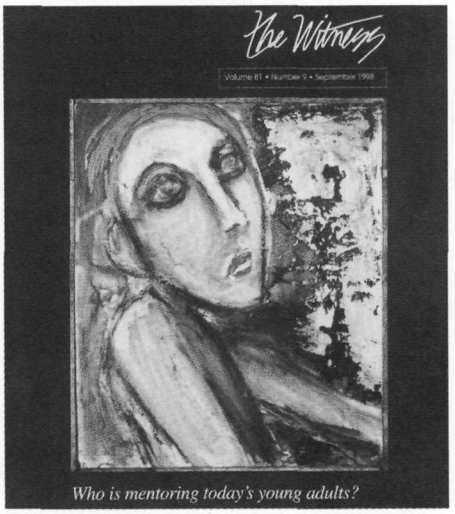
Mentoring the next generation

I HAVE RECEIVED AND READ every issue that comes from my *Witness* subscription with a great deal of appreciation and gratitude to everyone involved in putting together a publication of such quality and substance. It is always welcome because it nurtures my mind and spirit in ways that many other publications, and aspects of society in general, do not.

Your September issue was especially significant to me because I am one of the young adults who were the focus of the issue. I believe that the mentorship that we young adults need more on the journeys we are all engaged in is less of an apprenticeship with a learned elder (though some of these relationships are truly beneficial) and more of the spiritual nourishment and reinforcement that was offered in your September issue.

I completely agree with the authors of *Common Fire* (and in fact went out and purchased the book) when they were quoted as saying that it is the task of young adults to find our dreams and work on them. We young adults are diverse not only in the communities we come from but also in the dreams that we hold and work for and this diversity is good, should be welcomed and encouraged. I feel *The Witness* welcomed and encouraged the dreams of young adults in the September issue and thank you for it.

The article on spirituality in education was also timely and profound for me as I am in graduate school and have experienced the exhilaration of finding meaning in the research and applied aspects of my degree program and the many difficulties that arise from encountering people who are not aware of their own meaning for teaching, engaging in research or being a student. Often being a member of a community that has not been welcomed into the academy and whose numbers are few and far between can make the



Who is mentoring today's young adults?

journey through higher education even more difficult. Reading Victor Kazanjian's article on "Reuniting mind with spirit" was a reminder of why I began graduate study and what I hope to accomplish through it. It reinforced something the poet Nikki Giovanni said — that we are "responsible for the life we live and the world we live in" — that has been of particular relevance for me.

Thank you, *Witness,* for serving to mentor me with your September issue by reminding me of my purpose and for mentoring all of those — including young adults — who read your publication regularly.

Edith G. Arrington
Philadelphia, PA

Trickster spirit

MY SYMPATHIES SUPPORT what Michael Moore has done on behalf of U.S. workers in both his movies, which *The Witness* deservedly supports. Justice of course calls for more effective channels within the U.S. to counteract the sinful and ultimately dangerous gap in lifestyles and values between rich and poor. Yet there is also such a gap between our wealthy U.S. and poor nations. We see national and world stages both being run mostly by the power of wealth, more often exploitively than helpfully, characteristic of most of history. Since Jesus taught "the love of money is the root of all evil," we clearly still have a long way to go toward developing cultural structures and channels that provide needed economic checks and balances, incentives and controls, to lead us into better stewardship of wealth on behalf of justice and peace.

To do it we need a combination of influence from Christian prophetic insight and spirit, plus a well developed plan and philosophy of their application to modern technology and social structures. Adam Smith, Karl Marx, Max Webber, authors of the U.S. Constitution, etc. all have made significant starts in this direction. I hope God's providence inspires in us soon the practical vision now needed economically and politically that speaks to this problem for both national and international stages in a mutually helpful way.

David W. Cammack
Baltimore, MD

I WANTED TO WRITE AND EXPRESS my deep joy at finding your powerful and necessary publication. I work with the homeless and working poor in Denver and have appreciated the ways in which *The Witness* speaks to social realities from an unflinching perspective of faith and compassion. I will certainly be subscribing.

However, I felt the need to write about Joe Summers' article "Unpacking anti-racism" in the July/August 1998 issue. I appreciated the depth of thought and reflection with which Summers struggled with the lack of complexity in many anti-racism workshops. I share his concerns about the over-simplification of institutional and personal racism in much of the anti-racism curriculum. He is right; these issues are not "black and white."

But, as I read the article something kept nagging me. Halfway through, I realized that my experience as a Latino in the anti-racism struggle was completely missing.

I grew up in South Texas where the issues were more "Brown and White" than "Black and White." Is that regional reality a constant "misfit" to the binary black and white understanding of race in America? Must we cling to the need for a national symbolic narrative that silences and excludes the realities of the growing Latino and Asian populations? When I point out this erasure the usual response is a "yes but" or a shrug and a look of "yeah, yeah whatever." The reason Italians were assimilated to "whiteness," as Summers pointed out, is because the duality of "black and white" offered no third or fourth ways of being.

The continued use of a dualistic paradigm helps no one. It simply upholds the antagonistic "victim/perpetrator" model Summers is so dedicated to dismantling. We must get over the dichotomies of a past time that served no one to justice and did little to reflect the realities of any day. A vision recognizing the multicultural complexity and promise of our society is essential to creating a future of justice and community where all voices are heard harmonic.

Dan Vera
Denver, CO

IN ALL THE CHURCH PUBLICATIONS I get, with all the controversy, debate and even hostility, I have rarely seen an article expressing hope that we can actually have the dialogue we keep saying we want. Finally you have published that article.

"Can we talk?" [*TW* 7-8/98, dialogue between Julie A. Wortman and Douglas LeBlanc] is the most hopeful thing on our infighting which I have ever seen in an Episcopal publication. Thank you.

Blaine R. Hammond
Seaview, WA

Christians and Buddhist wisdom

PLEASE SEND ME FOUR COPIES of your June 1998 *Witness* on Christians and Buddhist wisdom. I am making my first Buddhist or Zen retreat. I found your latest issue very meaningful and helpful.

Marie Joseph, RSM
Rochester, NY

WILL YOU PLEASE SEND A COPY of Christians and Buddhist Wisdom to the enclosed five addresses. As you can see, I particularly resonated to this issue and want to share it with others.

Elvira Charles
Washington, CT

The Episcopal Church in conflict

THANKS FOR THE TERRIFIC WORK on conflict and change, especially Verna's (Dozier) articles.

Fredrica Thompsett
Cambridge, MA

Classifieds

Rector watch

Total ministry parish seeks part-time priest for the next three years or so. If you understand "total ministry," would like to live in Colorado, don't need to preach every Sunday or cover all the ministries, would like to help a lively, established parish get into and up to speed in a brand new facility, contact the parish administrator at P.O. Box 29279, Thornton, CO 80229.

Episcopal Urban Interns

Work in social service, live in Christian community in Los Angeles. For adults 21-30. Apply now for the 1999-2000 year. Contact: The Rev. Gary Commins, 260 N. Locust St., Inglewood, CA 90301. 310-674-7700.

Vocations

Contemplating religious life? Members of the Brotherhood and the Companion Sisterhood of Saint Gregory are Episcopalians, clergy and lay, married and single. To explore a contemporary Rule of Life, contact: The Director of Vocations, Brotherhood of St. Gregory, Dept. W, Saint Bartholomew's Church, 82 Prospect Street, White Plains, NY 10606-3499.

Prisoners need stamps

Christian prisoner project seeks donations of postage stamps (limit: two books of 20 each). Help inmates keep in touch with loved ones at Christmas. Christian Williams, FSP, Rt. D18367, Represa, CA 95671-5071.

Classifieds

Witness classifieds cost 75 cents a word or $30 an inch, whichever is less. Deadline is the 15th of the month, two months prior to publication.

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The Witness

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Co-editors/publishers	Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann Julie A. Wortman
Assistant Editor	Marianne Arbogast
Magazine Production	Maria Catalfio
Book Review Editor	Bill Wylie-Kellermann
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Cover: Prisoner *by Edward Bisone.*

The Witness offers a fresh and sometimes irreverent view of our world, illuminated by faith, Scripture and experience. Since 1917, *The Witness* has been advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those people who have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." We push boundaries, err on the side of inclusion and enjoy bringing our views into tension with orthodox Christianity. *The Witness'* roots are Episcopalian, but our readership is ecumenical. For simplicity, we place news specific to Episcopalians in our Vital Signs section. *The Witness* is committed to brevity for the sake of readers who find little time to read, but can enjoy an idea, a poem or a piece of art.

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

The editor whose editorial appears on page 5 crafted this issue.

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Office: 7000 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210-2872. Tel.: (313) 841-1967. Fax: (313) 841-1956. To reach Julie Wortman: HC 35 Box 647, Tenants Harbor, ME 04860. Tel.: (207) 372-6396.
E-mail: <[first name]@thewitness.org>.
Website: <www.thewitness.org>.

Prisons: profits and prophecy

by Marianne Arbogast

A teenaged volunteer at Detroit's Catholic Worker house once startled an older community member by explaining to a suburban church group that the people who eat at the soup kitchen are "mostly criminals." Although we laughed at the time, his assertion was both tragic and irrefutable. Many of our soup kitchen guests do, in fact, have prison records. Joe Summers attests that the reverse is also true: The people found in our prisons are largely the same people encountered in emergency shelters [p.18].

Today, when public sympathy for the homeless has worn thin and welfare policies punish the poor solely for their poverty, this may have less shock value. Criminals are the poor. The poor are criminals. Economics has a great deal to do with who ends up behind bars.

"If you have money and you're white, you go to the Betty Ford Clinic," said one participant at a recent roundtable gathering of prison reform activists, noting the high rate (around 80 percent) of criminal convictions in which drug or alcohol abuse is a factor. "If you're poor, Latino or black, you go to prison."

The accelerating rate at which the U.S. imprisons its citizens is an attempt to "disappear" social problems by disappearing people, suggests former political prisoner Angela Davis.

"Homelessness, unemployment, drug addiction, mental illness and illiteracy are only a few of the problems that disappear from public view when the human beings contending with them are relegated to cages," Davis writes (*ColorLines,* Fall, 1998). But she goes on to note a more alarming development: "The practice of disappearing vast numbers of people from poor, immigrant and racially marginalized communities has literally become big business."

Advocates of restorative justice point out that retributive justice approaches tend to "disappear" crime victims as well as offenders.

Private industry is seeking to cash in on prison expansion [p. 8]. Struggling communities look to prisons as a source of jobs. The mix of profitability, the sometimes murky government-business partnership, the drain on public finances and the lack of a socially useful product have led Davis and others to begin speaking of a "prison-industrial complex."

Like the military-industrial complex, it is fueled by fear and requires a common enemy — conveniently at hand in the welfare recipients we have already demonized. To sustain the myth that prisoners are evil people, real contact with people in prison is minimized. More and more, prisoners are isolated — even from each other — in high-security, control-unit facilities.

But it is not only the incarcerated who are victims of the prison principality. The specter of Third World-style labor markets within prisons has mobilized both prison and labor activists to warn of the implications for all of us [p. 14]. On a more fundamental level, the prison system seems to thwart justice itself, with assumptions that obstruct positive change.

A small but growing prophetic voice can be found in the "restorative justice" movement, which challenges the assumptions of "retributive justice"and models alternatives, such as the Victim Offender Reconciliation Programs now operating in many places. Duane Ruth-Heffelbower explains the principles of restorative justice and describes a VORP process in operation [p. 21].

Advocates of restorative justice point out that retributive justice approaches tend to "disappear" crime victims as well as offenders. They stress the primacy of repairing community and human relationships. Costs are low. There is little profit in it.

Study after study demonstrates that alternatives to prison — as well as substantial drug treatment and education programs within prisons — can significantly reduce recidivism while avoiding the financial drain of long-term incarceration. Implementing these alternatives could free up resources to be spent where they might really count — on education, health care, housing and community development. If this is not happening, it may be because we are dealing with forces larger than we have yet grasped.

"The growth of the prison-industrial complex is part of globalization," another participant at the roundtable gathering declared. "The system we're dealing with is the whole world."

For people of faith, the challenge is to act on the gospel promise that this "world" has already been overcome. TW

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

editor's note

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Going hungry: news that really matters

by Norman Solomon

Two days after many TV networks aired every moment of Bill Clinton's grand-jury testimony, several members of Congress teamed up with researchers and activists for a dramatic forum about "economic human rights." The independent hearing focused on matters of profound importance — and the big news media ignored it.

The gathering took place on Capitol Hill, right under the noses of the Washington press corps. And the media establishment stayed away in droves. Not a single TV camera was there, In fact, hardly any journalists showed up.

"Thirty million Americans are hungry," notes the Institute for Food and Development Policy, also known as "Food First," which helped to organize the Sept. 23 forum. Somewhere between 5 million and 7 million are homeless. "More than 40 million Americans have no health insurance. And the country has the highest rate of child poverty among the industrialized countries."

The institute emphasizes that "hunger is not an accident, in the U.S. or anywhere else. There is no scarcity of food in the world. Certainly there's no shortage here in America." Yet, "the number of hungry people in America has increased by half since 1985."

While we keep being told that the nation's economy is robust, inequities continue to widen. "Sure, there are more millionaires than ever in the U.S.," says Food First. "But for every new millionaire, there are countless new hungry people for whom $100 or $200 a month in food stamps is the only safeguard against malnutrition, even starvation."

Sometimes, I would roll bread up into little dough balls to try to fill myself up. It gets to a point where you kind of get used to it.

— Katherine Engles

So, why don't we hear more about hunger in the U.S.? A key factor is the media industry's fixation on demographics. "Because the mass media is aimed at the people with the highest disposable income, we see pictures of hunger overseas, but not our own," Food First observes. "Perhaps that's a reason why the growth of the Hunger Class has been ignored politically."

The forum on economic human rights included testimony from scholars. But there were also firsthand accounts of being hungry in America. "It isn't that I never worked," said a grandmother named Katherine Engles. "I worked since I was 14 years old. The jobs that are out there — you are not making enough in order to live. Mothers go hungry at night so their children can eat."

In the glazed-over eyes of editors in Washington, her words were not significant. But they remain: "When you are hungry, it's really hard. Sometimes, I would psyche myself to a cup of tea and try to make myself feel as though I just ate a full-course meal even though I didn't. Sometimes, I would roll bread up into little dough balls to try to fill myself up. It gets to a point where you kind of get used to it. Till today, I can't eat no more than one meal a day. It's what I am used to, and even today it's about all we can afford anyway."

And, she added: "I keep looking at the bigger issue. What's ahead for our children, our grandchildren? What is ahead for them?"

Engles was one of 200 people, many of them poor, who filled the room in the Rayburn House Office Building to support a "Fairness Agenda for America." The media odds were stacked against them — and not only because of the frenzy over President Clinton and Monica Lewinsky.

Major media outlets have usually stayed away from efforts to challenge economic disparities. Traditional news judgment dictates that journalists tread lightly on the subject of who really wields the economic power — and at whose expense — in the U.S.

(Although media gatekeepers blocked the recent forum in Washington, plenty of information is available on the web — at <www.foodfirst.org> and <www.net-progress.org>).

People fighting for economic human rights have always had an uphill battle for space in the mass media. Now the terrain is tilted against them more than ever.

Can you imagine what would have happened this year if the news media concentrated on hunger in America with the same fierce determination that has pervaded coverage of sex near the Oval Office? By now, life would be much better for a lot of children who will go to bed hungry tonight. TW

Norman Solomon is co-author of *Wizards of Media Oz: Behind the Curtain of Mainstream News* and author of *The Trouble With Dilbert: How Corporate Culture Gets the Last Laugh.*

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The New Warden

by Jimmy Santiago Baca

He sat in the cool morning.
He had a handful of seeds in his palm.
He sat there contemplating
Where he would plant them.
A month later he tore the kitchen down
and planted apple seeds there.
Some of the convicts asked him why:
"Apples," he said, "is one of America's
great traditional prides. Remember
the famous ballad Johnny Apple Seed?"
Nobody had heard of it, so he set up
A poetry workshop where the death house had been.
The chair was burned in a great ceremony.
Some of the Indian convicts performed
Ancient rituals for the souls of those executed in the past.
He sold most of the bricks and built
Little ovens in the earth with the rest.
The hospital was destroyed except for one new wing
To keep the especially infirm aged ones.
And, funny thing, no one was ever sick.
The warden said something about freedom being
the greatest cure
For any and all ailments. He was right.
The cellblocks were razed to the ground.
Some of the steel was kept and a blacksmith shop went up.
With the extra bricks the warden purchased
Tents, farming implements and a bought a big yellow bus.
The adjoining fields flowed rich with tomatoes, pumpkins,
Potatoes, corn, chili, alfalfa, cucumbers.
From the nearby town of Florence, and as far away as Las
Cruces,
People came to buy up loads and loads of vegetables.
In one section of the compound the artists painted
Easter and Christmas and other holiday cards, on paper
previously used for disciplinary reports.
The government even commissioned some of the convicts
To design patriotic emblems.
A little group of engineers, plumbers, electricians
Began building solar heating systems and sold them
To elementary schools way under cost. Then,
Some citizens grew interested. Some high school kids
Were invited to learn about it, and soon,
Solar systems were being installed in the community.
An agricultural program opened up.
Unruly convicts were shipped out to another prison.
After the first year, the new warden installed ballot boxes.
A radio and TV shop opened. Some of the convicts' sons
And daughters came into prison to learn from their fathers'
trades and talking with them about life.
This led to several groups opening up sessions dealing with
Language, logic, and delving into past myths and customs.
Blacks, Mejicanos, Whites, all had so much to offer.
They were invited to speak at the nearby university
Discussing what they found to be untouched by past historians.
Each day six groups of convicts went into the community,
Working for the aged and infirmed.
One old convict ended up marrying the governor's mother.

— Half Chicano and half "detribalized Apache," Jimmy Santiago Baca lived in a New Mexico orphanage from the time he was five till he turned 11, when he fled it to live in the streets. At age 20, he was sentenced to a long term in an Arizona maximum security prison, where he spent four years in solitary and was subjected to electric shock treatments. In the hole, Baca taught himself to read and write and began composing poetry. Today he has achieved international recognition as a major American poet, has taught in universities and received several prestigious prizes for his work. "The New Warden," by Jimmy Santiago Baca: Copyright © 1990 by Jimmy Santiago Baca. Used by permission of New Directions Publishing Corporation.

Poetry

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The prison boom: corporate profits, human losses

by Sam Hine

It's the fastest growing industry in America. One of the most influential political lobbies. A hot ticket on the New York Stock Exchange. Some observers, boggled by the insanity of its logic and alarmed by its momentum, have started calling it the prison-industrial complex: a faceless corporate monolith like its sibling, the military-industrial complex.

The FBI has reported a drop in crime for five straight years, but even though violent crime is at a 25-year low, the rush to incarceration hasn't begun to abate. American prisons currently cage 1.9 million human beings, one in every 240 citizens. The criminal justice system costs taxpayers upwards of $100 billion every year, roughly 10 percent of our tax dollars. (The crimes allegedly being combated deprive individual Americans of only $10 billion annually. So, for every dollar lost by victims of crime, we spend $10 to apprehend and punish the perpetrator.)

Someone pockets all that cash. Those who benefit from the prison boom range from the architects who design more sophisticated and efficient prisons to the academics who get major grants to produce the statistics we love to quote. Few benefit more than the companies using the labor of this captive population.

Public industries, such as the Federal Bureau of Prison's UNICOR, enjoy special terms with other government agencies, and produce everything from furniture and uniforms to missile components. States operate similar prison factories. Delaware prisoners recently saved the state $25 million, working for 15 cents an hour to build, of all things, another prison.

Increasingly, private industry is looking for opportunities to cash in. Where else do you find labor rates comparable to the Third World without the shipping costs, and a regimented workforce that can't unionize and doesn't require worker's compensation?

Prison corporations are paid by the head, so overcrowding, fewer services and cheaper food provide greater profits, as does reducing pay and training for guards.

Prisons for profit

The last 15 years have seen the rise of a new manifestation of justice as a commodity — the private prison. "You just sell it like you were selling cars or real estate or hamburgers," explained Thomas Beasley, co-founder of Corrections Corporation of America (C.C.A.), near the start of privatization in 1983. Far and away the industry leader, C.C.A. currently houses 65,000 prisoners in 79 privately owned and operated facilities in 25 states. Their mission: "to provide quality corrections at less cost to the taxpayer." Wackenhut Corrections comes in second with 40 facilities, and is the market leader overseas, with prisons in the United Kingdom and Australia.

The concept is brilliant: Innovation sparked by free-market competition will lead to more efficient management — and supposedly, savings. A few years into the venture, however, government reports suggest that while the corporations involved have profited handsomely — with C.C.A. ranking among the top five companies on the New York Stock Exchange over the last three years — the taxpayer has not. A 1996 report by the General Accounting Office compared private prisons to similar state-run institutions and found no significant savings. To increase their own profits, private prisons undercut state spending by as narrow a margin as they can.

Whether we need them or not, more of these prisons are going up every year. And if recent history is any judge, as long as new prisons are built, they will be filled. Overcrowded states have begun to "farm out" prisoners to places such as Texas, where the building spree has outpaced local demand. (Private prisons in Texas received a bad rap last year, when the media released videotape showing guards beating and kicking Missouri prisoners in the groin, making them crawl on the floor and allowing guard dogs to bite them.)

Families of offenders are not the only ones inconvenienced when prisoners become exports. In one legal snafu, two Oregon sex offenders escaped from a privately run detention center in Houston. As there was no law against escaping from a private institution, the state police would have been unable to arrest them, had the escapees not solved the dilemma themselves by stealing a car. Predictably, the state wasted no time in outlawing future escapes.

Conflict of interest

Many people are uncomfortable with the

Sam Hine is a member of the Bruderhof community and works on inmate advocacy with the Pennsylvania Prison Society.

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thought of someone profiting from another person's incarceration. Others object to passing governmental authority and power into private hands. But the real problem with C.C.A. and its competitors is a fundamental conflict of interest: While they claim to be in the business of "correction," as profit-making institutions they have a financial incentive, not to rehabilitate, but to keep people in prison as long as possible, and preferably, to have them return. Prison corporations are paid by the head, so overcrowding, fewer services and cheaper food provide greater profits, as does reducing pay and training for guards.

Last year C.C.A. created the Prison Realty Trust, a company devoted exclusively to speculating on prisons as real estate. The first stock market offering brought in $388 million. A year later, Prison Realty Trust and C.C.A. have agreed to merge, in a deal valued at $4 billion, which will also swallow competitor U.S. Corrections Corporation. Analysts suggest that private prison corporations will double their "market share" in the next five years.

Outspoken opponents to privatization include the American Bar Association, the National Sheriffs Association, and the American Civil Liberties Union. But not all criminal justice reformers oppose private prisons outright. William DiMascio, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Prison Society, an inmate advocacy group, says that while he may have philosophical objections to prisons for profit, he has seen cases where private prisons are doing a better job. "Whatever you find to be wrong or bad in privately run prisons you will also find in public prisons," DiMascio says. He suggests that the controversy surrounding the move toward privatization has brought increased scrutiny to both public and private institutions, which holds everyone more accountable.

Political payoffs

Why don't elected officials protest this erosion of their sovereignty? One reason may be that many of them profit from crime, and not only politically. Tennessee offers a case in point. According to *The Nation*, "as former chairman of the state G.O.P., [C.C.A. founder] Beasley was a good friend of then-Governor Lamar Alexander. In 1985 Alexander backed a plan to hand over the entire state prison system to the fledgling company for $200 million. Among C.C.A.'s stock holders at the time were the Governor's wife, Honey, and Ned McWherter, the influential Speaker of the state House, who succeeded Alexander as governor." Although that original plan failed, Tennessee has since agreed to give C.C.A. its entire prison system.

Crime, politicians know, is a handy rhetorical enemy. It pays to play on the exaggerated fear of crime instilled in Americans by the media's zeal in sensationalizing bad news. (Crime pays for media, too, which may or may not explain why *USA Today* co-sponsored a 1998 "Entrepreneur of the Year" award given to C.C.A. Chairman, CEO, and President Doc Crants.)

Economically strapped rural towns vie for new prison contracts, which are touted as "recession-proof employment." In Waynesburg, at the heart of Greene County, Pennsylvania, Confederate flags are still a common sight. Waynesburg was once a mining center. Now it's a prison town, with the entire local economy geared to providing services for its three penal institutions and their employees.

Dannemora, a small rural town, has 1,215 residents and houses 2,928 prisoners at the Clinton Correctional Facility, located in the center of town. The economy of this upstate region of New York relies heavily on housing convicts from New York City.

Andrew Lichtenstein, Impact Visuals

"Get tough" policies

Waynesburg hosts Pennsylvania's flagship super-maximum security facility, the State Correctional Institution at Greene,

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The spider

by Mumia Abu-Jamal

Norman called over, his voice heavy and strangely conspiratorial. "Hey, Mu. Ya bizzy, man?"

"Naw, Norm. I wuz jus doin' a little readin'. But wussup, man?"

"I been lookin' at this mama spider in my cell. She beautiful, man!"

"Yeah?"

"She tiny, but she so strong, man!"

"Uh, huh ..."

"An' ya know what's amazin'?"

"Whut's dat, Norm?"

"Think 'bout how she make her own home — her web — out of her own body!"

"That's amazin', man."

And indeed it was amazing, especially to Norman, a man encaged in utter isolation. Here he sat, and would sit for the remainder of his days, in the antiseptic stillness of a supermaximum-security prison block, yet he was not entirely alone. With a quiet, unwitting bravado that defied the State's most stringent efforts to quarantine him, spiders had moved in and built webs in the dark corner under his sink. Now they shared his cell, and he spent hours watching them spin their miraculous silken thread.

Norman watched them give birth. He watched them stalk those few rare flies who entered his cell, only to be trapped. He watched them suck the life sap from their prey until nothing remained but dry husks. He watched them in a deep and reverent wonder, and his cell became a study.

Norman watched, and whenever something truly remarkable occurred, he quietly tapped on the wall. He'd begin in a deep stage-whisper: "Mu — Yo, Mu! Ya bizzy, man?"

