

**NAIROBI
REPORT**
PAGE 16

THE WITNESS

January 1976

\$1.00



Dana Martin

■ **Black Is Different**

An Interview with James H. Cone
by Theo Witvliet (Radio Holland)
and Hugh C. White

■ **The Offense of Black Theology**

by Mary Adebonojo

■ **Francis of Assisi:**

His Challenge In Our Days

by Dom Helder Camara

■ **Look At Yourself America**

The American Journey—Part II

by Edward Joseph Holland

Letters to the Editor

The Witness reserves the right to condense all letters

The article on hunger in your October issue was of particular interest to me since I am a professional. Because of my experience in the processing of milk and other foods I was, in 1941, called to Washington charged with the responsibility of directing a campaign to increase the annual U.S. production of cheese, powdered and evaporated milk by over a billion pounds for our Armed Services and our allies, including their civilian populations.

I strongly disagree with many of the statements and implications regarding the attitudes of major U.S. companies in the grain and food businesses. Regarding the report of pushing "the infant milk and baby food formula to replace the breast feeding of infants," in my experience it was not to replace, but rather to supplement the scant milk available from half-starved mothers, and UNICEF was certainly the main source of supply and encouragement.

Mr. Gillett has written an interesting plea which I hope will produce the results he hopes for.

Howard P. Faust *Beaulieu-Sur-Mer, France*

On behalf of the Order of St. Helena I wish to thank you for our complimentary subscription to THE WITNESS. I am sure that there will be articles in it that will touch on the concerns of some of our sisters.

Sister Winifred, *OSH Valis Gate, NY*

I like very much the November issue of THE WITNESS finding it less strident and, therefore, more convincing of a point of view than sometimes has been the case. I am an expert at stridency as you know, and urge that, in my experience it's usually a mark of uncertainty. I guess I agree with what Massey Sheperd, Jr., said in his letter.

James Littrell *Buffalo, NY*

END TIME

Marigolds like candelabra quiver nonchalant as dead rain

Falls upward from fields the sheep have crunched

And I, incurious and middle-aged, recall

How making love was once the way

Time ending opened fully

In the irregular

Eschaton

Regularity later

Topsy-turved exactly as

Her dime store paperweight, when

Shaken up, became snow sheep quivered in

And in a crunching of time the pewter candelabra

Became no grandmother, a nonchalance of marigolds dying.

Anthony Towne

Within this issue we present you, our reader, with Part II of Edward Joseph Holland's perceptive monograph on the American Journey entitled "Look at Yourself, America!" When the series of four is completed you may write THE WITNESS for extra copies for use with group discussions.

THE WITNESS

Robert L. DeWitt, Editor; E. Lawrence Carter, Robert Eckersley, Antoinette Swanger, Lisa K. Whelan, Hugh C. White, Jr. Editorial and Business Office: P.O. Box 359, Ambler, Pennsylvania 19002. Telephone (215) 643-7067. Subscription rates: \$9.00 per year; \$1.00 per copy. *The Witness* is published monthly by the Episcopal Church Publishing Company. Board of Directors: Bishops Morris Arnold, Robert DeWitt, Lloyd Gressle, John Hines, John Krumm, Brooke Mosley and Dr. Joseph Fletcher. Copyright 1975 by the Episcopal Church Publishing Company. Printed in U.S.A.

Editorial

Politics and the Church

In this presidential election year, that quadrennial convulsion will dominate the news. And rightly so. For the moment, let us set aside such questions as the essential ideological similarity of the two major parties and the relative unimportance of personalities when compared with the power of entrenched institutions. The fact remains that a President—and many other officials—will be named by the electorate this year. Foreign capitals will be busy assessing the front runners, and making alternate strategies so they can position themselves properly for any outcome. Advertising and public relations campaigns will be devised and funded, “deals” will be made to secure endorsements. Coalitions and alliances will be sought. Such are the marks of political process in a democracy.

Similarly the Episcopal Church is democratic. It should not be surprising, therefore, that many of the same political processes are at work in the life of the Church. The election of the present Presiding Bishop was the result of a carefully-planned political process. No less political are the activities of the Society for the Preservation of the Book of Common Prayer and the efforts of those opposed to and favoring the ordination of women. Only the naive will be surprised or shocked at this. But still there are cries that “the Church should be different,” and that “the Church should be above politics”.

Behind these cries is the correct assumption that the Church has a sovereign purpose and that politics—“the art of the possible”—is subservient to that purpose. The purpose of the Church was not arrived at democratically. It was and is a given. But politics is involved in determining how the Church will approximate that purpose in any particular place and time.

Pope John XXIII was clear about this. Vatican II was a carefully-planned piece of politics. Its aim was to stretch the Church by making the best possible response to the divine imperative. Although he has not yet been canonized, we nevertheless refer to this political Pope as saintly. A politician, “saintly”? Yes, because he was using politics—the art of the possible—to mold the Church into a more responsive instrument of God’s will.