With a quiet, unwitting bravado that defied the State's most stringent efforts to quarantine him, spiders had moved in and built webs in the dark corner under his sink.

I was rarely too busy to listen for 15 or 20 minutes, and it wasn't long before I found myself sharing his fascination and enthusiasm. And in time, lo and behold, a web scaffold appeared in my own sink-corner.

In ancient African and West Indian folklore, the mother spider — Anansi — looms large. She is a wise and protective being who knows proverbs and possesses the gift of prophecy.

A famous Ghanian tale tells of a fire raging in a forest. As the beasts scamper for safety, an antelope feels a tickling sensation. A small dark spider has alighted on her ear. Before she can toss her head to flick it off, however, the spider whispers, "It is I, Anansi. Take me with you — I will repay you." The antelope, more concerned with its own survival than the minor inconvenience of a spider, agrees and runs on to safety, her path directed by Anansi.

Once she reaches safety, Anansi climbs off, thanking the antelope and promising her she won't be forgotten. Several seasons later, the antelope finds herself and her offspring threatened again, this time by hunters. Her little one is too young to run, so she instructs it to drop to the ground and hide itself in the shrubbery. Then, leaping from the undergrowth, she distracts the hunters and leads them away from her baby. Arrows whiz through the air, but the antelope is too swift. Finally the hunters give up the chase and leave the forest.

Cautiously, she returns to find her young one, whose faint cry she hears but cannot place. Where is her baby? Try as she might, she can't find her.

Just then, Anansi lets herself down from a tree limb on her slim silken cord, and announces her presence. Whispering to the mother antelope, she directs her to a clump of shrubs where, hidden under a tightly woven protective net, lies her baby. "I told you I wouldn't forget you," Anansi reminds her.

For Norman, the target of a hunt no less deadly than that of an antelope in the jungle, Anansi was vital company. In a cell constructed to maximize human loneliness — a site designed to kill the mind — Anansi was a source of friendship and wonder. In a concrete tomb erected to smother men to death, she was a tiny, marvelous reflection of life. TW

Mumia Abu-Jamal is a radio-journalist on death row in Pennsylvania following a criminal trial and murder conviction, widely believed to have been politically motivated and conducted in a biased manner. This story is excerpted from his book *Death Blossoms: Reflections from a Prisoner of Conscience,* Plough Publishing House, 1997.

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which prides itself in outdating the long-unrivaled federal facility in Marion, Ill., which went on permanent lockdown in 1983, creating the first "control unit." SCI Greene is now preserved in infamy by resident journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal's devastating exposés. In his book *Death Blossoms,* Abu-Jamal describes the "antiseptic stillness" of a soundproof solitary confinement cell designed to "maximize human loneliness," where he is held 23 hour a day with the lights on.

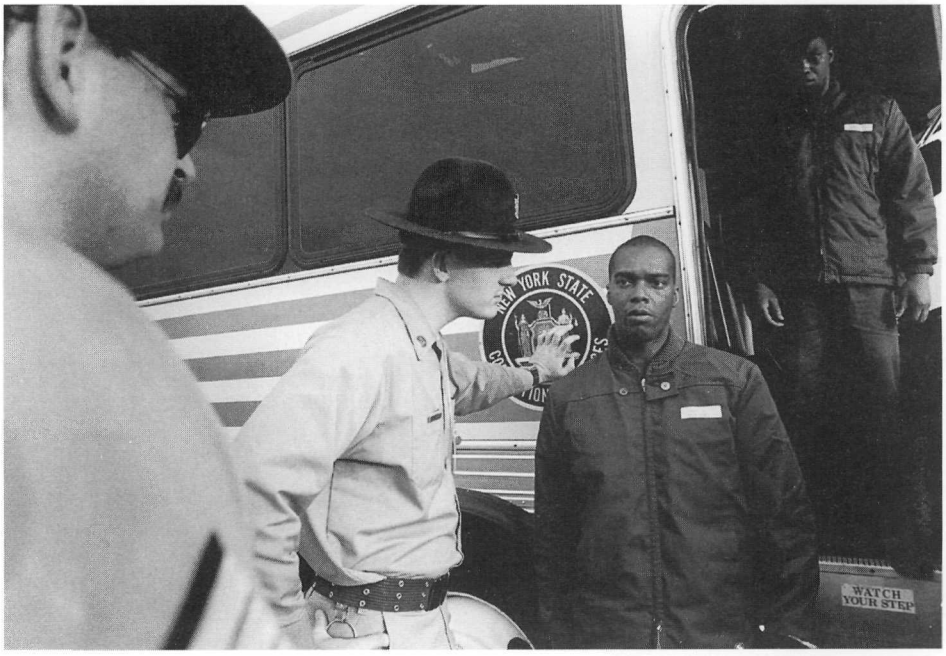
The rising popularity of the super-max prison is only one aspect of a more pervasive "get tough" policy, which shows itself in harsher sentencing — such as California's new "three strikes and you're out" law — and cuts in inmate education, job skill training and the amenities that make prison life bearable.

The number of women in prison continues to grow, as does the number of juveniles, with one state after another passing laws dispensing with juvenile justice for young violent offenders. In the high-profile Massachusetts case of Edward O'Brien, arrested and charged with murder at age 15, the district attorney's office succeeded in having Judge Paul P. Heffernan recused from the case because his belief in rehabilitation influenced his decision to try O'Brien as a juvenile. O'Brien was eventually tried as an adult and sentenced to life imprisonment, and in the heat immediately following the brutal murder, the state legislature passed laws demanding adult justice for teenagers charged with any of seven violent crimes.

"Like building more graveyards"

Crime, violence and drugs are very real problems. But will more ruthless police and courts, longer sentences and more prisons make our communities more peaceful? One prison reform activist says that "building more prisons to address crime is like building more graveyards to address a fatal disease."

In a recent speech, former Attorney General Ramsey Clark suggested that we ought to tear down all the prisons. Prisons don't protect the public or rehabilitate inmates. They reduce chances for future employment, and breed dependency, despair and mental illness. If anything, they foster crime. "The criminal justice system is the worst attempt to address these problems we could possibly devise," says Malcolm Young, Executive Director of The Sentencing Project. "It does nothing but breed resentment on the part of the offender."



Prison inmates arriving at a shock camp meet their drill instructors.

Andrew Lichtenstein, Impact Visuals

"We should send offenders to prison *as* punishment, not *for* punishment," says Charles Sullivan, founder and executive director of national CURE (Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants). Sullivan, whose organization has programs in most states — many run by recovering drug addicts — points out that drug-related convictions account for much of the increase in incarceration. He says we ought to view drug abuse as a health problem, and address it accordingly. "Treatment does work. Education, where it has been tried, has made a huge difference." Increasingly, prisons offer neither.

Who are the prisons for?

If prisons have failed to serve their stated functions, perhaps we need to look at some of the unstated functions prisons serve. Studies show that 90 percent of adult Americans have committed a crime punishable by incarceration. Who ends up behind bars?

Nationwide, if your skin is black you are nine times more likely to end up in prison. In 10 states, all in the North, blacks are more than 15 times more likely to be locked away. Blacks serve sentences 20 percent longer than whites convicted of similar crimes. By reducing the sentences given blacks to create parity with those given whites, the federal prison system alone could free up three thousand beds and close six prisons.

Increasingly, prisons serve as warehouses for people with no place in the economic order — the poor and unemployed. Over half of prisoners are serving

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time for economically motivated crimes — burglary, larceny or theft. Over half were unemployed at the time of arrest. Seventy-two percent of prison inmates never finished high school. Pennsylvania inmate Donny Unger writes, "Either education and wealth are two of the strongest fortifications against the commission of crime, or there is a different measure of justice for the rich and the poor, white and black, the educated and the unlearned." Or maybe he's right on both counts.

Historically, prisons have been used to suppress dissent. Today, leaders of the Puerto Rico independence movement, Black Panthers, and American Indian Movement are serving unprecedented sentences for politically motivated crimes. Every new prison built adds to a growing apparatus for repression, and contingency plans for mass detention are already in place. An executive order signed by President George Bush in 1989 authorized the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to build 43 "internment camps" with a capacity of 35,000 to 45,000 prisoners each, for use in the event of "national disaster, social unrest, insurrection, or national financial crisis."

Toward alternatives

For investors in C.C.A. stocks, and politicians who profit politically from crime (and fiscally, if they own C.C.A. stock or court the industry's powerful lobby), high recidivism rates are a positive indicator. Rehabilitation is hardly a driving concern. "The system won't improve until citizens see it as their duty to get involved, " insists William DiMascio.

Vermont is one of the first states to build such an approach into its criminal justice system. There, councils of community members determine community service and restitution payments by nonviolent offenders.

There have been minor victories in other corners. Senator Paul Wellstone of Minnesota successfully added an amendment to a federal crime-fighting bill that will allow states to use money for treatment of mentally ill inmates rather than for prison construction. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously this year to apply the Americans with Disabilities Act to prisoners. In Oklahoma, the League of Women Voters sponsored a study circle which played a key role in implementing major legislative reform.

Richard Dieter, director of the Death Penalty Information Center, notes a heightening of public awareness. He says, "Like never before, people are aware of the fact that the death penalty isn't a deterrent, that it's costly, that mistakes are made, and that it isn't applied justly or fairly." All of which can be said of imprisonment as well.

We are capable of a justice more fair and compassionate than this. TW

No sanctuary

Jerome Bowden was a clinically retarded African American man who had grown up in Muscogee County, Ga., where his mother worked as a maid for the county sheriff. Jerome and his sister grew up eating surplus commodity food because his mother was not paid a living wage. His whole life was something of a death row even before he got to prison. There he remained for a number of years before he was executed in June of 1986.

Jerome had a simple, childlike approach to life. And the way he saw what was going on inside the prison was always so basic that I often learned from him. I loved the time he told us about the Bible Study they were having in his cell block on the Book of Revelation.

Jerome wanted to understand Revelation so badly that he kept going to the other guys saying, "Look, can't you just break this down for me?" Finally, one of his friends drew a chart of Revelation. I wish I could have seen that chart because I would like to see just exactly how the Book of Revelation was reduced to a chart and explained to Jerome.

We went to see Jerome one day, and he was dying laughing. He told us how the guards had come into the cell block for a shakedown. They threw his stuff all over the floor and looked for contraband and weapons. One guard came across Jerome's chart of Revelation. He was convinced that it was an escape plan! So Jerome's chart was confiscated and taken straightaway to the Warden's office, where numerous prison bureaucrats put their heads together over it. They tried to figure out how Jerome Bowden was going to escape from death row with this chart. And Jerome couldn't stop laughing. But he never got his chart back.

When Jerome's execution date was set, the Georgia Association for Retarded Citizens took his case and began to advocate for him. A stay of execution was won that lasted for several days. During that time the Board of Pardons and Paroles sent in an Emory University psychologist to study Jerome and determine just how retarded he was. The conclusion drawn by this eminent psychologist was that Jerom Bowden was retarded, but not quite retarded enough to be spared. What an ironic twist that the test the psychologist used was to ask Jerome to define the word "sanctuary." Jerome said, "A place to go and be safe." Sanctuary — because he knew the word, Jerome died.

— Murphy Davis is a member of the Open Door community in Atlanta, Ga.

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Voluntary Service and Action

The Commission on Voluntary Service and Action (CVSA) has been promoting independent volunteer action since the aftermath of World War II. At that time, CVSA produced a pamphlet called *Invest Your Summer*, which listed the locations and contact people operating various independent non-government, all-volunteer–run relief and reconstruction centers.

CVSA has long recognized and promoted the special role of independent, full–time volunteers' efforts in addressing the needs of the world's communities. Its continued role and vision has been to protect the fundamental right of individuals to participate in voluntary service activities outside of the domain of corporate and government controls. The Commission remains the only non-government, ecumenically based organization in North America advancing voluntary service as a vocation.

Copies of *Invest Yourself*, which lists over 200 organizations offering volunteer opportunities, are available from CVSA, PO Box 117, New York, NY 10009. The suggested donation is $8 per guide, $3 for postage and handling.

Plowshares in jail

On May 17, 1998, the 30th anniversary of the Catonsville Nine protest, five peace activists beat swords into plowshares at an air show outside Washington, D.C. Calling themselves the Gods of Metal Plowshares, Carol Gilbert and Ardeth Platte, from Baltimore's Jonah House, Frank Cordaro from Des Moines, Iowa, Larry Morlan, from Bloomington, Ill., and Kathy Shields Boylan, from Washington, D.C.'s Dorothy Day Catholic Worker, hammered and poured blood on a B–52 bomber during the Department of Defense Open House at Andrews Air Force Base, Prince George's County, Md.

After the Gods of Metal Plowshares hammered, leafletted, prayed and threw their own blood, military and civilian police placed the five religious activists under arrest. Their trial before Federal Judge Alexander Williams, Jr., began on September 22 with the defendants facing a misdemeanor count of willful injury to government property, less than $1,000 damage, which carries a possible sentence of one year in jail.

Francis Boyle, a professor of International Law at the University of Illinois College of Law at Urbana-Champaign, was the final witness for the defense. Boyle said that the defendants had acted without malice, in the belief that the B–52 bomber, because its purpose is mass extermination, violates various international treaties, including the rules of war.

In reaching his decision to find the five defendants guilty, Judge Williams disregarded Boyle's testimony. In response, the defendants refused to further cooperate with the court. They were then taken into custody.

— Max Obuszewski, Jonah House

Nuclear waste storage

According to Honor the Earth, every proposal to store high level nuclear waste in North America targets Native lands. The Skull Valley Goshute community of Utah is the target of a private storage initiative, while the Western Shoshone of Nevada struggle to prevent their sacred Yucca Mountain from becoming the nation's radioactive dump. Canada is pushing to store waste on two small, isolated reserves — one of which has just received running water from the government.

Honor the Earth has developed an ongoing Nuclear Waste Initiative to resist the radioactive contamination of Native lands, and to address the imbalance of power between politically and materially impoverished Native communities and the energy interests of industrial society.

To receive their newsletter, contact Honor the Earth, PO Box 75423, St. Paul, MN 55175; 612–721–1918; <HONOREARTH@EARTHLINK.NET>; <WWW.HONOREARTH.COM>.

Colleges ranked for gay acceptance

The Princeton Review has released the 1999 edition of its annual "The Best 311 Colleges," based on a survey of 56,000 students' assessments of their own schools. One of the 62 rankings assesses which colleges are most and least accepting of gays and lesbians on campus.

The top 10 list in order: 1) Saint John's College, Sante Fe, N.M.; 2) Cooper Union, N.Y.; 3) Warren Wilson College, Asheville, N.C.; 4) Marlboro College, Marlboro, Vt.; 5) Saint John's College, Annapolis, Md.; 6) Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Mass; 7) Eastman School of Music, N.Y.; 8) Hendrix College, Conway, Ark.; 9) College of the Atlantic, Bar Harbor, Maine; 10) Boston Conservatory, Boston, Mass.

The superconformist list entitled "Alternative lifestyles not an alternative" is: 1) Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Ind.; 2) Morehouse College, Atlanta, Ga.; 3) Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Va.; 4) University of Rhode Island, Kingston, R.I.; 5) Westminster College, Wilmington, Penn.; 6) University of the South, Sewanee, Tenn.; 7) Baylor University, Waco, Tex.; 8) Miami University, Oxford, Ohio; 9) Hamilton College, Clinton, N.Y.; 10) Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn.

In 1996, New York University Press issued "The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Students' Guide to Colleges, Universities and Graduate Schools," based on a survey of lesbigay students on 1,100 campuses. Some of its top picks were Oberlin College (Ohio), Reed College (Ore.) and Johns Hopkins University (Md.), while some of its lowest ranked choices were Dartmouth College (N.H.), University of Colorado (Boulder) and Boston University.

Short takes

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Captive labor: jobs without justice

by Jane Slaughter

Start talking about "prison labor," and people tend to fall into two categories. One is appalled at the exploitation implied: workers locked up, overseen by guards, with no say in their wages, conditions, or anything else. But the other group sees a chance to "make prisons pay" and to get tough on crime. Back in the 1970s, Chief Justice Warren Burger called for turning prisons into "factories with fences." Today, Burger's words are coming true, with consequences that may be as serious for workers on the outside as for those who labor behind bars.

The number of prisoners who work for private, profit-making companies or state-controlled industries—around 80,000—is still relatively small compared to the skyrocketing prison population.

But the numbers are growing fast, urged along by advocates in government and by companies who see prison labor as a closer-to-home alternative to production in Asia and Mexico.

"It's about time we stopped being ashamed of our resources and began putting them to work," says Rep. Stephen Matthew (R-AZ), chair of a Congressional committee studying prison labor. Matthew says his goal is to have half of all prisoners holding down inside jobs by the year 2000.

Consider these trends:

- a phenomenal increase in the number of people behind bars—1.9 million today, driving towards one percent of the total population—propelled by the lock 'em up mentality prevalent in legislatures;

A publication from the Department of Justice spells it out: "Inmates represent a readily available and dependable source of entry-level labor that is a cost-effective alternative to work forces found in Mexico, the Caribbean Basin, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Rim countries."

- fewer and fewer good jobs available, as the supposedly "booming" economy creates mostly low-wage or temporary or part-time jobs (or all three);
- welfare recipients forced into low-paid jobs in competition with other working-class people, under the heading of "welfare reform."

Then recall the rhetoric that conservatives use to describe members of what they call "the underclass"— "welfare queens" sucking up the tax dollars of hard-working citizens, criminals watching TV in jail, likewise on the tax dollars of those same law-abiding citizens. Given all this, it's not hard to believe that policy makers have in mind a two-pronged "solution" to the perceived problem of the underclass: low-paid, poverty-sustaining jobs for the women, even lower-paid jobs in jail for the men. As one advocate mused in an Internet posting, "[Prison] labor is the carpet under which can be swept those who fall out the bottom of the system, and it's a profit center as well! ... It seems to be the only government-sponsored program that 'deals with' inner-city unemployment."

Slave labor?

In a collection of essays by prisoners, *The Celling of America,* prisoner Paul Wright, co-editor of *Prison Legal News,* notes that Americans mistakenly believe that slavery was ended by the Thirteenth Amendment. In truth, Wright points out, "slavery and involuntary servitude" were abolished, in the words of the Constitution, "except as punishment for crimes whereof the party shall have been duly convicted." After the Civil War, it was common for newly freed slaves to be "duly convicted," sent to jail, and then leased out to private employers.

In the 1930s, spurred by Depression unemployment, Congress forbade the interstate transport of prison-made goods made for less than minimum wage, effectively shutting down the private use of prison labor. It was today's prison-building binge that once again sent lawmakers looking for ways to make money from convicts' work. In 1979, Congress created a program to help bring private companies into prisons. From 1980 to 1994, sales by prison industries, private and state-run, rose from $392 million to $1.31 billion, as the number of federal and state prisoners working in prison industries jumped by 358 percent. Some industry officials estimate that by 2000 prison industries' sales will hit $8.9 billion.

Required to work

Some prisoner activists, such as Paul Wright, call prison work "slave labor," arguing that it is not truly voluntary.

Jane Slaughter is a Detroit-based labor writer. Cartoonist **Kirk Anderson** lives in St. Paul, Minn.

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According to the AFL-CIO, 21 states have passed laws requiring prisoners to work, and federal prisoners are required to work as well. Just as important, taking a job can reduce your sentence, often on a day worked per day served basis, and not taking one can subject you to penalties that lengthen your sentence.

Even at the pitifully low wages paid, prisoners take jobs for the money. Alice Lynd, co-founder of a prisoners' advocacy group called Prison Forum in Youngstown, Ohio, explains, "I have a friend who gets $17 a month for tutoring. People working for Ohio Penal Industries get as much as $45 a month. It creates a class system within the prison as to who's got money for the commissary and who hasn't." One prisoner doing data entry at San Quentin said, "The food here sucks and a can of tuna fish costs 95 cents in the commissary, so I am really glad to have this job."

Courts have ruled that the Fair Labor Standards Act, which mandates the minimum wage for free labor, does not apply to government-employed prisoners. Federal UNICOR inmates are paid between 23 cents and $1.15 per hour, and up to 50 percent of that may be deducted. Private companies in prison are required to pay the minimum wage. Whatever the nominal wage, however, prisoners see only a small portion of it. Prison officials make deductions for room and board, taxes, family support, victim restitution, and savings for release. A Unibase employee at Lebanon Correctional Institution in Ohio, for example, makes 47 cents an hour for data entry, and a sewing machine operator at Soledad in California makes 45 cents.

If prisoners have incentives to take prison jobs, private companies have equally strong motivation to locate behind bars. A publication from the Department of Justice spells it out: "Inmates represent a readily available and dependable source of entry-level labor that is a cost-effective alternative to work forces found in Mexico, the Caribbean Basin, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Rim countries."

Company executives delight that prisoner-workers never get stuck in traffic (though they are subject to periodic prison-wide lockdowns). Nor do they receive benefits or vacations. And they fit well with companies' focus on "flexibility"—available when needed for surges in demand, returned to their cells, with no unemployment pay, when the market sags. Prisoners can be fired for any or no reason, including back-talk, and they are not allowed to unionize, much less to strike.

On top of these incentives, the government often provides handsome subsidies to entrepreneurs, such as leasing them space at very low rates or subsidies to buy equipment. An ad from the Wisconsin Department of Corrections asks business owners, "Can't Find Workers? A Willing Workforce Waits."

Perhaps the most bizarre rationale for prison labor is that it keeps jobs in the U.S. "We can put a Made-in-the-U.S.A. label on our product," one executive told a Justice Department researcher. Companies argue that prison jobs would otherwise be done by workers in Sri Lanka or El Salvador. The president of multinational Unibase, with workers inside three Ohio prisons, says that keeping work in the state is part of his "sales pitch."

It's easy to imagine a scenario in which a worker loses his job, commits a crime out of desperation, and then ends up working for his former company in jail. But at least he's got the job, not the foreign competition!

Rehabilitation?

Occasionally an advocate of prison labor will claim it's good for prisoners (as opposed to state or private coffers). The idea is that prison jobs teach work habits to those who've seldom held a steady job. One study, for example, showed that inmates employed by Badger State Industries in Wisconsin had a 15 percent lower recidivism rate than other inmates.

But others doubt that prison work will help prisoners once they return to society.

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For one thing, prison employers tend to cherry-pick the "best" prisoners, those with work histories and good records. Many managers set up the hiring scene as much as possible like private-sector ventures, with applications and interviews. So those hired are those most likely to make it on the outside in any case.

Second, most prison jobs are specifically designed not to require marketable skills. The Justice Department passes along the advice of a manager at a South Carolina firm: "Keep it simple—put the least complex sewing jobs you have inside the prison." Alice Lynd points out, "Sewing blue jeans isn't done outside prisons, it's done overseas. When they get out they won't be able to run down to a plant and get a job."

Third, although punching a behind-bars time clock is said to teach a "work ethic," the stultifying nature of the low-skill job could also carry the lesson that work is something to be avoided at all costs.

Competition

With the American workforce already battered by downsizing, privatization, contracting out, and the dislocation of jobs to overseas factories, workers' organizations are becoming alarmed by the rapid growth of prison work. "Prison labor," says the AFL-CIO, "is being used today to perform work in both the private and public sectors ordinarily done by free workers."

Under the 1979 Prison Industries Enhancement law, private companies who want to operate in jail must pay the "prevailing wage." They must consult with and win approval from union leaders in the area; their industry must be one with no local unemployment; and the local labor market should not be affected.

But as the examples below show, these rules are apparently ignored:

- In Arizona, a hog slaughtering plant closed down, costing union workers their jobs. The plant then reopened as a joint venture between the Department of Corrections and the state's Pork Producers Association.
- In Wisconsin, Fabry Glove & Mitten cut wages and slashed outside jobs by 40 percent after hiring inmates at the Green Bay Correctional Institution.
- In Utah, asbestos removal companies say that prison labor has virtually driven them out of business. "We find it ironic that they are putting an industry out of business that they are purportedly training people to work in," said a spokesperson.
- Companies in the government-supply business say that UNICOR's rapid expansion has cost 2,000 jobs in furniture-making since the late 1980s.
- A private prison run by Wackenhut in Lockhart, Texas, houses a company called LTI which assembles circuit boards for IBM and Texas Instruments. Wackenhut built LTI a brand-new facility (using prisoner labor) and charges the company a rent of $1 per year. To top it off, LTI gets a tax abatement from the city.

  But before this cozy arrangement, LTI operated a circuit board plant in nearby Austin, employing 150 workers. The company laid them all off and moved its equipment to Lockhart.
- DPAS, a literature assembly firm,

Look for the prison label

Some examples of prison labor for private profit:

- Picking pineapples and processing macadamia nuts for Hawaiian Tropical Products (replacing workers imported from Micronesia and Mexico).
- Sewing lingerie for Victoria's Secret (South Carolina).
- Taking plane reservations for TWA (California Youth Authority).
- Sewing blue jeans under the "Prison Blues" label (Oregon). Shirts with the slogan "Made on the Inside to be Worn on the Outside" or "Sentenced to Life on Earth" sell for $27 each.
- Data entry for Unibase (Ohio).
- Building a nuclear power station (South Carolina).
- Sewing graduation caps and gowns (South Carolina).
- Making windshield wiper parts (Ohio).
- Telemarketing for Congressional candidate Rep. Jack Metcalf.
- Sewing Eddie Bauer clothing (Washington).
- Building electronic menu boards for McDonald's (Oregon).
- Packaging Windows '95 and Microsoft Office software in Washington (ended after exposure in media).
- Stocking shelves for Toys 'R Us in Illinois (ended when exposed).
- Packaging for Starbucks (Washington).
- Stuffing envelopes for US West (Washington).

More numerous are jobs in state-owned or federal prison factories. Jailed workers in Ohio, for example, make furniture, cleaning products, street signs, U.S. flags, boxes, clothing and shoes. They also do asbestos abatement, data entry, auto repair, printing and drafting, and furniture refinishing.

Federal prisoners build a wide range of goods, ranging from clothing and furniture to war materials, including missile cables and bomb parts. The federal government's UNICOR is the largest single employer of prisoners.

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closed its facility in Tecate, Mexico, in favor of San Quentin.

Prevention, not bogus cures

Youngstown, Ohio, where Alice Lynd lives and works, was devastated by the steel mill closings of the 1980s. She helped found the Prison Forum group after Youngstown officials hailed the construction of a new "Supermax" prison there as a job-creation coup. Prison Forum has drawn up a platform on prison labor that would protect both imprisoned workers and those outside the walls. Besides banning the displacement of outside jobs, it would give prison workers the right to unionize and strike, or, at the very least, to report their grievances to an outside labor organization to advocate on their behalf.

Lynd is a Quaker whose long-time activism has ranged from union support to draft counseling during the Vietnam war. Her work with prisoners, she believes, is "consistent with traditional Quaker concerns; it has roots that go way back." Prison Forum includes a retired schoolteacher, professors of criminal justice and English literature, two steelworkers and the religious education director of a Unitarian church.

It's easy to imagine a scenario in which a worker loses his job, commits a crime out of desperation, and then ends up working for his former company in jail. But at least he's got the job, not the foreign competition!

As an attorney, Lynd is able to work directly with prisoners while also taking education into the community. "People tend to think of criminals as people who are like barbarians," she says, "people who are outside the society. But most of them are going to return to society, and they may have a more difficult time than they had before to reestablish themselves in a constructive mode, rather than go from bad to worse." She wants to "assist by giving people hope, help them figure out how their future can amount to anything, how they will make it on the outside."

Unfortunately, she doesn't see prison jobs, in their current form, as a big part of the solution. "Some major plants will hire ex-convicts," she says, "but there are an awful lot of occupations where they're not going to.

"We need to do much more at the prevention end. Increasingly repressive prisons and longer terms are not meeting society's needs. Jobs, education, assistance to get off drugs are being shortchanged to try to deal with it at the wrong end of the problem." TW

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BACK ISSUES WITH CONNECTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S TOPIC

The following back issues of* The Witness *contain articles which may relate directly to* The Prison-Industrial Complex, *or simply to the spirit of this month's topic.

- *Economic justice (5/94)*
- *Economies of sin (3/95)*
- *Immigration: the flight into America (12/97)*
- *In need of a labor movement (9/96)*
- *Unmasking the death penalty (9/97)*
- *Welfare 'reform' and poverty in the 1990s (3/98)*

Other available back issues:

- *Africa: Come, spirit, come (6/95)*
- *Alternative ways of doing church (8-9/94)*
- *American Faces of Islam (5/96)*
- *Body wisdom (5/95)*
- *Can Christians learn the earth's song? (10/98)*
- *The Christian Right (10/96)*
- *Christians and animal rights (10/93)*
- *The communion of saints (11/93)*
- *Disabilities (6/94)*
- *The Episcopal Church in conflict (5/98)*
- *Fasting in Babylon (12/96)*
- *Glamour (11/94)*
- *Godly sex (5/93)*
- *Holy matrimony (12/95)*
- *Hospitals: quality, access and spirit (6/96)*
- *In defense of creation (6/93)*
- *International youth in crisis (7-8/93)*
- *The Left (3/94)*
- *The New Party (11/95)*
- *Northern Ireland: winds of peace (11/97)*
- *Ordination: multi-cultural priesthood (5/92)*
- *Perspectives on Aging (1-2/93)*
- *Resisting sprawl (10-95)*
- *Resurrecting land (4/95)*
- *Silence (1-2/96)*
- *Staying in my denomination (10/94)*
- *Trickster spirit: a paradigm for social action? (7-8/98)*
- *What to do with what you don't believe (4/98)*
- *When the church engages rage (12/92)*
- *Who is mentoring today's young adults? (9/98)*
- *Women's spirituality (7/94)*

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Bearing witness across the divide

by Joe Summers

And she asked, "Can you describe this?"
And I said, I could.
And a smile appeared where her face had once been.

— from a poem by Ann Akhmatova about an exchange with a woman in one of Stalin's concentration camps

When my congregation, The Church of the Incarnation, was established its members decided to focus on prison ministry. It seemed to connect our concerns with such evils as racism and sexism and the way the poor are treated. It also seemed a way to root ourselves in our area, as the institutions which weren't wanted elsewhere — including two jails and two prisons — were put in our rural township.

When I was hired by the church, I felt some foreboding that this was the congregation's major form of outreach, not only because I suffered from claustrophobia but also because I didn't understand why it was so important. After 11 years of working in Michigan's prisons, it is clear to me that the issue of incarceration is one of the most central issues of our time.

Simply entering a prison makes one aware of the barrage of propaganda that we are subjected to daily which leads us to understand crime as a problem of evil people. Again and again I have seen the enormous relief which sweeps over people after their first extensive visit to a prison, as they realize the prison is filled not with demons but with people, with all the dreams, aspirations, good and twisted intentions, wholeness and brokenness that you find among people throughout our society.

It is worth noting that one of the new religions that has emerged and spread quickly within Michigan's prisons looks to Nat Turner as its saint and looks forward to the day of judgment in terms of interracial war.

Encountering the poor

There are some middle- and upper-class people in our prisons, but overwhelmingly you encounter the poor. Having previously worked in a shelter for the homeless, I found it to be exactly the same population, with almost the same percentage of mentally ill folks. Their problems are manifold, but they are not the creatures who inhabit films like *Silence of the Lambs.* Doing prison work leaves one much less afraid of the poor.

In a society that looks increasingly like South Africa under apartheid, prison outreach allows middle-class people to reach across the growing divide between the poor and the affluent. It allows us to experience the devastation which goes hand in hand with the new society we are creating, as seen from the perspective of those for whom this society has no place.

In trying to accurately bear witness to the reality of our prisons and what they are doing to people, one is forced to either use a language that sounds hyperbolic or use statistics that seem to deny the human character of the tragedy which is occurring. So many of those in our prisons seem to have been programmed by life experiences for destruction. The prison system almost guarantees this fate, as 80 percent of those who are released from prison are re-arrested within something like five years.

Incarceration has emerged as a catch-all solution to a wide variety of social problems. A study of Michigan's highest-security women's facility found that the majority of women were there for multiple offenses of such crimes as shoplifting, prostitution, and bad check writing. The vast majority of prisoners have drug and alcohol problems. Most enter lacking high school educations. Most have been victims of domestic violence.

One of the horrors of prison work is to discover that a large proportion of the deinstitutionalized mentally ill are now in our prisons. A federally mandated study of Michigan's prisons done in 1987 found that 19.7 percent of the prison population was severely psychiatrically impaired and 47.5% moderately impaired.

Racism and alienation

Doing prison outreach also puts you directly in touch with the racist reality of life in the U.S. today. There is the racism of sentencing laws which penalize the poor 100 times more severely for the form of cocaine they use (crack) than the form normally used by the middle-class and wealthy, even though scientists have testified there is no fundamental difference between them.

There is the racism of a criminal justice system which only has mercy on those who can afford expensive lawyers. The rate of incarceration of African Americans is several times higher than the rate of incarceration of blacks under

Joe Summers is co-pastor of the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation, Pittsfield Township, Mich. The work of **Nancy Jean King,** an inmate at the Florence Crane Correctional Facility in Coldwater, Mich., was featured in a Prison Arts Project exhibit in Ann Arbor, Mich.

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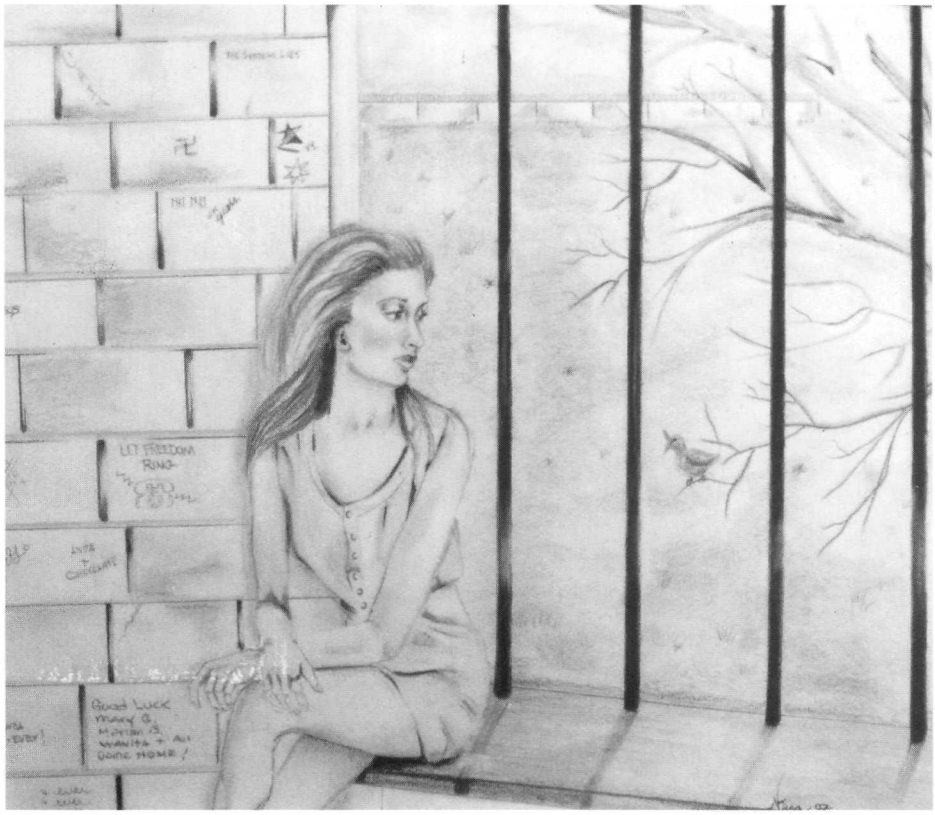
apartheid in South Africa. Today, more black men aged 20-29 are in prison than in college. (This is even more outrageous when one realizes they could all be sent to the best universities for less money.) Nationally, more than 25 percent of black men are under some form of criminal justice control at any given time. One out of four black men will go to prison in his lifetime — and this does not include jail, parole, or probation.

A number of the black members of our congregation had to quit prison outreach, feeling it was simply too painful to see the destruction of African-American youth. To have others take control of your body and its most basic functions leads to a level of alienation and anger which is overpowering. That a society with a legacy of slavery could so quickly move towards acting this way towards so many of the men who are the descendants of slaves is unconscionable. What it may mean for future interracial conflict cannot be underestimated. It is worth noting that one of the new religions that has emerged and spread quickly within Michigan's prisons looks to Nat Turner as its saint and looks forward to the day of judgment in terms of interracial war.



The beauty out there **by Nancy Jean King**

Fostering dependency

Prisoners tend to be people suffering from one form or another of dependency problems — yet they are put in a context which forces them into total dependency and denies them almost any grounds for building up a new sense of self. When we have tried to set up projects such as making crafts to raise funds for domestic violence shelters, they have been vetoed again and again for "security reasons." Having been denied the opportunity, sometimes for many years, to make the simplest of decisions in day-to-day life, the incarcerated are then thrust back into society and told they must immediately find jobs and housing and stay straight. It's no wonder few can make the transition. The Rand Corporation did a study comparing felons who had committed similar crimes, some of whom were incarcerated, while others were simply let off. It was found that those who had been let off were less likely to be re-arrested then those who were incarcerated.

Michigan vs. Minnesota

At the same time that Michigan set about constructing 30 new prisons for a cost of one billion dollars, Minnesota passed a community corrections act. The act was designed to divert one half of the population that was going into prison into community programs. These programs address a variety of things needed to help participants become successful members of society — e.g. permanent housing, a job, education or job training and drug and/or alcohol counseling. They put millions of dollars formerly going out of communities back into communities. Though the programs have not been magical, most participants have about a 30 percent recidivism rate — less than half the rate for those who have been incarcerated.

Impact on prison employees

For decades, prisons have been Michigan's largest growth industry. Prisons have been held up as political plums for communities that have suffered auto industry cutbacks. But the alienation and dehumanization which occurs in prisons also affects the thousands of people now employed by the prison system. A system that no longer believes in rehabilitation makes its employees instruments of punishment. One hears widespread stories of the personal and domestic unhappiness of many of the guards. In a system

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that has very little direct accountability to the public and which is accountable to the legislature only for security problems, it is easy for people to lose their perspective. I remember hearing in our Bible study that women in the prison were being handcuffed, spread-eagled and naked, to stone slabs when they acted up. The administration clearly felt maligned when they were criticized for this, for they had even gone to the trouble to keep video cameras on the women to make sure no one abused them.

If the public could get video footage of the solitary confinement units, which often house prisoners covered with feces, one suspects the outrage over the treatment of the mentally ill would quickly force changes. This is not likely to happen any time soon, for cameras are not allowed in most prisons — again, for security reasons. Our governor is currently even blocking a United Nations human rights inspector from visiting Michigan's prisoners. No doubt, she also poses a security threat.

Temptations

To be a Christian in the context of such great evil is to be prey to a number of temptations.

The individuals being ground up by this system desperately want you to perform some magic which will deliver them from their hell. Many offer it: "Pray and God will get you out of prison."

The majority of Christians in most of the prisons I work in have bought into a Christianity that says that God can and will act to deliver you from prison apart from any human agency — if you just have enough faith. Stories abound of miracles: cures of the ailments so many suffer, abusive guards who fall dead, prisoners who keep the faith and get out.

In the context of such desperation, one can bask in simply being so needed and so valued. A large percentage of prisoners get very few visitors. Your presence is bread for them.

Conversions are ample. It's easy to feel that in trying to rescue as many individuals as possible you are doing all that can be asked of you. Of the thousands of religious volunteers who come into Michigan's prisons each month, very few participate in any kind of lobbying to change the system that is putting people there.

Finally, in the face of such apocalyptic evil one can submit to the spirit of the apocalypse and come to feel that nothing you can do can really make any difference. The forces you encounter can seem too large and too inhuman to be held accountable. At conferences on the corrections system, you will encounter some who can only recite litanies of the terrible evils they have confronted, but whose litanies only end up paying homage to the beast, as they have lost any ability to believe in their power or the power of others to confront it.

Those of us fighting to resist these temptations are not left with much. We do what we can and try to bear witness, so that when the time comes — when minds and hearts become open — we can testify and be heard, to stop the systematic destruction of our sisters and brothers. TW

Prison theater

An English professor at the University of Michigan has found theater to be one means of bridging the gap between prisoners and those on the outside. Buzz Alexander teaches two theater workshop courses that take students inside Michigan prisons to work with inmates.

Based on the educational theories of Paolo Freire and the theater experiments of Augusto Boal and Ross Kidd, Alexander's approach is based on "respect for people and refusal to impose one's own perspectives and style," he explains. "There is a sense that people can address their own issues creatively, and do best when they make their own decisions. We bring in some tools and create a space where this can happen."

For prisoners, "theater offers a chance to work with other people, to invent, to perform, to respect their own lives and stories as significant," Alexander says. For students, the experience "is often transformative. They go to a place none of them have been, which has been stereotyped and mythologized, where their friends and family are afraid they will get assaulted or killed, and they find genuine, friendly, warm, creative human beings. They also get a look at who's there, and see the high percentage of blacks and minorities."

In the workshops, participants work collectively to improvise theater productions.

"The basic theme in a huge percentage of plays is the re-establishment of family relationships and community building," Alexander says. "There have been a number of plays about what happens when you get out of prison. Some have been autobiographical, and deal with runaways, how to get out of a gang, and neighborhood stories. A lot of prisoners have younger brothers, or children, and they are concerned about them."

The communal work builds relationships "that continue out in the yard," Alexander says. Many participants return for subsequent workshops, and one women's facility has its own theater troupe, "Sisters Within."

— Marianne Arbogast

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Restorative justice: making things right

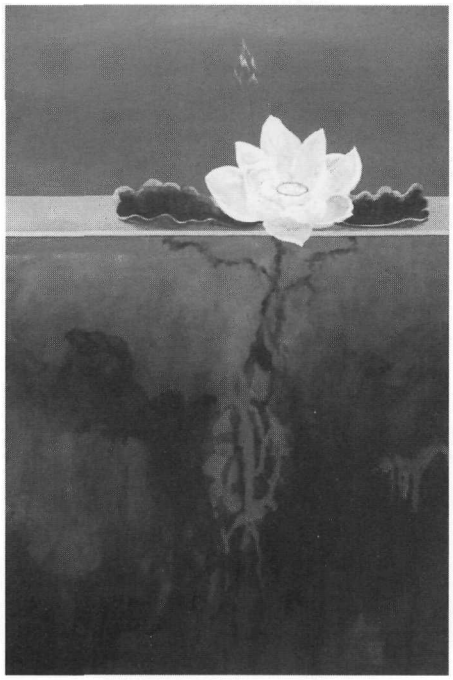
by Duane Ruth-Heffelbower

I recently heard a woman who survived a home invasion robbery, where her husband was killed and her daughter raped, muse about the term "criminal justice system." "Shouldn't it be 'victim justice system'"? she asked.

The truth is that our U.S. criminal justice system is focused on providing procedural due process for those accused of crime. It puts few resources toward those harmed by the crime, with some notable exceptions. This is what I and others call a "retributive justice system." It asks whether a law was broken, who did it, and what measured dose of pain they deserve in consequence. Howard Zehr suggests that a retributive justice system makes certain assumptions:

- Crime is a violation of law.
- The state is the victim.
- The victim-offender relationship does not matter.
- The debt is paid by "taking punishment."
- The balance is righted by punishing the offender.
- Justice is found in an adversarial process following rules.

Which one of us would feel, as a victim of crime, that we had received justice from such a process? My suspicion is that we resonate better with the assumptions of restorative justice as described by Zehr:



***Lotus* by Anthony James**

- Crime is a violation of people and relationships.
- Justice should identify needs and obligations and make things right.
- Justice encourages dialogue and agreement, giving victims and offenders central roles.
- Justice is tested by the extent to which responsibilities are assumed, needs met and healing encouraged.

Restorative justice is a new old thing. Village cultures have always had justice systems that looked like the restorative system described above. If you kill my pig, you owe me a pig plus something. The Bible has a lot to say on the subject. We may remember an eye for an eye, but Deuteronomy goes into great detail on the subject of righting wrongs by payment of damages or the doing of helpful acts. The standard measure of justice throughout human history has been compensation for losses and the righting of relationships. Village cultures can't afford the luxury of locking someone up, which means supporting them and their family. The direct cost of our system is lost in the huge national economic structure. Howard Zehr chronicles the fairly recent creation of the retributive justice system in his book, *Changing Lenses*. It dates back only to the centralization of power by English kings, but has been exported throughout the world by European empires.

Restorative justice is not a program or a process, but a way of understanding justice. All justice processes can be placed on a continuum with retributive at one end and restorative at the other. The idea of restorative justice is to work at moving all processes in the restorative direction.

Ron Claassen of the Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies of Fresno Pacific University has published a set of Principles of Restorative Justice, which have been adopted by the United Nations Alliance of Non-Governmental Organizations Working Party on Restorative Justice as a starting point for their work. By applying these principles to any justice practice, it is possible to rate the practice as more restorative or more retributive. The basic question is whether the particular practice tends to make victims whole while restoring the offender as a productive member of the community. The closer a practice comes to this ideal, the more restorative it is.

Victim offender reconciliation

What do some more restorative practices look like? A good example is Victim

Duane Ruth-Heffelbower is Associate Director of the Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies of Fresno Pacific University, Fresno, Calif.; <duanerh@fresno.edu>. The work of artists **Anthony James** and **Mark Killingsworth,** both inmates in Michigan prisons, have been featured in the Prison Arts Project exhibition in Ann Arbor, Mich.

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Offender Reconciliation Program. VORP has a simple premise: Crime creates obligations which must be voluntarily acknowledged by the offender, a plan for making things as right as possible needs to be developed by the victim and offender working together, and future intentions have to be made clear. While there is a range of practices within the VORP movement, each program provides a trained mediator who brings the victim and offender together to work out a plan. Here in Fresno with VORP of the Central Valley, most cases are handled by trained volunteer community mediators, most of whom are members of churches. The rest are done by VORP staff.

We have found through experience that the best way to help victims heal is to have offenders acknowledge their wrongs (confession), do what they can to make things right (atonement, which is always a combination of restitution and grace), and be clear about their future intentions toward the victim (repentance). As agreements are made and kept, trust and healing grow.

Fresno VORP has handled more than 7,000 cases since a small beginning in 1982. One case I worked with involved the theft of a new car from a theater parking lot. The owners of the car had gone to a dinner theater to celebrate their anniversary. Since it was a new car, and they were concerned about it being stolen, they parked right under a light in the parking lot. When they returned, the car was gone. They called police, and finally went home in a cab several hours later.

The standard measure of justice throughout human history has been compensation for losses and the righting of relationships. Village cultures can't afford the luxury of locking someone up, which means supporting them and their family.

Unlike most stolen car stories, this car was found by police with the thief in it. He was a teenager with no prior record. I received the case as a community volunteer, after the offender admitted the charge in juvenile court, and the court sent him to VORP to set restitution. (A person unwilling to admit the offense cannot participate in VORP).

The first step was to meet with the offender and his family to make sure he was really ready to participate. The house was hard to find. I wasn't even aware there were houses there on the far side of the freeway. The offender was home, but his aunt, with whom he was living, was not. VORP wants parents or guardians present for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is that the process and follow-up go better when they are involved. The aunt in this case was working long hours away from home, and wasn't prepared to participate. I asked the offender to describe what he had done and he told the story of wanting a car to go somewhere, and deciding with a friend to take one from the theater parking lot.

"I'd have to steal it."

I described the VORP process and asked if it sounded like something he would like to do. He said he would like to. Then I asked what he would do if the owner wanted cash restitution. There would surely be at least an insurance deductible the owners were out. He thought for a while and said, "Well, I guess I'd have to steal it." So we talked some more about the whole idea of making things right. As it turned out, this teenager was an undocumented alien who couldn't get a job. His parents were working far from home and had no money. The only way he could pay restitution was by working for the victim or someone else who would pay him.

Then I met with the victims, a couple in their 50s. This was their first new car and its theft was devastating. Worse, in stealing the car the offender had used a body shop dent puller to remove the ignition. The electrical system was seriously damaged, and in numerous trips to the dealer it could not be successfully repaired. They had lost the use of the car for almost a month, and now had an unreliable car. I described the VORP process, told them about the offender, and made an appointment for a meeting.

When the day of the meeting came, the offender didn't show up. I called him at home and he was there. His aunt had been called in to work and he was stranded miles from the meeting place. The vic-

Restorative justice websites

The principles of restorative justice developed by Ron Claasen are available at <http://www.fresno.edu/pacs/docs/rjprinc.html>. A more complete edition with explanations of each principle is available at <http://www.fresno.edu/pacs/docs/rjprinc2.html>.

Information on the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program can be found at <http://vorp.org>.

The article "What is forgiveness?" by Ron Claasen, which describes the peacemaking model developed at the Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies, is available at <http://www.fresno.edu/pacs/docs/restj2.html>.

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tims went to a restaurant to eat and I drove out to pick up the offender. The round trip took an hour. The meeting went well. The offender told the story of the theft and answered questions. The victims were puzzled about him taking a car right under a light. He said: "That gave us light to see what we were doing." Then the victims told in detail how the theft had impacted them. The offender was visibly moved. He hadn't wanted to cause trouble like that, he just wanted a ride.

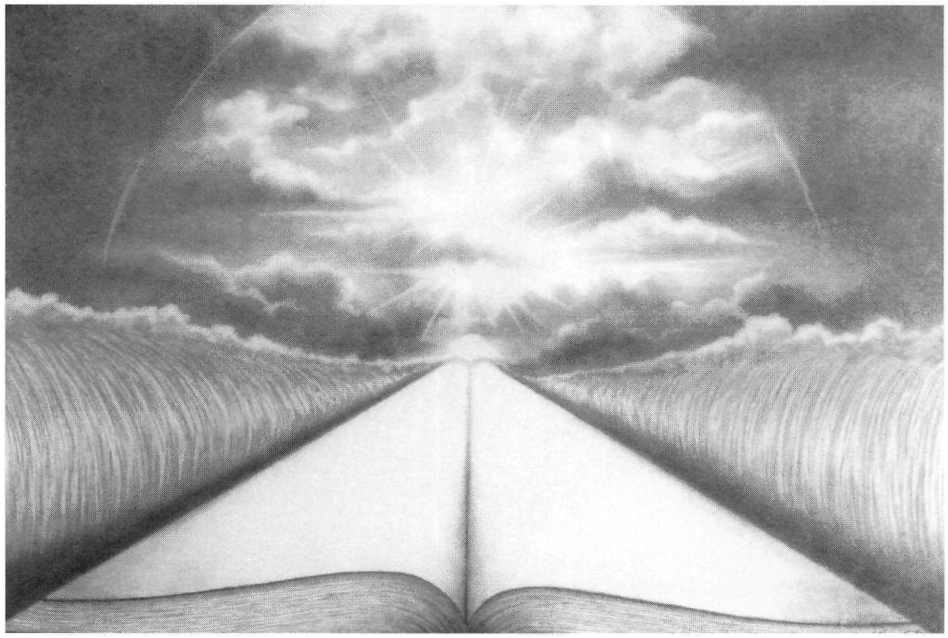
Finding a solution

How to make things right? The victims had close to a thousand dollars of out of pocket damages, and a new car they couldn't trust. The offender described his situation. He wanted to do what was right, but didn't see how he could pay them back. The couple talked about the problem and made a proposal which the offender accepted. The woman was moving her professional office the next week. He would come and help her move. Then on Thanksgiving he would go with them to help serve dinner at a soup kitchen. The solution satisfied everyone. The woman asked: "Are you going to steal our car again?" "No," the offender replied, obviously amazed at the suggestion.

Offenders who go through the VORP process are much less likely to re-offend, according to studies, and if they do re-offend it is usually at a lower level. By supporting and volunteering in a program like VORP, the church community can have a positive impact on community safety and security. It can also help turn offenders back onto a productive path.

VORP in prison

What about those who wind up in prison? Is restorative justice of any relevance to them? The principles of restorative justice can be applied to any situation, from home to school to criminal justice, and prison is no exception. There are at least two restorative projects in California which are happening inside correctional institutions.



Genesis **by Mark Killingsworth**

Inmates at the men's prison in Vacaville formed a Victim Offender Reconciliation Group some years back. These men are unlikely to meet their own victims, having committed serious or violent felonies. VORG aims to help inmates become aware of the personal damage they have done to their victims, and to perform symbolic restitution through community service. The group brings in representative victims, such as volunteers from Bay Area Women Against Rape, to talk about the personal cost of victimization. The idea is to help the men rebuild the feelings of empathy which they had to deny to commit their crimes, and which prison tends to drive out as well. As it happened, the first "graduate" of the group was paroled to Fresno. Some very experienced VORP volunteers set up a support group for him, and he had not re-offended at the time of his death.

At the other end of the incarceration spectrum, Fresno VORP is working with Fresno County's new boot camp program. The cadets go through an extensive victim awareness training as part of their program. When they are ready to graduate, VORP holds a Community Justice Conference. This meeting brings together the cadet, his or her extended family, the victim and any advocates the victim desires, a probation officer and any other community or professional persons who would be helpful, to work out an aftercare plan for the cadet. The plan is developed by consensus, and can include anything the group believes would be helpful to the cadet in becoming a productive member of the community. VORP and the probation department then monitor the cadet's progress with the plan. If the plan breaks down, the group comes together again.

Crime creates obligations. As restorative processes help offenders accept responsibility for their actions and make things as right as possible with the victim, our communities become safer, better places to live. TW

www.thewitness.org

The Witness' website has recently been revamped and improved! Check out the changes at <www.thewitness.org>.

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Lambeth analysis

Radical mutuality still out of reach

by Ian T. Douglas

For 35 years the Anglican Communion has heralded the coming of the Church in the Southern Hemisphere. Since the Anglican Congress of 1963, the Anglican Communion has acknowledged, in rhetoric anyway, that Anglicanism is no longer a Church identified exclusively with the industrialized West. The Congress' manifesto, "Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the Body of Christ" (MRI), called for a radical mutuality and sharing of power and resources. No longer would rich churches in the West be the givers and poor churches in the South receivers. Rather, there would be one common global household of God sharing God's mission of reconciliation together. Today, following Lambeth 1998, it is clear that: 1) the emergence of the Church in the South has gone beyond rhetoric resulting in a profound shift in power within Anglicanism from the industrialized West to the Southern Hemisphere; 2) the cultural hegemony on which both liberal and traditionalist Western Anglicans have traded since the advent of the Anglican Communion has begun to crack; and 3) the mutual responsibility and interdependence envisioned by the 1963 Congress remain out of reach in today's Anglican Communion.

Church convention watchers in the U.S. would do well to observe how the calls of Resolution 1.15 to amend diocesan budgets for the sake of the poor compare with diocesan resolutions affirming or decrying Lambeth's position on sexuality.

Ian Douglas is Associate Professor of World Mission and Global Christianity at Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass., <idouglas@episdivschool.org>.

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Vital Signs

The first few weeks of Lambeth promised hope of a renewed Anglican Communion where a multiplicity of voices could come together around a shared vision of God's calling to us as followers of Christ. Anglicans do worship well and our gatherings around the table offered hope for a new Church, a new humanity. The opening service in historic Canterbury Cathedral was filled with the promise of new life embodied in symbols and words from Kenya, Central America, Brazil, Egypt, Tanzania, and the Seychelles, to name but a few. Never before had Anglicanism staged, in so public a way, a Eucharist where the radical plurality of voices that make up the Communion was heard and celebrated.

The daily worship of the Conference also offered the promise of many voices with service orders and leadership from almost every church in the Anglican Communion. Unfortunately, the difficulties of sharing a common cup in two sweltering gymnasiums and the apparent need for each Province to include as many bishops as possible in each liturgical event seriously undermined the worshipping experience. Perhaps if we had all gone home after the opening service, the possibilities for Anglicanism to embrace a new level of mutuality and interdependence among disparate peoples and voices would have been better served.

Initial commonality on issues

Initially the Conference seemed to find some commonality on issues, especially the evils of international debt. The desire to challenge the international monetary order that cripples poor countries with outrageous debt service payments at the expense of local initiatives in education and health care was the one issue raised by all pre-Lambeth regional meetings. There was genuine possibility that the Anglican Communion would call for a jubilee of international debt. The strength of such a voice was not lost on the powers and principalities as Jim Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, reeled defensively in the face Church pressure to forgive debt. The strong leadership of Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndugane of Southern Africa, who chaired Section One: "Called to Full Humanity," helped to give voice to those who suffer the most at the hands of international debt. Resolution 1.15 on "International Debt and Economic Justice" moved by Section One and ultimately embraced by the Conference is a far-reaching and profound call to political, corporate and churchleaders for amendment of life for the sake of a new common-wealth of God.

This longest and most substantial of all the close to 100 resolutions passed by the 1998 Lambeth Conference [for a listing

see *TW* 10/98], was more than polemics. It laid out a clear plan of action for leaders of debtor and creditor nations and leaders of the Church. If taken seriously, the resolution will have direct and lasting implications on how we handle our money, including challenging dioceses to fund international development programs at the level of at least 0.7 percent of annual total diocesan income. Church convention watchers in the U.S. would do well to observe how the calls of Resolution 1.15 to amend diocesan budgets for the sake of the poor compare with diocesan resolutions affirming or decrying Lambeth's position on sexuality.

Radical pronouncements ignored by Western press

The majority of resolutions put forward by Section I were consistent with the resolution on international debt and called on the Church to take a prophetic stand for the poor and the oppressed of the world. There were resolutions affirming the U.N. Universal Declaration on Human Rights (I.1), calling for: justice for women and children (I.3), solidarity with those who suffer in Northern and Western Uganda, Sudan, Rwanda,and Burundi (I.6 and I.7), and the cessation of the use of nuclear weapons and land mines (I.11 and I.13). Two resolutions on creation (I.8) and ecology (I.9) resonated deeply with the radical call to conversion and amendment of life embodied throughout the section's work. Resolution I.8 on creation proclaimed unequivocally that "unbridled capitalism, selfishness and greed cannot continue to be allowed to pollute, exploit and destroy what remains of the earth's indigenous habitats and that the future of human beings and all life on earth hangs in balance as a consequence of the present unjust economic structures, the injustice between the rich and the poor, the continuing exploitation of the natural environment and the threat of nuclear self-destruction." The fact that such radical pronouncements as these from Lambeth are not lifted up in the American secular and religious press is not surprising since they call Western Christians to actively work against the capitalist structures that privilege us at the expense of the world's poor.

Proclamation without reconciliation and unity

Section II of the Lambeth Conference focused its work around the theme "Called to Live and Proclaim the Good News." Most of the resolutions from this section advanced theologies of mission with a primary imperative on the proclamation of the Gospel. Its seven resolutions sought to advance or protect evangelization initiatives in a variety of contexts and dealt with such topics as: religious liberty in Islamic societies (II.4), concerns over the processes of increased urbanization (II.7) and the contributions of young people to the Church and the world (II.8). What was lacking in most of the resolutions from Section II was a shared vision with Section I of God's mission as that of reconciliation and unity of all people with God and each other in Christ.

The missiological imperative of reconciliation lacking in Section II, however, resurfaced in Section IV, "Called to be One." Here the Anglican Communion's commitment to the full, visible unity of the Church, embodied in both the ecumenical movement and bilateral conversations with other distinct churches was affirmed. In over 25 resolutions, the Lambeth Conference embraced initiatives by which Anglicans could work together with sisters and brother Christians across the world's traditions.

Disparate and diverse resolutions from the regions

Many of the themes of sections I, II, IV were echoed in over 30 resolutions submitted by groups of bishops from geographic regions. These resolutions were a grab bag of pronouncements as diverse as the regions themselves. Resolutions on "International Debt Cancellation and the Alleviation of Poverty" (V.2), and "A Call for Solidarity in Working for Justice, Peace and Reconciliation in the World" (V.3) were bumped up alongside of resolutions on an Anglican provincial structure for continental Europe (V.6), the end of the United States embargo against Cuba (V.9), religious persecution in Pakistan (V.19), Korean unification (V.26) and thanksgiving for the end of Apartheid in South Africa (V.31). The fact that the

Call for national church nominations

The Joint Standing Committee on Nominations for the General Convention 2000, is requesting nominations for members of the Executive Council, the General Board of Examining Chaplains, trustees for the Church Pension Fund and the General Theological Seminary, all of whom will be elected at General Convention. The Committee will nominate twice the number of candidates that is available for each vacant office.

Nominations are to be "broadly representative of the constituency of the Church," (Joint Rule 21 of the rules of the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies). Biographical sketches will be prepared on all nominees and published in the General Convention 2000 Blue Book.

Nomination Proposal forms must be completed in full, including the nominee's biographical data, photograph, and signature. Forms are available from the General Convention Office, Joint Standing Committee on Nominations, Attn.: Mr. Vincent C. Currie, Jr., 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017 or by calling the General Convention Office at 1-800-334-7626. Nominations should be received by the committee by December 1, 1998. Nominees for positions will be notified by the Committee by September 30, 1999.

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resolutions from the regional groups were so disparate and diverse, speaking from so many different cultural, political and theological contexts, was a manifestation of the breadth of the Communion. It was unfortunate that the crush of business and the political wrangling in debates over sexuality in the closing week of Lambeth overshadowed the richness and plurality of voices from the regional groups.

Can faithfulness and pluralism coexist?

The multivocal nature of the regional groups, however, stood in opposition to the work and resolutions of Section III. The section's title, "Called to be a Faithful Church in a Plural World," gave away the section's biases. Here a "faithful church" was cast in an oppositional relationship to a "plural world." The hermeneutical assumption here was that faithfulness and pluralism cannot coexist.The multiplicity of voices in the Church and beyond are not to be celebrated but rather overcome. It is no surprise then that the majority of resolutions coming out of Section III sought to define the limits and boundaries of both Christian belief and the Anglican Communion. Resolutions on "The Bible" (III.1), "The Unity of the Anglican Communion" (III.2)," Subsidiarity" (III.3) and "The Authority of Holy Scripture" (III.5) all tried to articulate a "classical" Anglican ecclesiology that lifted up the authority of Scripture and the creeds and that of local diocesan episcope. Section III relied uncritically on the formularies of both the Eames Commission report and the Virginia Report of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (resolutions III.4 and III.8 respectively). The fact that these reports were heavily influenced by and primarily authored by Anglo-American men who sought to manage diversity in the face of increased pluralism in the Church and the world seemed lost on most at Lambeth.

The Eames and Virginia Reports represent a last gasp effort to make room for those who are "different" at the table of Anglicanism without challenging the cultural and theological hegemony upon which the table rested. What is called for, however, and what ultimately began to show itself at Lambeth, was that many in the Anglican Communion today do not want a seat at the table of Western Anglicanism but rather are seeking a place in a different kind of household.

Increasing primatial drift: the ACC vs the Primates

The final bid of Western hegemony to manage the increasing plurality of voices in the Anglican Communion is manifested in resolution III.6 on "Instruments of the Anglican Communion." Those who worried about an increasing primatial drift in the Anglican Communion need look no further than this resolution for confirmation of their fears. This resolution asks "the Primates' Meeting, under the Presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury ... to exercise an enhanced responsibility in offering guidance on doctrinal, moral and pastoral matters" across the Communion. It further empowers the Primates' Meeting, once again under the presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury, to intervene with "moral authority" in Anglican Churches "in cases of exceptional emergency which are incapable of internal resolution within provinces, and giving of guidelines on the limits of Anglican diversity in submission to the sovereign authority of Holy Scripture and in loyalty to our Anglican tradition and formularies." Whose Anglican tradition and formularies??? Finally Resolution III.6 recommends that the bishops representing each province in the Anglican Consultative Council should be the primates of the province, thus excluding other episcopal representation in the only international, representative council of the Church.

Resolution III.6 thus undermines the sense of mutuality at the heart of the Anglican Consultative Council. It gives the Primates' Meeting unheard of extra-metropolitical authority to intervene in the life of Anglican provinces locally, while eviscerating the sharing of power with lay people and priests in the old ACC.

What most people fail to consider in the passage of this resolution is the history that led to both the founding of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) and the Primates' Meeting. The genesis of the ACC lays in MRI and the Anglican Congress of 1963. Seeking a new way for sisters and brothers to come together for mutual sharing and consultation, the ACC was founded in 1971 as a representative body of the churches of the Anglican Communion made up equal numbers of bishops, priest, and lay people. The ACC, meeting approximately every three years for almost three decades, has taken a variety of important stands and positions, including the affirmation of the ordination of women in 1976 and 1979. Shortly thereafter, Presiding Bishop John Allin of the U.S. called together the primates of the Anglican Communion to counter the progressive steps of the lay people, priests, and bishops of the ACC. This first meeting of the primates to rebuff the ACC position on the ordination of women would lead to ongoing regular meetings of Anglican archbishops. And so the Primates' Meeting was born not of far reaching and inclusive imperatives but rather of reactionary and conservative fears of change.

Through the years the relationship between the ACC and the Primates' Meeting has been both tenuous and careful. This was vividly demonstrated in the joint meeting of the ACC and the Primates in Cape Town, South Africa in

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1993. Many agreed that the meeting, although useful for coordination of initiatives, seriously curtailed the ACC and its work. The gathering of archbishops was simply too weighty to be countered by the lay people, priests, and bishops gathered in the ACC. Substituting the Primates for the bishops on the ACC, Resolution III.6 virtually guarantees the silencing of priests and lay people on the ACC. Who in their right mind would speak out against either their own archbishop or the gathered Primates in an ACC meeting? As if this slide to primatial power was not enough, even the consultative imperative of the Anglican Consultative Council was symbolically done away with in Resolution III.6 by changing the name of the ACC to the Anglican Communion Council.

Resolution III.6 thus undermines the sense of mutuality at the heart of the Anglican Consultative Council. It gives the Primates' Meeting enhanced responsibility for pan-Anglican doctrinal and moral matters and unheard of extra-metropolitical authority to intervene in the life of Anglican provinces locally, while eviscerating the sharing of power with lay people and priests in the old Anglican Consultative Council. Resolution III.6 creates for the first time an Anglican Curia under the Presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Fears over loss of hegemony

Is a new Anglican Curia really what we want in the Anglican Communion today? Is a curia of any kind the best way forward in these tenuous times where Western power is being tested and an increased plurality of voices are being heard across the Communion? Here lies the real issue in Lambeth's discussions over sexuality. I suspect that in their heart of hearts those in the West who fought so hard (and were so astute politically) to make Lambeth about sex really are afraid of the loss of straight, white, male Western hegemony in the Anglican Communion today. The fact that Western traditionalists were able to find a collegial voice in Third World Church leaders was not due so much to shared theological and scriptural understandings but rather to the dynamics of increased pluralism in the Anglican Communion. While Anglo-American conservatives sought to reassert the cultural, moral and ecclesiological norms of a church gone by, Third World church leaders struggled to find their voice in a new church and new world. Whereas the former is reactive and backward looking, the latter is progressive, looking forward.

Neither conservatives nor liberals in the West, however, are willing to cede their hegemonic ways to the emerging church in the South. We simply do not want to give up our power. Conservatives applaud the victory of their position on sexuality at Lambeth made possible by bishops in Africa, Asia and Latin America while liberals try to discount the voices of the South as uneducated, unsophisticated, and unenlightened. Both positions are ultimately racist and imperialist,for neither side wants to give up our control over the life of the Communion. The way out of this morass is not to be found in a new Anglican Curia, under the Presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury, nor more resolutions from Lambeth. We in the West must realize that we are no longer at the center. We must realize that our beloved Anglicanism is no longer the church of our white ancestors but rather a church of the poor who suffer at the hands of political and economic structures of our own making. It will be a long and difficulty journey for those of us who have found comfort and power in Western hegemony. But in the promise of plurality released at the first Pentecost and now located in the diversity of voices across the church in the South is the hope of our new life in the Body of Christ — and is the hope of the new Anglican Communion.

Churches question state-sponsored gambling

Eighteen Canadian church leaders have sent a joint letter to the nation's justice minister calling for an independent review of state-sponsored gambling in Canada.

David Pfrimmer, of the Lutheran Office for Public Policy, said, "What's remarkable is the unanimous ecumenical consensus among the Christian churches in Canada that state-sponsored gambling is bad public policy, bad economics and bad public morality."

There are more than 50 casinos in Canada, and there are plans for more to be built. Recent estimates state that the casinos earn profits of $1.75 billion a year; federal and provincial governments take almost half this amount as taxes and duties. A national magazine, *MacLeans*, reported in May that the average Canadian household was gambling $840 each year.

The churches, which are members of the Canadian Council of Churches, the nation's principal ecumenical organization, demonstrated their united opposition to gambling by sending the letter to Anne McLellan, minister of justice and attorney general of Canada. Among those signing the letter was Jim Boyles, general secretary of the Anglican Church of Canada.

The church leaders wrote: "The promotion of state-sponsored gambling is at an all-time high in Canada." They asked the government to establish an independent body "to review the social, economic and legal impact of legal and illegal gambling and charitable gaming in Canada, and to make recommendations regarding public policy."

The leaders also called for Canada's 10 provinces to "place a moratorium on gambling expansion until such time as a public review has been completed and policy recommendations have been enacted." The letter said the church leaders understood the provinces' need for revenue. "However, it is difficult to recognize government's duty to uphold the public interest in provincial plans to increase the number of gamblers and the frequency with which they gamble and lose." — *ENI*

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An FBI agent's conscience

by Jim Douglass

What is at stake in the Justice Department's reopened investigation into the assassination of Martin Luther King? Judging from the story of Donald G. Wilson, it could be the power of an FBI agent's conscience to uncover a monstrous question. When King was shot to death on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Wilson was a 25-year-old FBI agent in Atlanta. He had joined the FBI to "do something positive in civil rights from an investigative standpoint."

During his FBI training, however, Wilson was shocked to see the bureau upholding segregated housing in Maryland for the only black member of his class. "It became patently clear," he said, "this was a racist organization."

As Wilson spoke his mind to fellow agents about racist incidents in the bureau, he was given a stark warning. On an assignment where only the FBI knew his identity and whereabouts, he received a phone call from an "operator" who told him to return home immediately — his baby daughter was deathly ill. Wilson phoned his wife and learned their child was fine. But he knew the FBI had sent him a message.

In Atlanta the bureau assigned its agent not to his first choice of duty, civil rights, but to the politically more innocuous stolen cars division. It thereby unwittingly facilitated Wilson's becoming the first FBI agent to open the door of James Earl Ray's abandoned white Mustang, in an Atlanta parking lot, one week after King's assassination. There he discovered two papers, each bearing the name "Raul," in the midst of other written information. He kept the papers secret from the bureau he had learned to distrust.

In 1997, two decades after his resignation from the FBI, Wilson showed the papers to Coretta King, after seeing on TV her moving courtroom appeal for a trial for James Earl Ray. Ray had claimed repeatedly that Raul was the name of the mysterious gunrunner who set him up, whereas the government denied Raul's existence. Mrs. King made Wilson's Raul papers the primary basis for her appeal for a new investigation into her husband's murder, which is now taking place.

The paper Wilson preserved 29 years in a vault turns out to be evidence of a connection between the assassinations of Martin Luther King and John F. Kennedy.

Wilson recently phoned me from his home near Chicago to describe what he and his wife were experiencing from the reopened investigation. Wilson first refused to turn over the papers to the Justice Department, which has had him and his bank under surveillance. Then he and his wife received haranguing phone calls from lead investigator Barry Kowalski. Federal investigators began to question neighbors about the Wilsons. Kowalski obtained a search warrant from a Chicago judge to go into Wilson's bank vault after the papers. Wilson finally surrendered them to a federal marshal who promptly contaminated them, confirming Wilson's sense that the government had no intention of treating them as proper evidence. Then in an unexplained incident, the tires on Mrs. Wilson's car were slashed.

Wilson noted a discrepancy in the government's attitude. On the one hand, Barry Kowalski wrote him a preliminary letter (with a copy to Coretta King) saying he considered Wilson's evidence critical to the investigation. On the other hand, the FBI publicly proclaimed his evidence a fabrication.

Is there anything in the papers seized by the Justice Department that could indeed be "critical," not to a bogus investigation of a martyr's death, but to the legitimacy of the government conducting it?

One of the papers is what Wilson calls the "telephone document." It was identified by an investigator working with Ray's attorney William F. Pepper as a page from a 1963 Dallas telephone book. Wilson says he was astounded to learn further from Pepper that a phone number written at the top of the page, preceded by the letter "J" and followed by the name "Raul" and an extension number, was listed in 1963 as belonging to Jack Ruby's Vegas Club in Dallas.

The paper Wilson preserved 29 years in a vault and then shared with Coretta King turns out to be evidence not only of Raul's existence but of a connection between the assassinations of Martin Luther King and John F. Kennedy.

In 1998 at age 55, Wilson is a teacher in a special tutoring program for high school students with behavioral problems. He takes a special pride in his students' achievements. He hopes he doesn't lose his job as a result of the public stand he's taken. In our last phone conversation he said quietly, "This takes a lot of faith. It's so disheartening what these people of power do." TW

Jim Douglass is a long-time peace activist now working on a book about the King and Kennedy assassinations.

Keeping Watch

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Requiem for the Capeman

by Edwin Muller

Paul Simon's musical, *Capeman,* opened on Broadway in January and closed a few months later following much controversy and poor reviews. One newspaper called it "Paul Simon's murder musical." Another suggested it was like a wounded animal that needed to be put out of its misery. Simon considered it the culmination of his musical career. I saw the opening and considered it an excellent production. Why, then, did one of the most costly and widely advertized musicals ever produced on Broadway fail so quickly? The answer is to be found in the emerging mythology of our culture and in what we believe about the fundamental human condition.

Early on in his project, Paul Simon called me and asked if I would do some research on the biblical theme of redemption. When I later read that the theme of the musical was to be redemption, I sensed it might be in trouble. Since Russia is no longer "the evil empire," we are a society in search of new demons. We seem to have centered on the poor, people with AIDS, the homeless and people in prison. In our mythology, demons are objects to be destroyed. Our society does not want its demons redeemed. "Can I forgive him, can I forgive him? No, I cannot," are words that ring out in one of the songs.

In 1959 Salvador Agron committed a crime in which two teenage boys were killed on a playground in New York City. He was the war counselor of a gang and wore a nurse's cape. His friend Hernandez carried a sharpened umbrella. The media labeled them the "Capeman" and the "Umbrella Man."

Agron was sentenced to death at age 16. Because of his age, Eleanor Roosevelt made a plea for clemency. Governor Rockefeller responded and changed Agron's sentence from death to life. After three years in Sing Sing's death house, he spent another 20 years in New York State prisons. I was his chaplain for 15 of those years.

Our society does not want its demons redeemed.

In prison, Agron learned to read and write. He became a poet, attended college and eventually participated in a college study release program. In prison at night, on campus during the day, he lived what he called a "Jekyll and Hyde" existence. Convinced he would never make parole, he ran away to Arizona where there was a Hispanic governor. He was brought back to New York and tried for escape. Found not guilty due to impaired judgement, he was returned to prison for another two years and then paroled. He lived six years in the "free world," then died a natural death.

Today Agron would probably never receive clemency from death to life. He certainly would not attend college in prison or go on study release. Those programs have been canceled. He would not be found innocent of escape and probably would not be paroled.

During the 31 years I have been a chaplain, I have seen the New York State prison population grow from 11,000 to over 70,000. Sixteen prisons to seventy. About 80 percent of the inmates come from eight neighborhoods, seven of which are in New York City. Books like Jonathan Kozol's *Amazing Grace* tell us what is going on in places like the South Bronx. The crime generative factors of urban decay and human desolation are so profound that prison seems to be at the end of every road.

Prior to the Attica riot in 1971, prisoners were completely cut off from the outside world. I remember one man who came to prison in a stagecoach in 1911. He was still in prison in the early 1970s. Another man, sentenced to 40 years to life in 1945, was given a 25-year subscription to a daily newspaper by his family. Three newspapers went out of existence during his sentence. After the *World, Mirror* and *Sun,* he ended up with *The New York Times.*

After Attica, we were inundated with all kinds of projects and programs. We knowingly agreed to participate in the superficial activity rather than address the profound human problems. This went on for 20 years until a new shift took place. Now we have few programs, extremely long sentences, a large number of 23-hour-a-day cells, little parole and no hope. People in prison may be out of sight for a longer period of time, but they are not out of mind. They are at the center of our new set of demons.

What we really need now is a requiem and not a musical. Salvador Agron is dead, but the Capeman is very much alive as a symbol of what society hates. We can put him to rest by transforming him into a symbol of the thousands of young people today who deserve a better way than the road that leads to prison. TW

review

Edwin Muller is Director of Chaplaincy for the State of New York.

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Advocating for prisoners' children

by Leah Samuel

Joyce Dixson is devoted to creating a space to meet the needs of women in the prison system, and the children that system forces them to leave behind. Through Sons and Daughters of the Incarcerated (SADOI), a program she created, Dixson offers counseling to young people who face the confusion and fear that comes with having a parent in prison.

"If a mother goes to jail on Tuesday, that child is expected to be in school on Wednesday," Dixson says. "And a child is not going to go to school and say, 'I look like a mess and I'm sleeping in your class because my mother went to jail.' Teachers just see this as bad behavior and the children wind up in the principal's office. When I've talked to teachers about this, they've told me that it was better to ignore it so they wouldn't embarrass [the children]."

"Losing a parent, particularly a mother, to prison is the most devastating thing that can happen to a child, short of that parent's death," she adds. "They're torn between the guilt and shame and feelings of loss and abandonment, and dealing with the person (a relative, foster parent or other guardian) who is not used to them."

Dixson created SADOI in 1995, two years after she herself had been released from a Michigan prison. She had served 17 years and 120 days of what had been a life sentence.

"I was incarcerated in 1976 for shooting my abusive partner," she explains. "In the 1970s, there were not many domestic violence laws for women. I ended up in the old Detroit House of Corrections — DeHoCo — which was the only prison for women in Michigan at the time.

Going to prison gave Dixson a first-hand look at the sexism that fueled the lack of resources and services for women prisoners and their children.

"I learned that women were totally disregarded, and held in no respect," she says. "Women had no court access. We didn't have jailhouse lawyers because we didn't have law libraries. There was no education for women, while men [prisoners] were being bussed to universities to complete degrees.

"Once, some officials came through," Dixson adds. "The question I asked them was, 'Why did men have so much and women have nothing?' I was told to my face that men had more because men needed more. I think it was at that time that I wanted to learn how to be an advocate for women." Dixson started by advocating for herself. She learned a lot from a group of young, progressive women attorneys, who filed a lawsuit against the Michigan Department of Corrections over the lack of services for incarcerated women.

"In 1982, we won," Dixson says. "We've been fighting to get the department to comply ever since."

Women prisoners did get some services, including work and education programs which gave them an opportunity to earn money and gain skills. A pilot education program allowed Dixson and a few other women to earn degrees from the University of Michigan. But, like some of the other gains for incarcerated women, that program was cancelled soon afterward.

While completing her university education, Dixson also got training and work — as a paralegal for the prison's legal services department. "I found out that, at that time, if a woman was in prison she could be

"Researchers are saying that the number one predictor of whether a child will be incarcerated is whether a parent has been incarcerated."

Joyce Dixson

Witnessing the quick and the dead

Leah Samuel is a Detroit-based free-lance writer.

found guilty of neglect for not being with her children.

"My own children were six and eight when I left," she says of her two sons. "They were really lucky, because they weren't separated or put in foster care."

Nonetheless, there were effects.

"Children of the incarcerated are socially ostracized, and they are sometimes treated as if they had committed the crime," Dixson explains. "My older son was fighting in school almost every day because kids were teasing him about me. So he went and did what kids do — he found other kids like himself."

Dixson describes her release from prison as "a miracle" of coincidences, opened doors and open minds.

"I had a tremendous amount of support from people in the community," she says. "A woman judge was elected. My charge was reduced to second-degree murder, and I was released."

But going home revealed for Dixson an even more compelling motivation to work with children.

"I had been in prison trying to become the best woman I can be for myself and my children, and I come back and my son is serving a natural life sentence for conspiracy to commit murder. I figured I had to do something."

Her opportunity came when Michigan's Washtenaw County allowed her to start working with juvenile offenders. She had the tools to do it. She was a certified paralegal with a master's degree from the University of Michigan. But it was her incarceration experience, she says, that was the most valuable to her work.

"[In prison] I met a lot of women and worked with a lot of their children's cases, involving children that were really small. Now, some of those same kids were in my program, in juvenile cases.

"I had such wonderful relationships with them. And it's not because I'm so great, but because I do what nobody else has taken the time to do: relieve their minds. I answer questions for them — the questions they always have but never could ask, like 'Does my mother walk around with a ball and chain and drink water out of the toilet?' They have so many fears."

These days, Dixson works as an independent contractor, seeing 65-150 children each school year. SADOI now has a board of directors, and is working on becoming a non-profit agency.

"We want to make it so that every child with a parent in prison can have this. We have to get to them early. Researchers are saying that the number one predictor of whether a child will be incarcerated is whether a parent has been incarcerated."

Dixson believes that the issues facing incarcerated women, and the factors that put women in prison, are challenges that still have to be met.

"If anything, it's gotten worse," she says. "More and more prisons are being constructed and reconstructed and money is going into warehousing people. There has to be alterative sentencing for non-assaultive offenses, and an end to mandatory minimum sentences.

"We have to get the men out of the women's prisons, and that will cut down on the rape and sexual abuse. Women already come in with low self-esteem, and most of the women in prison are there because of their male partners. And we're letting men run prisons.

"We have to start working with the children of incarcerated mothers and fathers," she adds. "We have to get immediate intervention for them, to break the chain of intergenerational incarceration."

That chain has been broken in Dixson's family. Her younger son recently graduated from Eastern Michigan University with a degree in broadcast journalism.

"That lets me know that the children of the incarcerated don't have to go to prison," she says.

Dixson asserts strongly that her spirituality and her experiences help her meet the demands of her own growth.

"I am 47 now and taking nothing for granted," she declares. "I am a woman who is trying to find a way to reach my potential. Too much of my time was wasted and lost. I am trying very, very hard not to limit myself because of my fears, or because of my past. In prison I decided to totally surrender myself to God. Whatever happens to me is all right as long as I know I'm in the right place with Him." TW

We ask your prayers

This past Labor Day *Witness* staff and close friends were shocked to learn that *Witness* co-editor Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann was suffering the incapacitating side effects of a brain tumor.

Jeanie underwent surgery on October 1. Most, but not all, of the growth was removed. To everyone's dismay, the pathology report showed it to be an aggressive, fast-growing cancer.

Witness readers will recall that in the October issue Jeanie speculates that environmental toxins may account for a large share of the headaches and allergic reactions she has suffered over the past decade. She now wonders about a possible similar cause behind this tumor.

We've set up a spot on our Web site, <www.thewitness.org>, for Jeanie and her partner Bill to post updates on her condition and offer reflections on how this tumor is affecting their views on life, the universe and everything.

As Jeanie pursues treatment (her age and good health are working in her favor), we ask readers to keep her, Bill and their two daughters, Lydia and Lucy, in their prayers. — *J.W.*

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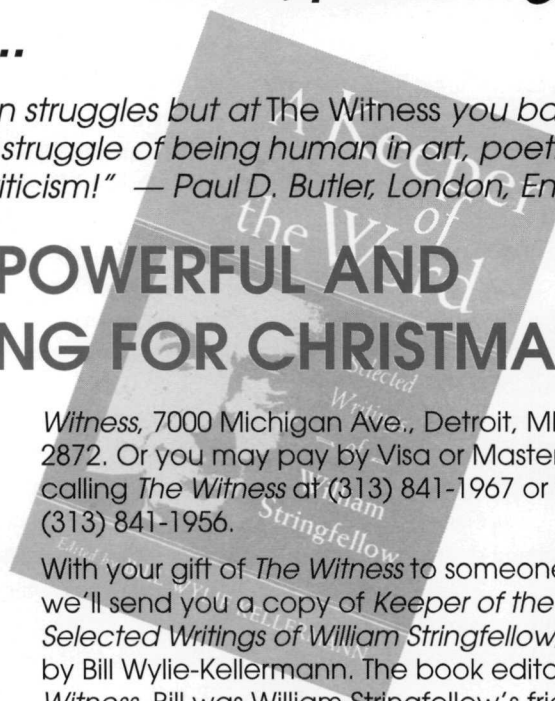
"Socialists and left-wing radicals of all kinds often forget to celebrate the fullness of life, preferring dry analysis to dancing. ...

... Of course, analysis is critical for liberation struggles but at The Witness *you balance analysis with the beauty, celebration and struggle of being human in art, poetry, good humor and a healthy dose of self-criticism!" — Paul D. Butler, London, England*



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The Witness

Volume 81 • Number 12 • December, 1998

Off-the-grid resistance: a reclaiming of soul

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Post-Lambeth debate

PLEASE KEEP US INFORMED about the post-Lambeth debate, especially the reactionaries' focus on personal morality and avoidance of corporate responsibility — we do not want to be Wit-less!

Jared Jackson
Pittsburgh, PA

Jubilee 2000

PLEASE SEND A SAMPLE COPY of *The Witness* to Bob Johnson, a Lutheran pastor I met last week at the Jubilee 2000/USA National Conference, "Break the Chains of Debt." This was a stimulating and educational conference. About 140 people preregistered and attendees were from over 20 states and several foreign countries. As the Jubilee year approaches and this initiative gathers steam, [*Witness* contributing editor] Ched Myers gave a wonderful Bible study on the sabbatarian basis and history of Jubilee — truly outstanding and suggestive of a broader application than this question of international debt relief.

I very much like the way you develop a monthly topical focus. Some topics engage me immediately. Others don't, but given your extensive and varied coverage, they become interesting and compelling.

Joanne Droppers
Arlington, VA

Not renewing

IT'S OBVIOUS THAT YOU MEAN WELL, but it's hard to take the church-y jargon and the rather insistent self-congratulation in each issue. Devoting several pages to gee-gosh-how-wonderful-you-are letters is very off-putting. Wish you well in reaching the people who resonate with you.

Ann Landsberg and Tim Baehr
Jamaica Plain, MA

Endowment fund gift

The Episcopal Church Publishing Company, publisher of *The Witness*, is pleased to announce that it has received a very generous gift to its endowment fund from an anonymous donor who says she wants to affirm the work that *The Witness* is doing. Income from the fund is crucial to the ongoing life of *The Witness*. The staff and board are very grateful for — and humbled by — this expression of enthusiasm and strong support for our work.

letters

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Classifieds

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Total ministry parish seeks part-time priest for the next three years or so. If you understand "total ministry," would like to live in Colorado, don't need to preach every Sunday or cover all the ministries, would like to help a lively, established parish get into and up to speed in a brand new facility, contact the parish administrator at P.O. Box 29279, Thornton, CO 80229.

Episcopal Urban Interns

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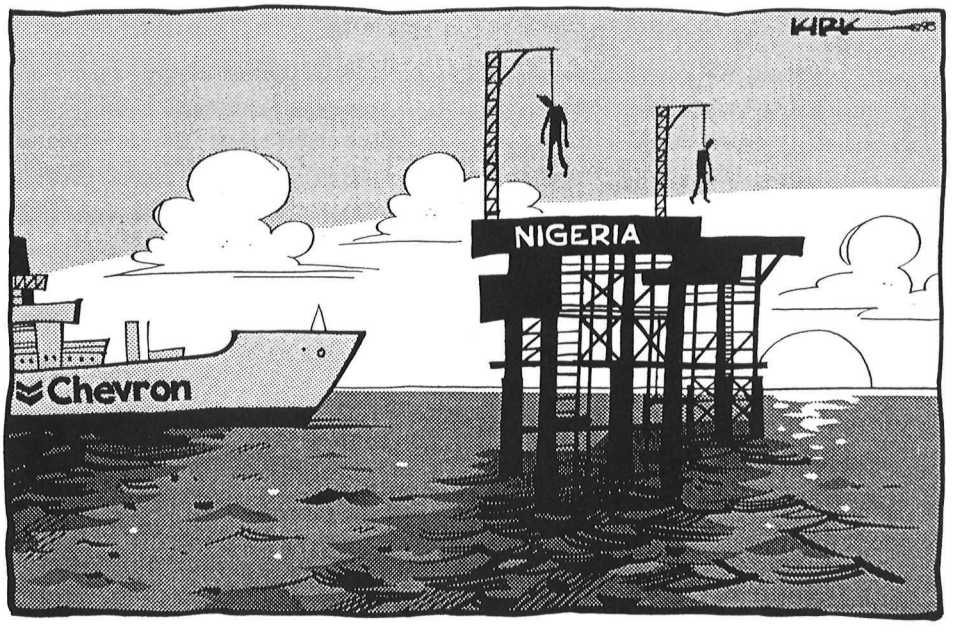
Vocations

Contemplating religious life? Members of the Brotherhood and the Companion Sisterhood of Saint Gregory are Episcopalians, clergy and lay, married and single. To explore a contemporary Rule of Life, contact: The Director of Vocations, Brotherhood of St. Gregory, Dept. W, Saint Bartholomew's Church, 82 Prospect Street, White Plains, NY 10606-3499.

Classifieds

Witness classifieds cost 75 cents a word or $30 an inch, whichever is less. Copy is due the 15th of month, two months prior to publication. Contact Marianne Arbogast, <marianne@thewitness.org>.

On not giving up in Northern California



"Our church is going to be part of the Billy Graham Crusade," the Dean of the Cathedral announced.

As soon as these words hit my ears, alarm bells, buzzers, and whistles went off in my head. I was convinced that Graham — because he was a fundamentalist and because most of my family had been converted to fundamentalism through, in part, his television crusades — had played a big part in the loss of my family. Fundamentalism provided them with ammunition to wage a war of hatred against the evils of homosexuality. I received many tracts from various family members condemning homosexuality, and asking me to "repent of my sinful ways."

I accepted the fact that I could never be part of my family unless I changed. I had reconciled my feelings of hurt and loss — until the Dean's words hit my ears, causing memories to resurface once again.

I came to this parish thinking that my partner and I could participate in the community as open lesbian women, but now I felt threatened. Would the church be safe after joining the Crusade? Emotions of vulnerability joined with the old memories of hurt and loss. My first inclination was to leave. But something told me to think about my decision.

Gathering my thoughts, I tried to focus on what the Dean was saying: "Counselors from our church will be able to provide outreach to those who do not want to join conservative churches."

After the service I was approached by a couple of people suggesting that I become a counselor with the Crusade. They felt that by my becoming part of the counseling team I might reach out to gay and lesbian people. I knew this was an impossibility. I couldn't be open and be accepted as a counselor with the Billy Graham Crusade. But I realized that within my own church there was a need to address and advocate for gay and lesbian issues.

I decided to start a chapter of Integrity, the national organization of lesbian and gay Episcopalians and their friends. I approached the Dean with my idea. I was given permission to proceed. Since that time Integrity has become increasingly visible in this diocese through its presence at diocesan conventions, sponsorship of pro-gay programs, playing an active role in the life of the parish, and providing outreach to gays and lesbians. The parish which once supported the Billy Graham Crusade has offered its support to Integrity, and has become a strong advocate for gay and lesbian rights.

I felt Integrity was making many inroads in the battle for justice — until last summer's Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops and the bishops' condemnation of homosexuality. Once more I felt I was not welcome in a church which claims to welcome everybody. I was not only discouraged for myself, but for other gay and lesbians who need to hear that the church accepts them just as they are. I was ready to give up.

But then I heard that former Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning was coming to Sacramento to help our parish celebrate its anniversary. I had read his book *No Outcasts* and knew that he was a strong advocate for gay and lesbian justice issues. I guessed that his presence would provide a lot of moral support to gay and lesbian people who felt the church had turned its back on them. I invited him to stay an extra day so he could do something special for our Integrity chapter. Much to my delight he graciously accepted.

Bishop Browning talked about his perceptions on the Lambeth decision and the need for gay and lesbian justice. Because of the turnout and positive response I believe that his presentation will prove to be a pivotal point in raising awareness of gay and lesbian justice in our diocese, and may even open doors to dialogue about sexuality issues.

When I reflect on how negative situations, such as Billy Graham and Lambeth, can become positive, I am reminded of the assurance Christ gave to us when he said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." I think it is this peace Christ promises that leads us all in our work for justice.

Barb Chandler, TSSF
Sacramento, CA
<barb@gvn.net>

Moving???

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The Witness

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Assistant Editor Marianne Arbogast
Magazine Production Maria Catalfio
Book Review Editor Bill Wylie-Kellermann
Poetry Editor Gloria House Manana
Controller Roger Dage
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8 Renewable energy on the eve of the millenium by Rachel Brahinsky
People who choose to live off the utility grid aren't just hippies anymore. Admitting to their role in global warming and frightened of dwindling oil reserves, petroleum multinationals are also, belatedly, turning to solar energy. In the face of Y2K, control is still an issue.

14 Localizing food systems by Kenneth A. Dahlberg
Americans have been blind to the importance of food in local and regional environments and economies. Eating locally could be a step in making communities healthier, more self-reliant and more equitable.

16 Embracing a common share in God's mercy by Peter Selby
Selby, one of the chief proponents of third-world debt relief at last summer's Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops, began exploring the topic of debt via the issue of student loans and ended up confronting the 'obsessive lending and borrowing which are a feature of our economy' — and, disturbingly, of our social relationships.

20 Investing to profit community by Elizabeth McPherson
The Genesis Community Loan Fund enables investors of conscience to invest in the common good.

The Witness offers a fresh and sometimes irreverent view of our world, illuminated by faith, Scripture and experience. Since 1917, *The Witness* has been advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those people who have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." We push boundaries, err on the side of inclusion and enjoy bringing our views into tension with orthodox Christianity. *The Witness'* roots are Episcopalian, but our readership is ecumenical. For simplicity, we place news specific to Episcopalians in our Vital Signs section. *The Witness* is committed to brevity for the sake of readers who find little time to read, but can enjoy an idea, a poem or a piece of art.

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

The editor whose editorial appears on page 5 crafted this issue.

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Cover: L'Adoration des Bergers *by Georges de La Tour, Louvre, Paris*

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Office: 7000 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210-2872. Tel.: (313) 841-1967. Fax: (313) 841-1956. To reach Julie Wortman: HC 35 Box 647, Tenants Harbor, ME 04860. Tel.: (207) 372-6396.
E-mail: <[first name]@thewitness.org>.
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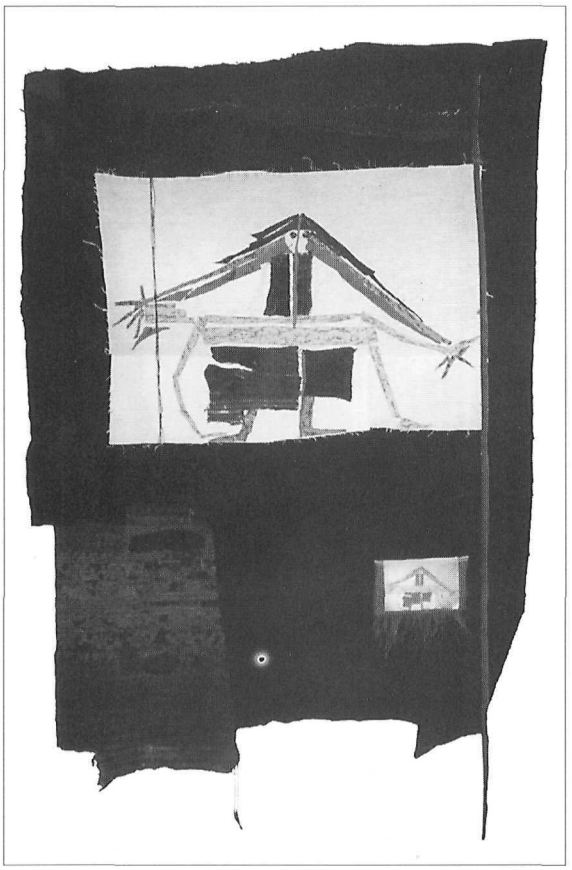
Off-the-grid resistance

by Julie A. Wortman

Lately I find myself wishing that I could spend my full-time energies homesteading. With the freezer full of our homegrown produce, the back porch littered with buckets of root vegetables, and five cords of wood stacked in readiness to fuel the wood stove, it sometimes seems possible. But our lives are still too thoroughly entwined with the economics of credit and debt — and we are still too woefully ignorant of what true homesteading would entail — to turn the wish into flesh-and-blood reality all at once. Still, my household is incrementally working toward a simpler life lived sustainably and green. And we are not the only ones attempting such a shift. In this process of acting very locally and very personally, people are learning to grasp the global connections more deeply, reinventing Left politics along the way. The success earlier this year of organic food producers and consumers in forcing the federal government to back off from its proposal to water down organic labeling regulations is a stunning recent example of the growing power of green-minded voters to challenge society's routine accommodation to the profit-at-all-costs agricorporations.

But let us be clear. We are talking here not primarily about a reclaiming of political will, but about a reclaiming of soul.

I've been thinking a lot about this lately as we here at *The Witness* have been living with the frightening reality of co-editor Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann's brain tumor. Having worked so closely with her over the past seven years and seen her overcome last-minute editorial disasters with breathtaking determination, it is unimaginable to me that she will not pull off a defy-all-odds recovery. Not that I haven't at times (all too characteristically) doubted her process, impatient for quick choices and fast positive results. But the politics of the medical world are not so easily or swiftly negotiated, especially for someone with Jeanie's strong sense of self-possession. She has proceeded in this matter trying to sort out the fact from the fiction, the life-giving from the life-denying, the self-affirming from the self-defeating.



Adelaide Winstead

Jeanie hasn't always gotten her way in life, but more than most people I know she is aware of the compromises she is forced to make and does her best to test and retest their validity. She knows who she is and to whom she belongs — and responds to life accordingly.

Without such self-possession, a person could end up sleepwalking her days away. In his own time, Henry David Thoreau believed such somnambulance afflicted most of the general populace. Worried that he himself might be infected, he packed himself off to Walden Pond in the hope that he might figure out how to live fully awake. His was a mystic's quest to which few of us consciously aspire. But living in a state of alert self-possession (which is not the same as self-centeredness) — that is, living as if we and our choices truly matter — is a sacred vocation to which we are all called.

The radical reordering of our individual and communal lives that such a way of living entails suggests why one mother's son I can think of was killed when he urged a disenfran-

continued on page 6

editor's note

Julie A. Wortman is co-editor/publisher of *The Witness*, <julie@thewitness.org>. Artist **Adelaide Winstead** lives in Tenants Harbor, Me.

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chised populace to embrace it. We spend the Advent season admonishing one another to keep our eyes open to the unexpected possibilities that open up when we honor this man's counsel as gospel. This we do in the face of continuing, often daunting pressure from the powers that be to accept their smoke-and-mirrors version of what we long for most.

Thoreau took to the woods to cleanse his palate of the politics and social presumptions of the powers of his time and to simplify, simplify, simplify. Thirty years ago like-minded folk went back to the land and off the utility grid. These days, with so many former hippies living mainstream lives and with corporations poised to wrestle the renewable energy movement away from any association with alternative economics, it is difficult to imagine completely unplugging from the systems that dominate our way of life. But I believe the off-the-grid metaphor — and the hope it embodies — still holds.

A resistance of going off the grid still means a resistance of making choices that free us to see how corporations, the global economy and the various powers and principalities of this world seduce us into living according to the bottom-line value of financial profit — profit at the expense of justice, profit at the expense of environmental quality and profit at the expense of our own self-possession as God's own. It is a resistance through which we teach ourselves awareness of life as it is — and through which we learn where our true security lies and what faithfulness entails.

Living in a state of alert self-possession — that is, living as if we and our choices truly matter — is a sacred vocation to which we are all called.

These off-the-grid choices could be modest in the extreme, such as committing oneself weekly to a complete day of sabbath or going "green" in some area of regular consumption — or they might entail dramatic lifestyle shifts, such as cutting up all the credit cards or joining a co-housing project. The purpose is to destroy the artificial limits of profit-based possibility and open up experimentation in ways of operating that nurture life, community and the common good. The goal is to learn sustainability, the uncomplicated exchange of goods and services that sustainability implies, and a commitment to environmental quality and egalitarianism.

If we're lucky, in the process more and more of us will wake up to the truth: that no one need go without the basics of life — including the self-possession required for choosing life in the face of death. TW

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BACK ISSUES WITH CONNECTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S TOPIC

The following back issues of* The Witness *contain articles which may relate directly to* Off-the-grid resistance, *or simply to the spirit of this month's topic.

- *Alternative ways of doing church (8-9/94)*
- *Economic justice (5/94)*
- *Fasting in Babylon (12/96)*
- *In defense of creation (6/93)*
- *Silence (1-2/96)*
- *Trickster spirit: a paradigm for social action? (7-8/98)*
- *What to do with what you don't believe (4/98)*
- *Women's spirituality (7/94)*

Other available back issues:

- *Africa: Come, spirit, come (6/95)*
- *American Faces of Islam (5/96)*
- *Body wisdom (5/95)*
- *Can Christians learn the earth's song? (10/98)*
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- *The New Party (11/95)*
- *Northern Ireland: winds of peace (11/97)*
- *Ordination: multi-cultural priesthood (5/92)*
- *Perspectives on Aging (1-2/93)*
- *The prison-industrial complex (11/98)*
- *Resisting sprawl (10-95)*
- *Resurrecting land (4/95)*
- *Staying in my denomination (10/94)*
- *Unmasking the death penalty (9/97)*
- *Welfare 'reform' and poverty in the 1990s (3/98)*
- *When the church engages rage (12/92)*
- *Who is mentoring today's young adults? (9/98)*

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Judgment Day

by Mary Thalia Pratt

When the angel with the flaming sword asks:
What have you done that is good?
What have you done that will last?
This is the answer I will give:

I walked long with my husband
on the wild uphill footpaths
remembering the names of flowers.

I gave thanks on a cold blue morning
while the new-raised sun
spread my shadow
along the unmarked snow.

I kept rosemary in a white pot
in my kitchen window.

I held my sister's hand ten days before she died
and we watched the sky turn orange on more time
and did not need to speak.

I played the piano for an old man in a nursing home:
"when the roll is called up yonder," and he sang.

I counted shooting-stars with my son
one summer midnight
and felt the skin of dew-covered grass
pulling us in safe.

The day before a February storm,
I took in a thin silver stray cat
with eyes the color of green olives.

I sat most of an afternoon in the sun
with my old dog, and later we rolled in leaves.

I trust that these will suffice.

© 1996 Mary Thalia Pratt. Pratt lives in New Haven, Vt.

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Renewable energy on the eve of the millenium

by Rachel Brahinsky

Turning from the highway into a quiet northern California town, I followed a windy macadam strip as it turned to gravel and then dirt. Counting three hilltops to the turn, I headed down a quarter-mile lumpy driveway cluttered with a rusting trailer and old machine parts to reach a rose-colored stucco straw-bale home.

I turned off the motor and was suddenly immersed in silence. There was no endless roar of traffic; the neighbors — each situated on 40-acre plots of land — were inaudible. Inside, the steady hum that usually accompanies modern appliances was noticeably absent. The culprit: an array of solar cells, standing sentinel, catching the rays of the sun to be converted into one of the cleanest and purest forms of electricity.

Since they built their home here five years ago, a lot of things in Ron and Pamela Benning-Hale's lives have changed. To save power, they turn the refrigerator off at night. They don't use the computer and the television at the same time when the sunlight is at its lowest level. And there's the monthly electric bill — it never comes.

"We wanted something that was energy efficient," Ron Benning-Hale explained. And in order to be less dependent on the corporations that control the energy market, the Benning-Hales chose to build their house "off the grid," that is, independent of the standard electric utility grid. Their appliances and lights run on electricity generated by a set of shiny black solar panels that rest just below the house, angled to receive maximum sunshine. When the skies are too grey (as they were during last winter's El Niño storms), the Benning-Hales fire up their gasoline-powered generator so they can keep the lights on a little longer.

'You start noticing stars.'

With solar power the Benning-Hales supply themselves with all of their electric needs — they watch television, play CDs and cook — they even log on to the Internet. But they find that, since rejecting the utility grid that most Americans take for granted, they have become more conscious of the world around them.

"When you're off the grid, you start paying more attention to nature," Pamela Benning-Hale said. "You start noticing the stars."

Two hours north of San Francisco, the Benning-Hales are positioned at the southern end of the broad expanse of hills and open space that make up the landscape of northern California. While the couple owns the only solar panels in their town, they happen to live in a region that is a hotbed of solar off-grid homes. Partially because of the availability of land for remote homes, and partially because of the high concentration of environmentalists and alternative-lifestyle seekers that populate California, more people live in solar powered homes there than in any other part of the U.S. But renewable energy has also become more accessible, more mainstream. In the 1990s, with 160,000 households nationwide living in solar homes, an increasing number of off-grid families are reported to be middle class.

Turning on a light or a television set may seem like an extremely simple act, yet the flip of a switch hooks us into a complicated and often highly political process.

From the politically paranoid to environmentalists

Richard Perez has watched the solar landscape evolve since founding *Home Power* magazine in 1987. With a circulation of 66,000, *Home Power* is loaded with how-to stories about renewable energy projects. "In1987, when we started the magazine, there were less than 1,000 people living off the grid [using renewable energy] in the U.S.," he said. At the time, with 18,000 readers, Perez sought to make alternative energy more accessible to a broader range of people.

"Our readers run the gamut from politically paranoid to religious folks to ecologically bent folks," Perez said. After reading the magazine for several months, many pick up enough knowledge to go off the grid. "Our readers stay with us for a while. Once they have learned what they need to know, they move on."

This eclectic group is part of a growing trend in the U.S. While the number is still extremely small, more homes run on renewable energy today than ever before, using wind-, sun- and water-powered systems. Among these, solar power is by far the most popular. Only 12 to15 percent of new renewable systems are windpower based while 5 percent are microhydro, or water power.

Rachel Brahinsky lives in San Francisco, Calif., where she works for the San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners.

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Falling solar costs

While wind and water systems have always been relatively inexpensive, the cost of solar panels was once prohibitive for most families. But as the technology has improved, the price has fallen. In the 1950s when the technology was invented by Bell Laboratories, photovoltaic cells (PV cells) — the blue-black silicone chips that collect sunlight on a solar panel — ran several hundreds of dollars per watt. Before 1985, there were no solar off-grid homes in this country. But by the mid-1980s the cost was down to $10; today the price per watt hovers around $6.

As the premium goes down, the number of solar homes rises. Shipments of PV cells have been increasing for several years. If industry projections are correct, by 2005 solar power will be cheaper than coal, sending people off the grid in droves. Now, of 160,000 solar homes in the U.S., around 80-90 percent are entirely off the grid.

Take the Benning-Hales. When they built their home in the early 1990s they hired an electrician to set it up like a standard grid-connected, utility-powered home. When it came time to bring in the wires, Pamela Benning-Hale called the major west coast utility company, Pacific Gas & Electric. "We investigated PG&E. Initially, we didn't necessarily want to be entirely self-sufficient but PG&E would have cost $25,000 to bring in. We couldn't afford it," she said. The solar electric system they eventually chose cost just $12,000.

The couple's choice of solar power wasn't only practical. They also were concerned for the health of the planet. After a trip to a river where she saw salmon caught and killed in the metal workings of an electric power dam, Pamela Benning-Hale was emotionally shaken, but took solace in the fact that her own power needs were not causing the death of living things. She says that the experience of living peacefully with nature has changed her. "Do you want to bring modernization out here and force it to happen," she asks those who wonder at her choice. "Or, do you want to look out here and see what's going to make your life a fuller life?"

***Road in Maine, 1914* by Edward Hopper** Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Flip-a-switch politics

The electric grid is like a tremendous web. If one part fails, the damage can be widespread. Snaking across the landscape, mostly hidden underground, the grid is so well established that Americans rarely consider its implications. While the electricity in most buildings once came from a local power plant, today the grid enables utility companies to purchase power from sources hundreds, sometimes thousands, of miles away. The city of Los Angeles, Calif., for example, taps into power which is generated by the Hoover Dam, situated in the middle of the Nevada desert. Until recently, the tiny town of Ashland, Ore., received electricity from a coal plant in Wyoming. When communities are detached from their power source, it is all too easy for them to ignore the environmental implications. Much of the northeast U.S. draws its electric power from Hydro Quebec, a series of dams in Canada's James Bay. Construction of the dams was highly controversial, and resulted in the flooding of hunting and fishing grounds of the indigenous people who still reside there, along with acres of wildlife habitat. Turning on a light or a television set may seem like an

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The power of choice: the sun

by Linda Tatelbaum

By five years, we'd succeeded in our goal. A small, passive solar house kept us warm on one cord of wood. A large garden and root cellar kept us well fed. We carried water, lit with kerosene, and cooked with wood. We even had the luxury of an indoor composting toilet. But simplicity is complex. While I never believed that the simple life meant the easy life, what I didn't foresee was the strenuous personal quest that lay before us as we grew with these choices.

Alternative lifestyles provoke controversy. Even more than the lack of a flush toilet, living without electricity made us an object of curiosity. We had taken a stand, and, like it or not, we were often called upon to answer for it. In my case especially, the stand had a way of solidifying, for in my work as a writer I extolled this chosen life. But all my essays and poems about the simple life made me want to spend more time writing and less on "grunt labor." Now I faced the hidden challenge: how to alter my position without destroying what I value.

It was hard to admit to conventional desires. Wouldn't I love to hear the sound of ice cubes tinkling in a glass once again, or the click of an electric switch flooding my house with light? But, once confessed, the harder part was trying to mesh these desires with the unconventional principles that still held true. That pulsing power line 100 feet from our door offered us a fast conversion. We could ease up on all this labor with a freezer, a refrigerator, lights, water pump, and so on. We just had to call the power company and sign our name. And pay the bills, of course. But kerosene wasn't all that cheap anymore either, and the fumes in our tightly constructed house worried us. Hooking up to the grid would clearly be the easiest solution.

Did I value my principles so little that for cheap convenience I would turn my back on my beliefs? How could I write about change while my electric typewriter hummed with splitting atoms? But I also saw how hard I had tried to be consistent without ever questioning "consistency." Was it possible, or even desirable, that my actions never contradict my beliefs?

But easy scared me after so much hard. I saw how suddenly I might find myself living someone else's life, driving off to work each morning so I could pay the bills instead of walking down to the spring for my daily water. Five years of hauling water seemed long, but how would 30 years of "working out" be?

Then we learned that people right here in Maine were installing photovoltaics, or solar electric power. Though highly technological, photovoltaics made harmonious use of an infinite resource, the sun. Photovoltaics are costly and provide only limited power (no refrigeration, for example, without many "panels"), but they fit our desire to alter, not destroy, our small-scale, self-reliant life. We clearly wanted to electrify our life, and now it was a question of how: with cheaper unlimited "grid" power, or with costly limited photovoltaics?

Most residential photovoltaic system owners do not live within sight of a public power line, as we do. Up on a mountain or out on an island, one can reasonably expect to find solar "arrays" where gasoline generators are the only alternative. But, seeing that power line out of the corner of our eye, we were obviously not concerned with what was reasonable. From an economic point of view, central power would clearly cost us less. But everyone knows that power rates rise as fossil fuels diminish, and nuclear power is not exactly free. And what will nuclear waste disposal or possible contamination cost? Photovoltaics would cleanly and quietly produce electricity for life. Surely we could afford to pay for that peace of mind.

Such economic reasoning brought us finally to this paradox: Cheaper central power might end up costing more; costly photovoltaics might well be a bargain.

We came so close to choosing public power that we went down to Sears to price freezers, and then paid a visit to the Central Maine Power office. Get the house

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Linda Tatelbaum, author, publisher, and homesteader, also teaches English part-time at Colby College. She has lived "off the grid" since 1977 with her husband in Appleton, Me., where they raise their own food and generate solar electricity. This 1983 essay is from *Carrying Water as a Way of Life: A Homesteader's History* (About Time Press, 1997). Available in bookstores or from About Time Press, 1050 Guinea Ridge Rd., Appleton, Me. 04862, for $9.95 plus $2 postage.

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wired, said the representative, and call us for the "power drop." We left the office in a daze, inexorably moving toward what we suspected we didn't really want. We found ourselves haunted by nostalgic regret. The quiet of the house and woods and garden kept whispering, Please, reconsider.

I saw that coming here had been a conscious choice. I had believed that living and writing about this life would be my contribution to change in the world. Did I value my principles so little that for cheap convenience I would turn my back on my beliefs? How could I write about change while my electric typewriter hummed with splitting atoms? But I also saw how hard I had tried to be consistent without ever questioning "consistency." Was it possible, or even desirable, that my actions never contradict my beliefs?

We did finally choose the hard way — photovoltaics — but we did not kid ourselves that it was morally consistent. That desire went out with the kerosene lamps and water jugs. We ended up with photovoltaics because we continued to value the pioneering spirit that brought us to the puckerbrush in the first place. Years of gardening had taught me that change is in the nature of things, yet I'd been resisting change in my own life, doggedly limiting myself to a worn-out definition of who I thought I was. "Getting power" gave me power, the power to accept my own changes along with those in the woods and fields around me.

I'm not living someone else's life now, any more than I was before. It's still my own life, even as I flick the switch. We live by power generated from our own choices, a personal resource that never runs out, and from the sun which lasts longer even than that. TW

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extremely simple act, yet the flip of a switch hooks us into a complicated and often highly political process.

In the 30 years since activists organized the first Earth Day, environmentalists have struggled to educate the public about the impact of the production of electricity on the environment. Hydroelectric dams kill fish and destroy habitats, and the burnt fossil fuels used to create electric power produce ecologically debilitating greenhouse gasses. These gasses, particularly carbon dioxide, are widely believed to be the leading factor in global warming, the accelerated heating of the earth that may be causing problems, among them extreme temperatures (both hot and cold), dangerous weather patterns and deadly bacterial growth.

Motivated by climate change — and profit

In the past year industries that had previously denied the reality of global warming have begun jumping on the solar bandwagon. Just last year British Petroleum CEO John Browne told a Stanford University audience that the company believes global warming theorists may be correct. "We must now focus on what can and what should be done," he conceded cautiously, "not because we can be certain climate change is happening, but because the possibility can't be ignored." Of total carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere, he told the crowd, nearly half comes from petroleum, his bread-and-butter product. Browne admitted BP's role in influencing climate change and revealed the company's decision to develop its fledgling solar industry, a perhaps enlightened, albeit profit-minded, response.

The British Petroleum admission comes at a time when carbon dioxide emissions are rising at ever higher rates, particularly in the U.S. Emissions of fossil fuels have risen by more than 10 percent in the U.S. since 1990, 1.5 percent in 1997 alone. The *Earth Island Journal* reported recently that though the U.S. makes up only 5 percent of the world population, its citizens generate nearly a quarter of all greenhouse gasses. Last winter, at the Kyoto Climate Conference, the U.S. agreed to reduce carbon dioxide emissions to below 1990 levels within the next10-15 years.

A million solar roofs?

The American strategy has been to promote its Million Solar Roofs Program, a project which calls for the installation of solar panels on one million buildings over several years. It's a nice proposal, but unlike a similar program in Japan where the government has spent more than $9 billion on solar installation, the U.S. has yet to commit any money to the program, which was first announced in June 1997. Richard Perez has his own spin: "Clinton recommends [pro-solar policies] but without support in Congress, no monies are appropriated, and hence nothing happens. The Million Solar Roofs Program is really a wind-power program — we've seen nothing from it other than hot air."

There was a time when the notion of funding solar programs was much more popular. In 1975, encouraged by generous federal and state tax credits, 3,000 new solar firms got off the ground. "Greenmarketers," like the Real Goods Trading Company in Hopland, Calif., tapped into the promising market for environmental products. Membership in the American Solar Energy Society (ASES) — founded 20 years earlier, just after the production of the first solar cell in 1954 — reached a peak of nearly 15,000 people. With Jimmy Carter in the White House, research into alternative energy was well-funded. Carter pushed for income tax rebates of up to $3,000 for individuals who installed solar water heat-

ing systems in their homes. For advocates of solar power, it seemed like their time had come.

Removing Carter's solar water heater

But during the Reagan and Bush administrations, funding dried up and support for alternative energy all but disappeared. As one of his first official acts, Ronald Reagan reportedly ordered that Carter's rooftop solar water heater be ripped out of the White House. During his presidency, funding for the federally run Solar Energy Research Institute was sliced in half — causing more than 500 layoffs within a few short months. Domestic shipments of U.S.-made solar water heating panels dropped by a staggering 91 percent between 1984 and 1986. At the same time, funding for fossil fuel skyrocketed. By 1989 there was $324 million in the Department of Energy's budget for fossil energy, $345 million for nuclear power, and just $35 million for PV cells. Federal spending on research, which fell by $600 million between 1980 and 1989, has risen, but remains at less than $300 million under Bill Clinton.

Without government support, the public seemed to lose interest for a time as well. The ASES lost thousands of members, hitting a low point of less than 3,000 in the mid-1980s. Both Arco and Mobil, companies that had made inroads into the solar market in the 1970s, sold their operations by 1993, claiming that the market for alternative power was not yet ready for mass production.

A solar revival

Five years later, just twelve months shy of the year 2000, solar energy is undergoing a revival — and this time it's big business. "Look at PV production," says Real Goods Renewables' Jeff Oldham. "In the next two to three years we'll see three times the PV production worldwide. We're finally seeing major corporations taking it seriously. The denial of global warming is coming to an end. People are aggressively going after the money, investing. The DOE expects 150,000 new jobs in the industry by the year 2005."

Because the surge of the 1970s was largely driven by federal monies, when the budgets were cut in the 1980s there was no large-scale grassroots citizens movement left behind to organize. The development of solar power remained in the hands of the scientists and corporations. Since making PV cells is an extremely high-tech, capital-intensive process, only well-heeled enterprises could take on the project of producing solar panels.

The inevitability of the eventual exhaustion of world oil reserves, too, has only encouraged multinationals such as BP and Royal Dutch/Shell to step up their interest in developing photovoltaics. "There is a limited amount of oil, so if you want to be a company that provides power in the future you have to look into these things," says ASES communications director Susan LeFever. "Financially, their interest is to take it seriously."

Playing catch-up

By taking alternative energy seriously in the U.S., corporations will also bring the country up to speed with the rest of the world where renewables, most notably wind power, have been established for years. "The European Community is doing quite a bit, increasing the renewable power mix faster than anywhere else in the world. There, they use mostly wind power," explains Jeff Oldham. One reason renewables have done well in the EC is that standard electricity in Europe costs three times what is does in the U.S. Unlike the price of energy in the U.S., which is highly subsidized by the government, Eu-

Exchanging candles for solar power

In the developing world, where the grid is either extremely unreliable or non-existent, solar power is ideal. Until recently the cost was still far too high for the average person to gain access. Now, several organizations are bringing alternative technologies to remote villages in Africa, southeast Asia and Latin America. The Solar Electric Light Fund, based in Washington D.C., installs 30,000-40,000 systems annually. In order to make solar panels affordable, the Fund bases its fees on each customer's previous energy costs. An individual's monthly bill for candles and kerosene, for example, would become their monthly payment for solar power.

Another key development worldwide is a system called net-metering. Net-metering links solar panels to the utility grid, with the electric meter rigged so that it runs in two directions. While the sun is at its peak, the meter runs down; when the needs of the household exceed the capacity of their solar array, the meter runs up. When the home produces more power than it purchases, the utility company pays for the extra watts. In the U.S., 26 states already have net-metering laws, though the technology is still extremely new. And so far, the electricity sold to the utilities is purchased at a much lower rate than the power purchased by the consumer, so it is not likely that a family will make money using the system. The one exception is the town of Ashland, Ore., where the public utility pays consumers 125 percent of the retail rate for wind- and solar-produced power. — *R.B.*

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ropean energy costs reflect the estimated value of the side effects of power generation (including erosion, crop failure due to climate change, and air pollution).

The booming market excites solar advocates. But when there are no fossil fuels left and solar power is the standard, who will control the industry? Ironically, the independent-minded people who seek to escape unwanted influences in society must turn to large corporations for solar panels. The merging that has already begun among corporate PV producers will only continue if the market grows as predicted, giving control over the price, quality and availability of PV to a few wealthy corporate interests.

There is also the Year 2000 (Y2K) question. Everyone in the field is talking about it. "One of the major things driving the market is the Y2K bug," Richard Perez reported. "The bug has been a major source of conversation; one third of my e-mail recently is related to it." Similarly, most of Jeff Oldham's phone calls in recent months have been Y2K concerns. And, according to alternative energy legal consultant Bill Spratley, industry leaders are cashing in on the coincidence that the computer problem happens to fall on the date that some believe will bring the apocalypse. One manufacturer is reportedly marketing a PV array called the "Millennial Unit."

It's anyone's guess what will happen when the clock strikes midnight next year. "At best," predicted Perez, "we'll see minor outages — for days or weeks. The grid is a very delicate infrastructure. It can have a domino effect." In his most recent *Home Power* editorial, Perez writes, "Here's my advice for those of you concerned about Y2K — install a renewable energy system. That way, if society falls apart, then at least you will have electricity. If society doesn't fall apart, then at least you will have electricity." TW

Serious sleaze

"What connection, if any, exists between public and private morality?" Joan Chittister asks in a reflection on the Clinton/Lewinsky affair (*National Catholic Reporter*, 10/9/98). "History provides little help in arriving at the answer. Alexander the Great created an empire and died at an early age from the results of syphilis. Roosevelt saved the country from depression, all the while supporting a mistress. Richard Nixon was apparently a Puritan saint but came close to destroying the democratic process.

"Perhaps the even more difficult question is whether or not Kenneth Starr's own sins — specious evidence-gathering, information leaks and pornographic reporting — on behalf of public morality may not themselves be as egregious as Clinton's private flaws.

"Maybe the country's drift toward fascism in its desperate attempt to punish sin is every bit as much a violation of rights, an abandonment of care, as serious a problem as Clinton's personal moral pathologies. Maybe overlooking one problem in our fascination with the other will, in the long light of history, turn out to be the most serious sleaze of all."

Tooth Fairy Project

The Radiation and Public Health Project is collecting donated baby teeth from "nuclear" and "non-nuclear" counties around the U.S. "to determine if there is a connection between radiation contamination and our national cancer epidemic," *Nukewatch Pathfinder* reports (Fall, 1998).

"Other RPHP studies have found that women living within 100 miles of a reactor are at the greatest risk of dying from breast cancer and that children born in the peak bomb test years had a 20-fold increase in the level of dental strontium-90 (Sr-90). Teeth in the Tooth Fairy Project will be tested for Sr-90, 'one of the deadliest elements released by nuclear facilities.'

"RPHP needs at least 5,000 teeth from every area in the country, from 1980 to the present, but they will also test baby teeth from children born as far back as 1970 — when the U.S. stopped publishing Sr-90 levels in humans.

"RPHP has baby teeth donation forms, envelopes and 'Tooth Fairy' buttons for participants. Please help by sending RPHP your children's baby teeth. Toll Free: (800) 582-3716."

Sprawl report

Suburban sprawl is gaining prominence as a political issue, according to columnist Neal Peirce (*Liberal Opinion*, 10/12/98).

"Early in September the Sierra Club issued the first of what it promises will be annual nationwide sprawl reports. It labeled Atlanta America's most sprawl-threatened region — a citistate that each week plows under 500 acres of field or farm to build parking lots, shopping malls and subdivisions. Others on the Sierra Club's high sprawl list were St. Louis and Kansas City, Washington, D.C., Denver, Minneapolis-St. Paul and Chicago."

But Peirce quotes Greenbelt Alliance director Jim Sayer as saying that "after a 50-year infatuation with low density development, America is giving rise to a multifaceted anti-sprawl movement.

"Sayer cites serious bids for urban growth boundaries in Arizona, around San Diego and Denver. He praises Gov. Whitman's strong instructions to the New Jersey Cabinet to enforce state plan guidelines supporting geographically compact development and reinforcing existing cities. Florida, he notes, is allocating $300 million yearly for open space acquisition."

Peirce notes that the Environmental Protection Agency and the Urban Land Institute have also sponsored a new national Smart Growth Network.

Short takes

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Localizing food systems

by Kenneth A. Dahlberg

Until recently, we have been blind to the importance of food in local and regional environments and economies, but the growing sustainability movement is starting to seek genuine, long-term, localized approaches to our food systems. With vision, we can do this in a way that will empower families and neighborhoods and make our communities healthier, more self-reliant and more equitable.

Current agriculture (nationally and internationally) needs restructuring. Not only does it impose extremely high health, social and environmental costs, but it is highly fossil-fuel dependent. In the U.S. it takes roughly 10 energy calories to deliver one food calorie on our plates. As fossil fuel prices rise, there will be a huge multiplier effect on food prices. We can either wait until things collapse or start building the necessary local and regional food systems now.

Most people are unaware of how dependent their cities are upon distant national and international systems for food or how vulnerable those systems are. Neither are they aware of the extent and complexity of their local food system, much less its potential; the annual value of produce from all U.S. gardens is roughly equal to that of the annual U.S. corn crop, about $18 billion a year. What's more, agricultural, horticultural and food-related activities constitute between 20 percent and 25 percent of a local economy.

Defining local systems

What then is a local food system? The local part starts at the household level and expands to neighborhood, municipal and regional levels. At each level there are different cycles, issues, problems and possibilities. The food part includes all the various social, symbolic, health, power, access and equity dimensions (imagine all the facets of personal and corporate efforts to provide the hungry and homeless with "real" Thanksgiving dinners). "Systems" include not just the production aspects of food but also issues of processing, distribution, access, use, food recycling and waste. Besides social, economic and environmental issues, each of these points also involves a number of ethical and value questions.

Localizing food systems and growing more food locally and regionally opens new opportunities for dealing with problems of hunger, joblessness, urban decay and environmental degradation.

Why localize? Sustainable agriculturalists have called for localization to increase environmental sustainability. Developing local markets reduces dependence upon distant (and often erratic) supply. Localizing food systems and growing more food locally and regionally also opens new opportunities for deal-

Kenneth A. Dahlberg is a professor of political science and environmental studies at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Mich. This piece is excerpted from *The Neighborhood Works* (February/March, 1994), a publication of the Center for Neighborhood Technology, 2125 W. North Ave., Chicago, IL 60647 (phone: 773-278-4800).

Going green in the kitchen

The Green Kitchen Handbook by Annie Berthold-Bond and Mothers & Others for a Livable Planet (New York: Harper Collins, 1997) is a very practical and accessible guide to maintaining an ecologically sound kitchen. Covering basic nutrition information to methods of preserving food, the advice in the book follows the eight steps developed by Mothers & Others for a Livable Planet to support sustainable agriculture and healthful food choices.

The eight steps are:

1. Eat organic food.
2. Eat locally grown food.
3. Eat seasonal food.
4. Eat a variety of food.
5. Eat low on the food chain.
6. Eat whole foods.
7. Avoid processed food.
8. Reduce packaging.

The book also contains very specific information, including a guide to finding whole foods groceries and a listing of food product categories with information about best choices and things to avoid. Canadian maple syrup, for example, may have been processed with formaldehyde-based tablets and the "puffing" process that creates "puffed" cereals destroys some vitimins and minerals.

In addition to covering types of foods and where to find them, the last section of the book discusses cleaning, water in the kitchen, appliances and other equipment.

—Anne E. Cox

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ing with problems of hunger, joblessness, urban decay and environmental degradation. Such a vision includes:

• providing both long-term food security and better health for all local residents by making a variety of safe and nutritious food available to all;

• creating a cushion of self-reliance against transport strikes, major storms and disasters and rising prices resulting from oligopolies and/or rising fossil fuel prices and their multiplier effects;

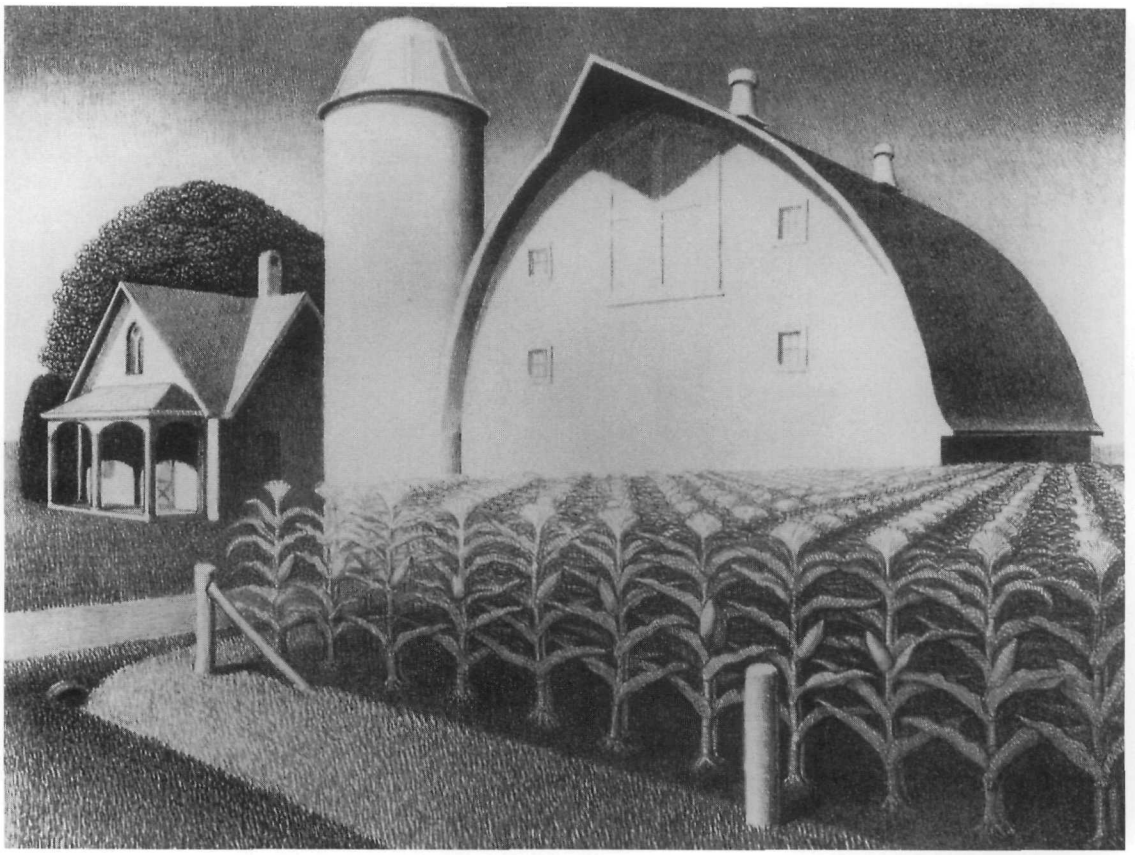
• providing continuing employment for local farmers, horticulturalists and food workers;

• making households and neighborhoods more self-reliant by making more land, work and employment available throughout the food system;

• freeing up more local dollars for local development by increasing the energy and resource efficiency of local food systems, especially by reducing energy costs and putting organic wastes into productive use rather than expensive landfills;

• creating a healthier, more diverse and more pleasant environment by cleaning up air, water and soil systems; creating more green spaces and more diverse rural landscapes; and reducing health costs and pollution clean-up costs; and

• reducing dependence on emergency hunger and feeding programs by moving toward hunger prevention programs.



***Fertility* by Grant Wood, 1939**

Food policy councils

How do we do this? At a personal level we can grow, process and preserve more of our own food. We can buy local food from farmers' markets and u-picks. We can join a community supported agriculture organization. As citizens, we can support innovative neighborhood and municipal programs and organizations. One example includes the growing popularity of food policy councils which form to address a given community's food system.

The issues addressed by these citizen advisory boards are critical and need to be investigated by local governments, nonprofits and the general population. They include:

• production: promoting household and community gardens; seeking to preserve local farmers and farmland; promoting community supported agriculture;

• processing: encouraging local food processing plants, as well as household and community canning programs;

• distribution and access: promoting co-ops, buying clubs and full use of available government programs; coordinating emergency feeding systems; ensuring availability of inner-city supermarkets; encouraging local farmers' markets;

• use: promoting safe food handling and nutritious diets;

• food recycling: promoting gleaning, food banks, pantries and soup kitchens; and

• waste stream: using creative approaches to waste reduction, recycling and composting in each stage of the system. TW

Coming next month!
The January/February 1999 issue of *The Witness* will address the politics of food.

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Embracing a common share in God's mercy

by Peter Selby

At some point the crisis of debt will overwhelm us. In the international sphere we see its effects each day on our screens in the level of hunger and deprivation which the poorest nations of the world have to endure in order to service the debts which they have incurred during the last three decades. When we learn that in many cases the interest already paid on the debts has more than paid them back, we wonder what is stopping us simply writing them off.

When a country such as Jamaica that is by no means among the poorest has to spend more on servicing its debts than it can spend on health care we know we are dealing with an obscenity.

When the people of South Africa's new democracy find themselves still required to pay back debts which the apartheid regime incurred in order to buy the tanks and guns that killed those engaged in the struggle for liberation, we know we are dealing with a scandal.

When we learn that that same new democracy has itself voluntarily cancelled the debts which the Namibian people had inherited from the time when the apartheid regime occupied them, we should surely be ashamed.

Debt and 'forgiveness'

No wonder every province of the Anglican Communion prioritized international debt as the issue they wanted faced at the Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops this past summer. No wonder the subsection on the topic which I convened found itself weighed down with the distress brought to us by bishops from the "indebted" countries. No wonder those of us who drafted our report and resolution were rebuked for our careless use of the language of "forgiveness": Who is it, after all, who needs forgiving for a situation which has proved so profitable to the lenders of money and so devastating for those whom they encouraged to borrow?

The real cost of imagining the release of the debts of the poorest nations is our fear.

We cannot claim ignorance about all of this. Susan George's books (*A Fate Worse than Debt, The Debt Boomerang, How the Other Half Dies*) tell a story which no amount of arguing about the detail (and there is very little argument about most of it) can let us avoid. The fact is that huge amounts of money that washed around the banking system following the oil price rises of the 1970s and 1980s were lent to poor economies for projects, some of which were well intentioned and some of which certainly were not. Subsequently, as the richest economies sought to solve their domestic economic difficulties by raising interest rates, the burden of that lending became intolerable.

Sometimes, of course, we can act very quickly. When a debt crisis hits an economy with which ours is closely aligned, as lately in southeast Asia, there seems to be no problem in finding the resources to ensure that our own banks and lending institutions are not engulfed in a whirlpool of non-payment. In fact, lending internationally is one of the safest things you can do: There's no chance that the borrowing country will go bankrupt, because there's no international bankruptcy system, and if all fails the government of the creditor country will bail the bank out.

But sometimes we simply look the other way. We are happy to take the results of the debt burden in raw material prices that are lowered by the competition debtor countries are forced into to secure exports and devalue their currencies in the search for ways to service their debts. We have been content that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) should require the restructuring of poor countries' economies in ways that suit the needs of the creditor economies, and which in the interests of our economic orthodoxy reduce spending on education and health.

The deeper costs of cancellation

I remember well the discomfort many of us bishops in the Lambeth subsection on debt felt as we contemplated all of this. Why should we be made to feel responsible for a situation we had not devised and where we had so little power to bring about release? What would it cost, we wanted to know, and what would debt cancellation do to the taxes of the people in our own countries? I also remember the intervention of the Japanese bishop, "We are a small church and we have sometimes resisted the government; but we are still responsible."

For the costs we need to bear are not so much financial ones: Many debts can be cancelled at no cost; much debt cancellation would simply be an accounting action, and if we were serious about it such cost as there is would be absorbed very quickly. No: The costs we are reluctant to face go

Peter Selby is author of *Grace and Mortgage: The Language of Faith and the Debt of the World*, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1997. He is Bishop of Worcester, England, <p.selby@mcmail.com>. Artist **Judith Anderson** lives in Miller Place, N.Y.

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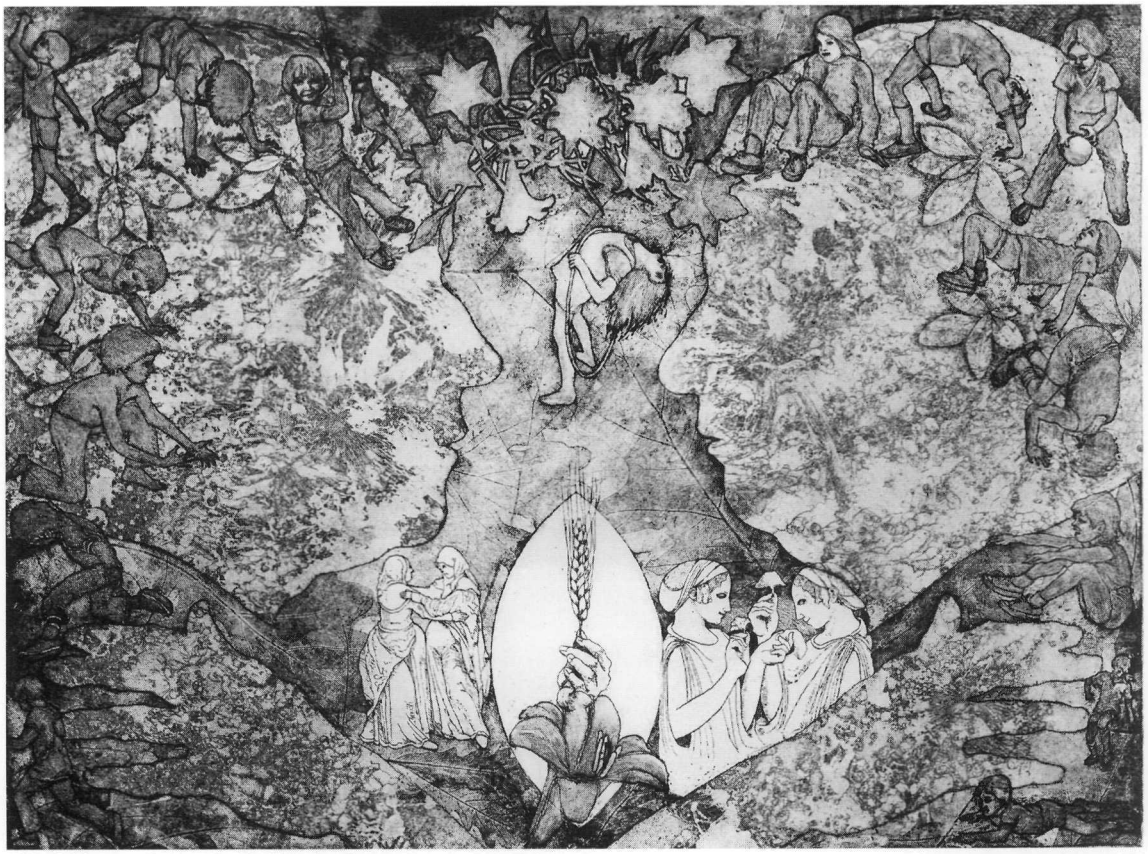
deeper, for they involve revising the attitudes we have taken as natural, attitudes on which debt thrives and by which mercy has no chance.



The fullness of time **by Judith Anderson**

Enslaving minds

My own exploration of the debt issue began with the search for the presence of Jesus Christ in the world today and took me via the issue of student loans — new for us in the U.K. though very well established in the U.S., of course — into the discovery of the debt burden as it affects many of the poorest communities set in the cities of wealthy countries. My knowledge of American money-lending institutions is slight, but in Britain it is not hard to find people paying annual interest rates well in excess of 100 percent to companies that are considered quite respectable, simply because that is the only source of credit they have accessible to them — and credit is the only way they can see of surviving.

But the exploration of debt took me to more places than the suffering of the poor. It took me into the progressive enslavement of our minds, our captivation by a myth of unlimited credit and the unrestrained practice of living on tomorrow's — and next year's, or next decade's — income today. It took me to the obsessive lending and borrowing which are a feature of our economy and some disturbing and fundamental questions of how the monetary systems of the world work. And it took me to further reflection on the freedom Christ offers, its roots in the economic system of his day and its profound connection with what Christians so centrally profess — salvation, redemption, justification by grace — and so seldom relate to the assumptions of our getting and spending.

For at the heart of our Christian story is something about gracious gift and owing nobody anything except to love one another (Romans 13.8). With that apprehension of ourselves as people released from seeing ourselves as burdened with obligations and (more seriously still) the belief that our standing is related to the number of people we have indebted to us and the weight of their obligations.

Fears and what-ifs?

The real cost of imagining the release of the debts of the poorest nations is our fear: fear that the whole system of relying on owing for survival might collapse into anarchy as people everywhere refuse to pay their debts; fear that we might have to trim our spending to what we have today; the fear that we might have to accept in our personal lives the logic of the Reaganomic solutions that have been so vigorously attempted in the sphere of national finance and taxation. It is the cost of believing that the beliefs we profess about God's providence, about the boundless generosity at the heart of things, about the mercy that we proclaim holds the world in life, that these beliefs should be allowed to impinge on the way we run our economy.

For mercy in all its arbitrariness ("I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy") and with all its dangerous willingness to stay committed to humanity despite everything is what we are offered and asked to offer to others. And as we contemplate it economically there rise up within us the "what if?" questions that are the names we give to our fear of mercy: What if every-

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body stopped paying their debts? What if we all had to pay the debts of others through our taxes? What if the amount of interest you could charge on a loan were radically restricted? What if people who charged exorbitant interest were prevented from using the legal system to recover their debts?

Yet in one of the largest international demonstrations we have seen in this country last May there could be seen in the faces of those who formed a human chain around the G8 summit venue a different set of emotions and convictions. There were people of all ages and nationalities, many of whom had clearly never taken part in a demonstration of any kind before, a powerful picture of faith in a different kind of world, of the impact of the divine economy of freedom on a world economy chained by debt.

Why did this event engage the imaginations of congregations all over Britain? Many of them have little experience of being caught up in political activity, far less of reading economic statistics as part of their Christian life. But they do have an experience of worship, and here in the human chain their faces, their banners and their songs said that they had seen something of the gracious mercy that worship was about. In the variety of that gathering and its singleness of heart they had seen something of what ecumenism was about in all its global as well as ecclesial meaning.

Yet the questions still come up: What can we do? How can we change anything? What will it cost? How do we change the politics of all of this? How does mercy get a chance, and a different economy of freedom come to birth? What are the steps we need to take, urgent and committed and yet manageable?

First steps: receiving the truth

First of all we can be clear that before we can receive mercy we need to receive truth, and yet before we can receive truth we need to receive the assurance of mercy. We have some strong things to say to our leaders and our bankers, but those strong things are the truth of actual stories, not a succession of damning accusations. We are not about arraigning those who sold cheap money to the poor in the 1970s and 1980s or requiring those who work in banks now to take on themselves a burden of guilt or the requirement that they listen to endless attacks from the pulpit every time they go to worship. But naming this issue is the critical first step, and that includes listening to the stories that make us uncomfortable and acknowledging the facts as they are.

The most difficult thing to "do" about Jesus' assertion that you cannot be slave to both God and Mammon is quite simply to agree.

I have found a remarkable response to the naming of this matter in gatherings of Christians who have experienced the whole area of debt and the place of money in their lives as a forbidden zone. They have shared at some depth in study groups and prayer meetings but generally without acknowledging their own financial anxieties and their dependence on borrowed money.

I have heard members of churches tell of the economic crises through which they have lived, always without daring to mention it in the congregation or even to their spiritual director. And I have sensed the liberation from fear and the secrecy that comes when an issue is felt to be too frightening to face. Of course the question of what we can do has to be faced, but the intensely practical first step for those confronted with truth is to accept it as truth and face it as truth. The most difficult thing to "do" about Jesus' assertion that you cannot be slave to both God and Mammon is quite simply to agree.

Looking outward and inward

And the truth has then to be pursued where it leads, and it will lead both outwards and inwards. It will lead outwards into naming this issue before politicians and economists, into reading and enquiring about the nature of indebtedness. That means getting at the facts about the international economy (the Lambeth Conference report and resolutions about debt are no bad place to start) and then at the impact of credit and debt on the cities and communities in which you are located. *The Witness* has contained many articles about poverty: Behind those pictures and articles lie many lives blighted by the need to juggle debts from one weekend

Invested in the common good

The "great work" of these times, says Thomas Berry, is accomplishing the transition from humanity's current practice of "industrial plundering of the planet" to a "mutually enhancing" human presence upon the earth that could be called an "Ecozoic Era." He suggests anyone interested in some guidance on what the shift entails get their hands on Susan Meeker-Lowry's *Invested in the Common Good* (New Society Publishers, 1995). She describes the steps needed to adjust our current economy to an earth-centered system and offers numerous examples of where and how individuals and groups have begun the process. Socially conscious investing, local currencies, community supported agriculture and Indian economic development are among the off-the-grid topics she covers. The book also contains a helpful bibliography and listing of organizations.

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to the next.

That is the journey outwards. But then there is the journey inwards, too: It means looking at lives rendered spiritually impoverished by the constant practice of playing the markets and going after the bottom line. It means looking at the lengths to which we go to avoid living on what we have and the silent anxieties we conceal about our financial future. It means facing the fact that much of our praying and preaching carefully keeps the world of economy well away from the searching light of gospel truth.

Resisting plastic?

Then of course there are the actions we can take: What would it involve for many of us to abandon the unthinking use of plastic credit? What would it mean — say for Lent — if what we gave up were something as basic as needless borrowing? What would it mean to contemplate — say for Advent — the evidence that our treatment of the planet as a credit card without credit limit or repayment date will surely bring its judgement, and, having contemplated that, to begin to take the steps we personally need to take to reduce our dependence on the income of tomorrow? What would it mean — say in Passiontide — to remember the cost of restoring the economy of grace and consider if there is not someone we need to let off something we have been holding them to? How about some of these things as ways of giving mercy a chance?

Those are personal actions in our own lives. They are, however, rehearsals in unlocking ourselves from the power of money and debt which need to lead to other actions: using our power as voters and consumers to press for terms of trade that are fair and release from burdens of debt that are unrepayable.

For us to give mercy a chance, however, is bound to lead us into the heartland of the life we live and the assumptions on which we base it. We shall need, that is to say, to look at the role money has come to play in our lives and the life of the world, and indeed at the fundamental character of money itself. For as you pursue the question of debt you become aware that it is not an isolated phenomenon, some accidental loss of control of an essentially benign activity called lending. What you notice is the way in which money itself, and the assumptions on which it rests, determines that there shall be debt and that it shall be without limit or restraint.

We have come to be dependent on the debt that money represents, especially in the last three decades with their explosion in the quantity and power of money.

This mystery which we call money is so pervasive that, as with the air, we are content to imagine that we understand it simply because we are familiar with it. Yet you only have to get out of your pocket a piece of paper money to find that what you are handling is nothing more nor less than a credit note, a government promise to pay. In fact, s when we came off the gold standard the right to claim the money was removed, so that, if it should ever happen that human beings corporately decided that they would no longer give worth to any of these pieces of paper, they would become worthless, because the supply of money is in effect the supply of debt.

No wonder then that there is resistance to the cancellation of debt. We have come to be dependent on the debt that money represents, especially in the last three decades with their explosion in the quantity and power of money. People have always sought riches, some to excess. But what we now see is a dependence created by the vast quantities of money there are, by the myth that anyone can have it, and by the "credit" it provides. We need urgent reform and regulation, an international matter ultimately and one which will meet fierce resistance. Meanwhile the value we ascribe to it and the way in which we allow it to be the mark of value in anything is a deeply spiritual issue about which honest reflection together is vital.

Credit-and-debt relationships

But if we decide personally, as communities and as nations to start to get out of the grip of debt, to contract into the freedom of Christ, it will have implications for many areas of life which concern other matters than money. For what we find is that all our attitudes to people are governed by the kind of credit-and-debt relationships which our present economic system sets up. A moment's look at those whom we marginalize and oppress makes clear that we are imposing on them the model of bankruptcy, the notion that they have nothing to offer and that we have everything to give — along with the right to regulate their lives and prescribe what God may or may not be doing in and through them.

In the frightening aftermath of the Lambeth Conference I found myself deeply concerned that in the publicity surrounding the nightmare of the way in which the issue of sexuality was handled all the work we put into coming to a common mind on the issue of debt would be wasted. That is still a fear I have; but what we actually saw was a way of behaving towards our gay brothers and sisters that precisely reflects the merciless treatment of others in the way the debt-and-credit economy sets up. It is those who are in thrall to creditor/debtor ways of thinking who then forget the common share we all have in the constant mercy of God and who fail to live out that mercy in their relations with one another. If we could begin the process of extricating ourselves from credit and debt and the power it gives to money we might give mercy — God's mercy — a chance in our life together. TW

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Investing to profit community

by Beth McPherson

Maine is celebrated nationally for its idyllic vacation and retirement attractions, but most of us who live here are keenly aware of another landscape: the less-travelled streets and hamlets where intense poverty and hardship exist. The neediest in our communities are increasingly deprived of even basic necessities, with the most significant unmet need being warm, safe homes. People who cannot find an affordable place to live often retreat from the economically more vital areas in the southern part of the state to impoverished regions further north where rents are still cheap — but jobs are hard to come by.

In recent years government programs that once provided loans and subsidies for housing and other community projects have been drastically reduced. At the same time, the for-profit housing industry has lost the capacity to build profitably for the low end of the market. In Maine, community-based groups with imaginative ideas for making housing truly affordable have been stymied by lack of capital and technical skills, particularly in the early stages of their projects. This is the gap the Genesis Community Loan Fund has been helping to bridge since 1992.

What community loan funds do

Community loan funds like Genesis are unlikely financial institutions. They solicit low-interest loans or donations from churches, corporations, foundations and individuals, then reinvest the money at below-market rates of return in poor neighborhoods and underserved communities.

Beth McPherson is executive director of the Genesis Community Loan Fund based in Bristol, Me., <genesis@lincoln.midcoast.com>.

Some of the ventures financed would make a conventional lender queasy. Community sponsors of affordable housing often are start-up organizations that can offer only limited collateral. In most rural areas, deep-pocket developers and solid credit histories are rarities. Still, for the 49 such community funds on which there are industry data, defaults run at the enviable rate of 1.2 percent of total loans.

A faith-based fund

The Genesis Community Loan Fund was founded in 1991 in Wiscasset as a faith-based fund, with assistance from Coastal Enterprises, Inc., and the Lilly Endowment. The following year Genesis made its first loan: $50,000 to Coastal Housing, Inc., for development of Ward Brook in Wiscasset, a nine-unit rental complex for single-parent families with incomes below the poverty level. Most of the money for the project came from four midcoast congregations who were alarmed by the absence of safe, affordable housing for families such as these.

In 1996 the Maine Community Loan Fund, which had been founded at about the same time in Portland, transferred its assets and loan portfolio to Genesis, doubling its size. Today the unified Genesis Community Loan Fund has revolving loan capital of over $700,000. It has aided 43 projects throughout the state of Maine with $990,000 in below-market-rate loans and substantial technical assistance. These loans have helped leverage an additional $9.8 million from Maine banks and other institutions to create 212 units of affordable housing for Maine's most vulnerable populations, including:

- low-income working families (25 single family homes);
- single mothers and their children (16 rental units with supportive services);
- low-income frail elderly (44 assisted living units);
- chronically mentally ill and/or developmentally disabled adults and children (72 rental units with supportive services);
- Maine's first hospice residence for the terminally ill (6 units);
- transitional homes for families made homeless by domestic violence (6 single family homes);
- the homeless (35 shelter beds).

Community-based care for the elderly

Housing and caring for the state's rapidly aging population is a growing challenge. Today Maine has the 14th highest proportion of persons over 65 among the 50 states, but will move up to 5th in just two short decades, according to Census Bureau projections. Accordingly, Genesis has taken a special interest in developing an alternative model to serve the state's frail, low-income elders—typically living alone and, due to illness or increasing incapacity, suffering from loneliness and neglect, poor nutrition, over- or under- medication and threats to mobility and safety. These Medicaid-eligible elders need frequent assistance with their daily activities but they do not need to live in a skilled nursing facility.

Last year non-profit community-based organizations in Old Town and Darmariscotta set out to develop alterna-

ECPC invested in Genesis

At its October 1998 meeting the board of The Episcopal Church Publishing Company (ECPC), the publisher of *The Witness*, voted to make a low-interest investment of $25,000 in the Genesis Community Loan Fund. All of ECPC's investments are managed in a socially responsible way, with a portion being placed in faith-based, community-focused enterprises such as Genesis.

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tive care options for their frail neighbors. Their shared vision: a model of quality extended care that allows elderly persons to remain within their own familiar community, and that is also far less disruptive of normal life and far less expensive than the usual institutional solutions. Genesis was asked to oversee the development of plans for the two assisted living projects. Not only did we lend acquisition and construction funds totaling $100,000, but we also succeeded in raising long-term financing for the projects from state and federal agencies. Together, the two new licensed homes that opened in April are providing housing and services to 32 frail elders with very limited resources.

An alternative space in a depressed neighborhood

The mission of Genesis to serve the needs of the disadvantaged encompasses other kinds of community service projects as well. For example, in September Genesis made a 10-year mortgage loan of $20,000 to Friends of the St. Lawrence Church, a Portland grassroots organization with a plan to transform the long-vacant Munjoy Hill church into a center to promote community involvement in educational, artistic and cultural activities. By paying off a burdensome short-term note, the Genesis loan frees up capital for building improvements essential to obtaining an occupancy permit.

The church is separated into two areas — a vaulted sanctuary seating 400-500 persons and a two-level parish hall. The Friends group expects the renovated building to provide an affordable home base for professional and amateur performing arts groups and also to serve as flexible programming space for nearby elementary and pre-schools, for public forums and for youth activities. Already several programs are up and running at the church. One is a pilot "school to work" program organized under the Maine Department of Labor that is putting neighborhood youth to work on demolition and refurbishing.

Two brothers explore the terrain around their family's new home in Bremen, Me. The faith-based Genesis Community Loan Fund has helped make new homes like this available to families whose income is no more than half the county median income .

The healing power of horses

Another Genesis project involves Riding to the Top (RTT), a nonprofit therapeutic horseback riding program founded in 1993 in the well-founded belief that horses are excellent healers. Over the past five years, RTT volunteers have worked with over 100 riders with physical, emotional and learning disabilities, ranging in age from 3 to 70.

The physical therapists who designed the program and are its volunteer directors say that the experience of riding a horse permits physically disabled persons the sensory-motor input of walking without extraordinary effort. Everything from the sensory feedback of touching a horse to the relationship developed when horse and rider communicate builds self-esteem, trust and confidence. Parents, teachers and therapists report on the tremendous positive change in troubled children's behavior when horses enter the picture.

After working out of other barns for five years, RTT decided last spring to buy its own 10-stall barn, riding ring and wooded trails in Windham. Genesis provided mortgage financing of $50,000 for 10 years to assist in acquisition of the property.

The need for credit

In Maine the need for credit in low-income neighborhoods and communities is far greater than our loan fund can currently meet. But as new loan capital and equity investments become available, Genesis will continue to link those resources to housing and community development projects to serve Maine people who have limited opportunity to better their own lives. TW

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Silence killed Matthew Shepard

by Steve Charleston

[Because Matthew Shepard was an Episcopalian — and in light of the condemnation of homosexuals issued by the Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops last summer — much has been said about his hate-motivated murder in Episcopal Church circles. This statement by Steve Charleston, Episcopal chaplain at Trinity College in Hartford, Conn., was one of the more passionate issued by church leaders.]

I saw on the news today that Matthew Shepard died. He was the 22-year-old man from Wyoming who was beaten and tortured and left to die for no reason other than he was a homosexual. This tragic murder has raised a national debate again, the kind of periodic soul-searching our society goes through whenever a crime of hate startles us into awareness.

The burning of Black churches, the bombing of innocent people, the death of a shy young man from Wyoming — these events suddenly shake us out of complacency and remind us that fear, prejudice and rage are always the shadows just beyond the light of our reason. And so people suddenly start to speak out. There are voices of outrage and grief. Voices of sorrow and demands to know why such a thing could happen.

Mourners filled New York's Cathedral of St. John the Divine for a memorial service for Matthew Shepard.

ENS/Jim Solheim

And predictably, there are also defensive voices: the governor of Wyoming trying to explain why his state has no laws to protect people from hate crimes and the leadership of what is called the "Christian right wing" trying to explain why their national ads against homosexuality don't influence people to commit such violence against gays and lesbians.

In the days to come, these many voices will fill our media and the cultural consciousness it imprints until we are once again lulled into the more familiar patterns of our lives, until the next tragedy rings the alarm of despair.

As the chaplain for our own community, I would like to invite us all to consider Matthew's death in another way. Not through the clamor or denials, not through the shouts or cries of anger: but rather, through the silence of his death, the silence of that young man hanging on his cross of pain, alone in the emptiness of a Wyoming night, the silence that ultimately killed him as surely as the beatings he endured.

Silence killed Matthew Shepard. The silence of Christians who know that the scriptures on homosexuality are few and murky in interpretation and far outweighed by the words of a savior whose only comment on human relationships was to call us to never judge but only to love. The silence of well-meaning educated people who pretend to have an enlightened view of homosexuality while quietly tolerating the abuse of gays and lesbians in their own communities. The silence of our elected officials who have the authority to make changes but prefer to count votes. The silence of the majority of "straight" Americans who shift uncomfortably when confronted by the thought that gays and lesbians may be no different from themselves, save for the fact that they are walking targets for bigotry, disrespect,

Vital Signs

Steve Charleston is the former Bishop of Alaska.

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cheap humor and, apparently, of murder.

Crimes of hate may live in shouts of rage, but they are born in silence. Here at Trinity, I hope we will all listen to that silence. Before we jump to decry Matthew's senseless death or before we seek to rationalize it with loud disclaimers, I hope we will just hear the silence.

A young man's heart has ceased to beat. Hear the silence of that awful truth. It is the silence of death. It is the silence that descends on us like a shroud. At Trinity, as in Wyoming, we are men and women surrounded by the silence of our own fear. Our fear of those who are different. Our fear of being identified with the scapegoat. Our fear of taking an unpopular position for the sake of those who can not stand alone. Our fear of social and religious change. Our fear comes in many forms but it always comes silently: A whispered joke. A glance to look away from the truth. A quick shake of the head to deny any complicity in the pain of others.

These silent aspects of our own fear of homosexuality are acted out on this campus every day, just as they are acted out every day in Wyoming. Through silence, we give ourselves permission to practice what we pretend to abhor. With silence, we condemn scores of our neighbors to live in the shadows of hate. In silence we observe the suffering of any group of people who have been declared expendable by our society.

As a person of faith, I will listen, as we all will, to the many voices which will eulogize Matthew Shepard. I will carry that part of our national shame on my shoulders. But I will also listen to the silence which speaks much more eloquently still to the truth behind his death. I will listen and I will remember. And I will renew my resolve never to allow this silence to have the last word. Not for Matthew. Not for gay men or lesbian women. Not for any person in our society of any color or condition who has been singled out for persecution. Not in my church. Not in my nation. Not in Wyoming. And not at Trinity College.

California bishop urges deeper reflection on Lambeth homosexuality resolution

Following Matthew Shepard's death, William E. Swing, the Episcopal Bishop of California, proposed to the diocesan convention a process by which Episcopalians in California could deepen their theological approach to the issues which they face as a diocese, beginning with the Lambeth Conference resolution that rejects "homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture."

"Why do I suggest the Lambeth Resolution to be our first theological focus?" Swing asked. "Because I have a deep conviction that Lambeth erred in its understanding of Holy Scripture and of homosexual people. Thus it is important for the Anglican Communion to hear from us on this subject. To hear us at our deepest and best.

"The basic problem was that Lambeth thought that it could make a balanced statement. Homosexuals should be treated with compassion on the one hand and with the Bible on the other hand. This is similar to saying 'we must love the sinner but hate the sin.' The problem is that the hatred inspired in the literal acceptance of the Bible is vastly stronger than the compassion encouraged in the resolution. Biblical blood lust is stronger than mild resolutions about compassion.

"Matthew Shepard chose the Episcopal Church and was confirmed at 15. He was given last rites by an Episcopal priest in Fort Collins, Colo. When Matthew Shepard was pistol whipped and strapped to a deer fence in Wyoming by, allegedly, Russell Henderson and Aaron McKinney, the Bible was blatantly clear in its judgement. An uninterpreted, unmistakable rendering of the Bible would find Matthew Shepard guilty of an abomination for being gay. Also, it would find Russell Henderson and Aaron McKinney justified in their actions. Leviticus 20:13 — 'If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them.'"

Swing said that although both he and the people of the diocese know such justifications are wrong, they need to determine how to state why they are wrong.

Swing said he did not believe "that an appeal to a few words of Leviticus should take precedence over the Bible's comprehensive, total wisdom. I do not believe that it is right for the church to side with the forces that dehumanize and demonize homosexuals and rob them of their God-given dignity. And I do believe that in the life, teaching, and Spirit of Jesus Christ, we will at last be led to wholeness in recognizing heterosexuals and homosexuals as full human beings, with no legislative, canonical, or quiet bias separating them from their rightful status as children of God."

California's diocesan convention endorsed Swing's proposal, asking the diocese's governing council to set up a task force of clergy and laity to explore the theological issue, "Homosexual practice is incompatible with Scripture," which will report its findings to the convention next year.

— based on a report from Kathleen McAdams of Oasis/ California, the Gay and Lesbian Ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of California, <www.diocal.org/ oasis>.

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Religion and ecology

by Libby Bassett

A a most unusual convergence of religion, science and public policy took place here recently and became a meeting of minds.

"Religion and Ecology: Discovering the Common Ground,"was held at two bastions of policymaking and science, the United Nations on October 21st and the American Museum of Natural History on the following day.

The gathering, which drew overflow crowds to the UN, was the culmination of a series of symposia held over more than two years at Harvard, each focusing on the environmental ethics of one of 10 major faith traditions (Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Indigenous, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and Shinto).

Mary Evelyn Tucker, a professor of religion at Bucknell and co-director of the series with her husband John Grim, said they wanted to see whether the power and ethical teachings of the world's major religions could help solve the environmental crisis. "Could this viewpoint expand our vision so that we might finally begin to reverse the destruction of our planet?"

While several speakers, scientists and policy makers alike, detailed just how bleak the environmental picture is, Lawrence Sullivan, Director of the Harvard Center for Study of World Religions, said the religious view provided hope. All religions share certain moral and ethical principles, he said, like altruism and compassion, community-building, just distribution of resources, mobilization for action, self-criticism, ascetism and restraint, a long-term perspective, and legal and ethical traditions.

"To develop a sense of the sacred in a culture of ecological protection, we will need to redefine our development and consumption models." — L.M. Singhvi

"Religions can play an important role, though they haven't always, in providing the motivation to find a common strand that unites us all for survival," said Maurice Strong, who headed the first UN conference on the environment in 1972 and the second, the Rio Earth Summit, in 1992. But, he added, "We have yet to experience the moral and ethical evolution that will make it happen."

"Our problem," Vanderbilt University theology professor Sally McFague said, "can be laid to the western tradition of human dominion over nature," although she noted, "in Genesis I, God said seven times, after every bit of creation, 'it was good.'

"The Christian tradition has been imperialistic," this self-described "Boston Episcopalian" continued, "by saying there's only one way to God. Today, a lot of us are aware that ways to the divine are not similar and that we can learn from each other's traditions, particularly on the environment."

L.M. Singhvi, a Member of India's Parliament and author of the Jain Declaration on Nature, concurred: "To develop a sense of the sacred in a culture of ecological protection, it will be necessary to redefine our development and consumption models. A new public platform is required in each tradition."

"Consumerism has obliterated divine reality," said Seyyed Hossein Nasr, a teacher of Islamic studies at George Washington University. "We've shifted from a thirst for God to a thirst for things."

"Just doing what we do on a daily basis, we're making other people poor,"Professor McFague said. "The latest UN Development Report said that we in the North, 15% of the population, use 80% of the world's goods. We're living a lie, we're in denial."

But to Donald Swearer, a professor of religion at Swarthmore College, "There is no dichotomy between the good life and what's good for the environment. In Buddhism the lifestyle is one of restraint and frugality, and the first precept is not killing and to act compassionately."

"In Confucianism," said Tu Weiming, a professor of Chinese history and philosophy at Harvard, "heaven is everywhere, but it is not all powerful so we need to be collaborators, participants, stewards, co-creators."

"How can we go from talk to practice?" Swearer asked. "It must be on an individual level, yet we also need to form strategies and alliances that attempt to bring change not only to the environment but our individual lifestyle."

Efforts are underway to move the dialogue out of the ivory tower and into the public eye.

In the U.S., the National Religious Partnership for the Environment grew

Keeping Watch

Libby Bassett is a freelance writer who lives in New York City, <lbassett@igc.apc.org>.

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from international appeals in the early 1990s by scientists to religious leaders to join in saving planet earth. Since 1993, the partnership — a federation of the U.S. Catholic Conference, the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, the National Council of Churches of Christ and the Evangelical Environmental Network — has reached tens of thousands of U.S. congregations, with each faith group implementing its own programs on behalf of a common ecological mission, <www.nrpe.org>.

An Earth Charter was supposed to be ready for signing at the 1992 UN Earth Summit, but it became a casualty of realpolitik. Now Steven Rockefeller, a professor of religion at Middlebury College, directs the attempt to find shared ethical values and practical guidelines to deal our with our world's linked social, economic and environmental problems. "Through the Earth Charter process of consultation, which is as important as the draft itself," Rockefeller said, "a consensus is beginning to emerge, and we are creating a document that gives expression to a worldwide ethic." A second draft of the Charter is due in January 1999, for launching on World Environment Day in the year 2000, with 21 principles for the 21st century. It then goes to the United Nations for governmental action, <www.earth charter.org>.

For Wangari Maathai, the founder of Kenya's Green Belt Movement, the Earth Charter is "a silver lining. It gives us hope to not be apathetic." She said the Green Belt Movement took the Earth Charter and used it as a vision. "One by one we addressed its 21 principles, holding seminars to try to translate them consciously and express them in our daily life. And we found we already are doing most of them."

Already, 60 people and institutions have affiliated with the new Forum on Religion and Ecology that's grown out of the Harvard conference process. The next step, said Harvard's Tu Weiming, "is a permanent network connected by e-mail and the web so we can quickly inform one another about critical issues anywhere. It's the emergence of a new coalition, one not in an ivory tower but in the mass media, government, social movements, religion, human rights and consumer movements."

"What can we do?"Oren Lyons, faith keeper of the Turtle Clan of the Onondaga Nation of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy), asked the hundreds of participants at the museum. "It's up to you. It's got to move beyond the intellectual. If we fail, we fail everything. Go back and do something about it. We're approaching the point of no return." TW

The sword and the cross

On Sunday, Oct. 4, 1998, two priests and a religious writer entered the enclosure around the war memorial at St. Paul's Anglican Church on Bloor St. E. in Toronto and urgently invited all churches to renounce the "Just War" doctrine. St. Paul's officials called in the city police to remove the three men who were then arrested and charged with trespass. Those arrested were Don Heap, an Anglican priest and former Member of Parliament, Bob Holmes, a Catholic priest and director of the One World Program for youth, and Len Desroches, Catholic author and non-violence trainer. Desroches is a long-time friend of Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), an initiative among Mennonite and Brethren congregations and Friends meetings to reduce violence around the world, and taught the sessions on non-violent direct action during CPT's regional training in Ontario in last spring.

CPT's Ontario Coordinator Doug Pritchard and his wife Jane led a group of supporters in prayers and songs on the sidewalk outside the war memorial which is called the Sword of Sacrifice and features a bronze sword set in the middle of a large stone cross.The witnesses in their press statement noted the huge cost of the current war economy: the number of lives lost every year and the diversion of money to weapons instead of basic human needs. They say the church is in denial about its own deep complicity in our permanent war culture.

They seek to engage all the mainline churches. But to start somewhere, they came to this particular war memorial on the grounds of St. Paul's Anglican Church, the Queen's Own Rifles' "garrison church." It may be the only such war memorial on a church's property, and it is one of the few times when Christians have questioned church leaders, instead of armies or governments, about their commitment to war.

The three men had met earlier this year with the rector and officials at St. Paul's and offered to replace the sword on the war memorial with a ploughshare as a public symbol of the church's renunciation of all war. The offer was declined.

As they entered the grounds around the monument, the men called on the church to break with its habit of turning to the state and its police to protect the sword. Despite the ensuing arrests, the three men have pledged to hold monthly public witnesses through to Good Friday, April 2, 1999.

— Doug Pritchard (Pritchard belongs to the Ontario, Canada, chapter of Christian Peacemaker Teams, <cpto@web.net>. For more information on the Toronto action contact Len Desroches at 407 Bleecker St., Toronto ON M4X 1W2 (phone: 416-975-4897). Contact CPT at P.O. Box 6508 Chicago, IL 60680 (phone: 312-455-1199), <CPT@igc.org>.)

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Another turn of the crank

by Karl Meyer

***Another Turn of the Crank* by Wendell Berry, Counterpoint, 1995.**

In *The Great Divorce*, C.S. Lewis imagined Hell to be a non-place, a suburbia sprawling into the limitless expanse of space-time where no one had any need for anyone else. Increasingly, this existential fantasy has begun to take on earthly reality. As our landscape becomes denuded into a featureless Cartesian plane of pavement and Taco Bells, and as our relationship to one another becomes more and more obscured by the global non-economy, we are left, absurdly, to ponder stray nuggets of uncommon sense as if they were rocks from Mars.

Wendell Berry, a Kentucky farmer, poet, essayist and agrarian radical, argues in *Another Turn Of The Crank* that we can start making sense common once again by looking for it where it is hidden in plain view, both under our feet and on our kitchen tables. His is an argument that is at once as startlingly simple as it is utterly challenging, and at its heart is the word "community." But then there are other words: economy, affection, knowledge, care, stewardship, imagination. These words, rarely uttered in the same breath in the highly jargoned speech of social scientists and culture critics, are for Berry the crux of the matter.

Community, especially rural community, has come under the wholesale onslaught of a kind of colonial system of exploitation, an economy of limitless greed,vanity, and arrogance that views people and nature as mere inputs, or factors of production, to be milled for profits. The logic of this industrial system demands that one place be turned into desertified moonscape for the aggrandizement of another. Agribusiness replaces farmers with machines, while topsoil is treated as no more than a kind of sludge to be endlessly injected with toxic chemicals. This logic of expropriation also permeates the educational system: Children are taught to scorn their provincial upbringing, and their success is measured by how far they get from home and how little their hands are dirtied by real work.

The word these days is to get "connected"— to the Internet, to 500 satellite television channels, to world markets, to limitless desire and opportunity. But the unspoken agenda is one of profound disconnection.

The word these days is to get "connected"— to the Internet, to 500 satellite television channels, to world markets, to limitless desire and opportunity. But the unspoken agenda is one of profound disconnection. It would have us not know where our food comes from. It would have us give up our loyalty to family, neighborhood, and community. We are to aspire to be "professional," that is, to detach from the claims made upon us by any particular place. Knowledge is freed of its local context and becomes information and a commodity. Words are severed from their meanings and become bytes of sound and sales pitches. We are to think it normal to be estranged from our children and from our old people. We are taught to disconnect belief from everyday life, to see no connections between politics and economics or economics and religion. Our health has nothing to do with the food we eat, the air we breathe, or our alienation from others. Sex is unjoined from love and turned into a medical procedure to be performed to normative specifications. In this way, life itself is freed not only from pain and suffering, but also from the possibility of joy and satisfaction; in short, it becomes a sort of general anesthesia.

Love, according to Berry, is the enemy of abstraction, of disembodied thought, disconnected from place. The 1990s mantra "think globally, act locally" is symptomatic of why even people of political goodwill exacerbate the predicament. Thinking globally, like central planning or free trade, damages the earth, for abstraction and theory deny to the earth the care, knowing, and affection local communities provide. One does not love conceptually but through nearness, intimacy, and familiarity, by attending to the details— peculiarities that can only be rampaged by theory. Global thinking is precisely why the so-called rational efficiencies of the market produce such absurd outcomes for the world at large.

review

Karl Meyer is a musician who lives in Detroit, Mich.

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Hope, for Berry, lies in recognizing that human intelligence and love are necessarily scaled by an ecological limit. It must be grounded in a place.

Unlike conservationists who believe that we should leave certain places untouched, Berry argues that places are best defended by the stewardship of communities that are in economy with their surroundings. If a community is not the colony of external economy, it will have every incentive to use with care, maintaining the fertility of its soil and the integrity of its forests. The human community of households will naturally come to recognize itself as a part of a larger community that includes the animals, plants, air, trees, and soil that also reside there. This identification explains why environmental destruction always rides in the wake of community destruction.

What can those of us in urban settings do? It all starts with food. We must shorten our supply lines wherever possible, building cooperative arrangements with local farmers. We must hold our food to standards of purity, demanding that they be free of toxic chemicals. We must see to it that our money circulates in our community for as long as possible before leaving. This involves shopping at small local businesses in preference to national chains, joining consumer co-ops and credit unions, supporting the work of local artisans, and choosing to invest one's money locally. Supporting local art and culture can do much to defend against the homogenizing influence of free-market culture. Perhaps most importantly, we must find ways to challenge the dominant paradigm of social mobility and provide ways in which our children can return home to their communities and do meaningful work.

When technology replaces the skills and care of human beings, it must be opposed, according to Berry. Such sentiments inevitably invoke the charge of "luddite," a word that trumps all discussion, much like the word "blasphemy" once did. Indeed it is heresy to challenge the universal faith in progress, our superstitious belief in the invisible hand of the market. Berry accepts that he is a luddite, not because he is against technology per se (he drives a car) but because he believes always in putting community above technology. He also calls himself a "Jeffersonian" in that he believes democracy can only be upheld by a vibrant class of small farmers "securely landed."

But finally and firstly, Berry is a Christian who finds much in biblical tradition to support his view that it is God's one fundamental wish that we be faithful stewards of creation. He writes, "I take literally the statement in the Gospel of John that God loves the world. I believe that the world was created and approved by love, and that, insofar as it is redeemable, it can be redeemed only by love. I believe that divine love, incarnate and indwelling in the world, summons the world always towards wholeness, which ultimately is reconciliation and atonement with God." TW

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Transforming a web of relationships

by Marianne Arbogast

Chuck Matthei spends much of his time trying to get people to think differently about property. Property is best understood "not as a construct of law or a calculation of the marketplace but as a web of relationships," says the president of Equity Trust, a nonprofit organization which works with community development and conservation projects, with a focus on land tenure and land reform issues.

Matthei's own most valued possession is a hand-embroidered quilt, charged with a history that points to his own place in the web, as well as the potential for change. The quilt was made by Amanda Collins, whom Matthei met on a visit to relatives in Lousiana when he was 8 and she was 95.

"Amanda Collins was born a slave of my family," Matthei explains. "She was freed by the Emancipation Proclamation at a very early age, but she was my great grandmother's servant, and she cared for and wet-nursed my grandmother and her brothers and sisters. When she was in her 80s, she made a quilt for each of the children she had raised. This was my grandmother's quilt.

"So when I talk of property, for me these are very personal questions. It wasn't very many years ago that my ancestors considered Amanda Collins to be property. Property is not the static institution that most people imagine it to be. It is a dynamic and ever-changing institution that reflects our understanding of our relationships with one another and the earth."

Because we fail to question our assumptions about property, we are ill-equipped to make crucial moral choices about our involvement with the economic structures of our society, Matthei believes. "What gives rise to the claim of possession? How are the interests of one balanced against the interests of the other? Where does value come from? One of the great ironies of modern life is that we know less about our personal economic relationships and responsibilities than at any other time in human history."

Matthei credits the civil rights movement of the 1960s with radicalizing his worldview. "When I listened to Martin King talk about the day when the sons of former slaves and the sons of owners would sit down together, I stood there and thought, he's speaking to me."

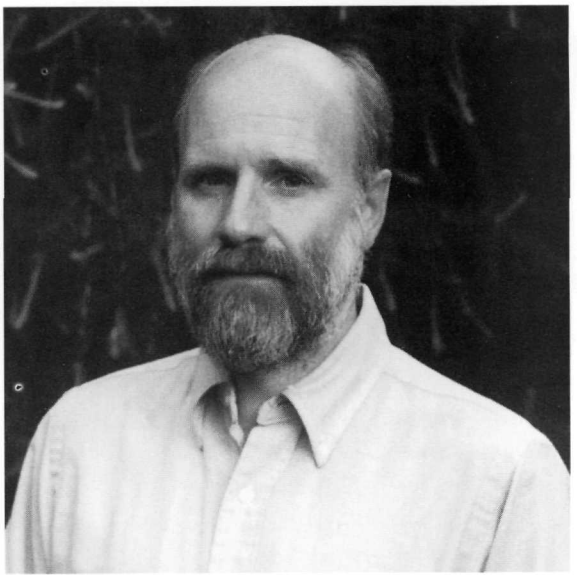
On the verge of his 18th birthday, after applying for military conscientious objector status, Matthei "hit the road on a Honda 50 going 30 miles an hour," with no clear goal but the pursuit of his ideals. When he learned that his application had been denied by the draft board, he burned his draft cards and wrote to say he was sorry he had registered.

Soon afterward, Matthei attended a program on nonviolence at the Catholic Worker farm in Tivoli, N.Y. "In the space of one week I met Wally and Juanita Nelson, Dorothy Day, Ernest and Marian Bromley, Maurice McCrackin ... I went from being almost completely alone in the world to having the most remarkable set of elders one could ever ask or hope for."

Matthei, who had been raised Presbyterian but attended synagogue during his teen years — drawn by the more active social conscience in the Jewish community — found a spiritual home in the Catholic Worker.

"The Catholic Worker movement has been the most instructive, challenging and nurturing religious environment in my life,"

"When I talk of property, for me these are very personal questions. It wasn't very many years ago that my ancestors considered Amanda Collins to be property."



Chuck Matthei

Witnesses, the quick and the dead

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

he says. "It embodied the basic principles of faith more fully and more honestly than any other religious community I'd encountered."

In the years that followed, Matthei's energies were absorbed by the peace movement. In 1969, he was arrested for draft refusal, imprisoned for 40 days, then released by a judge who asked only that Matthei meet with him periodically to continue discussion of the moral and political issues he had raised in the courtroom.

Meanwhile, Matthei's economic analysis deepened.

"My home bases were always in Catholic Worker houses or communal households of peacemaker activists," Matthei says. "Our homes were in low-income communities, and whatever larger political issues we tried to address, we also tried to live as neighbors in the places where we were.

"If you were to do a careful analysis of the circumstances of low-income communities around the country, you would find that the most commonly shared characteristic is the prevalence of absentee ownership. The wealth that flows into the community or the wealth that's generated within that community flows right back out. Poverty has a lot less to do with income than with structures of ownership."

When the war ended, Matthei turned his attention to these problems, working with some early community land trust experiments, then serving as the director of the Institute for Community Economics (ICE) for 12 years. During this time, he created a revolving loan fund for community development projects. When he approached churches to ask for investments, he realized the extent of the need for education.

"They thought it wouldn't work because they thought the poor had no resources," he says. "But as they began to understand the structure of ownership that drained resources right out of low-income neighborhoods, they began to realize that it is possible to form meaningful economic relationships with poor people."

Under Matthei's leadership, ICE also began to work with others to create regional loan funds throughout the country.

In 1991, Matthei moved on to help found Equity Trust. The work of the Trust includes assistance to community and conservation land trusts, an initiative on the stewardship and disposal of church-owned land, and work with community supported agriculture projects. Financial assistance is available through the Equity Trust Fund, which Matthei describes as "a program that combines socially and environmentally responsible investment opportunities with a voluntary land reform initiative."

"One of the great ironies of modern life is that we know less about our personal economic relationships and responsibilities than at any other time in human history."

While welcoming loans from socially concerned investors, Equity Trust also appeals to property owners to sign an "Equity Pledge." The pledge is based on a recognition of "social appreciation," Matthei explains.

"If you buy a property you create value by your investment in that property. If you improve the property by adding labor or capital to it, you increase its value. But in many ways, the community and society also add value to that property. Public investment in infrastructure, transportation and services affect property value profoundly. If neighbors organize to institute a crime watch or clean up vacant lots, that affects property value. Since value comes both from the individual and the community, we need to craft property relationships that appropriately allocate that equity."

The Equity Pledge commits property owners to pledge a designated percentage of the social appreciation of their property (the amount over and above their personal investment) to the Equity Trust Fund, if and when the property is sold.

"We use those monies to create access and opportunity for people who would be excluded from or disadvantaged in the escalating market that gave you a windfall profit," Matthei explains.

The pledge offers people an opportunity "to become personal participants in a process of land reform," he says. "But long before any money changes hands, we're using the example of your commitment to highlight a set of values and principles and to provoke public reflection."

The internal structure of Equity Trust is also an attempt to model just economic relationships. Core staff live and work on a 60-acre tract of land in Connecticut which includes several houses, office space and a conference facility they share with community groups. They receive housing, food, transportation and medical care as needs arise, along with a $200 monthly stipend. Additional funds are allocated for personal obligations such as child support or school debts.

"The idea was that compensation would be based on personal need, not on education, role or other factors," Matthei explains. "It is an effort in personal and practical economic terms to give expression to the respect that we have for each person as an equal and valuable child of God. We're accustomed to saying all are equal in the eyes of God, and then to treating people very differently." TW

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