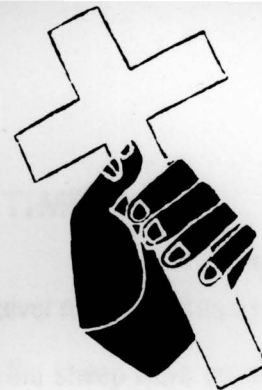
Many a bishop with a smaller see than the Bishop of Rome’s has interpreted his situation and role quite differently. As seen by many bishops, politics is not a useful tool to be put to sacred service, but an insurmountable reason for taking no initiative. Granted the dangerous drift toward oppression in many forms, they say, the political climate in the Church simply prevents my doing anything. The faltering Equal Rights Amendment, high unemployment (especially of Blacks), the economic imperialism of large corporations—these, they say, are unfortunate facts. Even dangerous. Perhaps disastrous. “But you don’t understand my situation,” they protest. “I have to be sensitive to the political realities.”

A bishop has to be a politician. It is an inescapable function of the office. The test, therefore, is not whether he is a politician, but whether he is using politics to stretch the Church toward obedience. Whether he is crowding the limits of the possible. Whether he is leading—with as much of coalition behind him as he can muster. In order to accomplish what? In order to see to it that a predominantly middle-class, white, male-dominated Church may start to stand free of its classism, racism and sexism, and be true to its calling to be the people of God.

Robert L. DeWitt

An Interview with James H. Cone
by Theo Witvliet (Radio Holland) and Hugh C. White

Black is Different



QUESTION: What does black theology mean in the U.S.A., 1975?

CONE: In order to understand how black theology seeks to speak in 1975, one must first understand a little bit about the history of black people in the United States of America. It's a history of slavery up until about 1865, and after 1865 it's a history in which black people have been systematically discriminated against and oppressed within this country. Let me just give you an example in the city of Detroit. The city is made up of more than 50 per cent black and yet 40 per cent or more of the population in this city who are black are unemployed. And they are highly concentrated in ghettos which gives them a small place to live.

Consequently, my question as a black theologian and also as a black person is, "What has the gospel to do with people who are dehumanized and oppressed because they are people of color?" It means to me that when the gospel takes seriously the human situation, then it has to ask the question, "What is it that makes people whole?" And salvation means wholeness. It means granting people the power to be who they are.

So black theology merely tries to say to the people as they struggle for freedom that in that struggle I'll be struggling with you to make sure that your humanity is protected.

QUESTION: What is the central theme of your new book, *God of the Oppressed*?

CONE: *God of the Oppressed* seeks to show that language which arises out of a political-social context, as my language of the gospel does, is not accidental; that is, language itself is social and political. Anybody who speaks says a word from a certain context. People in

power can cover up the context in which they speak. They can make you think they are speaking in a universal language. Actually they represent the status quo which has become universal in the consciousness of people, the oppressed and also themselves. What I try to say in this book is that my language is social and political but so is everybody else's language.

Ideology is not decided at the point of whether or not we speak from a certain context, but ideology is decided as we try to recognize the context from which we speak and whether we are open to the possibility that there are other contexts which may also be valid. But not only that, the perspective of the Bible has its own social-historical context. There, if theological language is to be Christian, it must be a language that arises from the struggle of people who are weak and poor, who are trying to find liberation. This is so because of the exodus, the cross and the resurrection of Jesus.

My point in the book is that ideological language, false speech in relation to the Christian gospel, is speech that sounds like Christianity but actually is not Christian doctrine because it is not the language of the poor and the weak.

QUESTION: That raises the question: If you have a black theology, do you also have a Puerto Rican theology, etc? Don't you make it too easy to say, well, that's your particular theology, it has nothing to say to us because we are in a different situation?

CONE: No, I don't think it's that easy to allude to that because, while language begins in a particular context, human beings are social creatures. That is, my humanity is not simply limited to my own family context. My humanity in terms of whether or not it's authentic, in terms of my struggle, is whether or not it reaches out to other people. Now, I cannot reach out to other people

unless I have a base from which to reach. My point is that because I speak from my particular black context, I don't see why anyone should get turned off by that.

Why do people get turned off with a certain kind of particular language—like black—and not get turned off with Marxist language which is also particular? Language, by nature, is particular—there is no other way to talk. If my way of trying to be human conflicts with your way of trying to be human, then what we need to do is sit down and talk about this.

QUESTION: Hugo Assman thinks it is a shame that theologies, like black theology, are defensive. They react, he says, to a situation of oppression; they exist almost by virtue of that situation. What is your reaction?

CONE: Yes, I think so. All theologies of liberation, Latin American liberation theology, for example, is on the defensive in relation to Europe. They get very uptight when Europe begins to speak of universal theology, and you should hear the oppression that comes out in the literature. They are as much on the defensive as black theologians are. I think oppressed people have to holler when they're hurt. Only those who are not hurting don't get on the defensive because they have nothing to be on the defensive about.

QUESTION: What contribution can the thought of Marx, the method of Marx, make to black theology in North America? What contribution has Marx got to make to black theology?

CONE: I think the contribution Marx has to make, or shall I say Latin American liberation theologians and social scientists who take seriously Marx's methodology, is to help black people be more aware of the contradictions which exist in our communities and in this society in terms of class. That can be sharpened.

What I resent when I make that admission is that somebody substitute the class contradiction so as to forget about the color contradiction, particularly if he is not a person of color. I just will not tolerate that insensitivity, because if you believe that the struggle is in the hands of the people, then you have to let the people into the struggle at the point that they can. My resistance is

to the Marxist people who have it already set up how the struggle ought to go without listening or joining the struggles of those people in Detroit, in Los Angeles and otherwise. They already know what they ought to be doing. I resent that, because they are doing to black people the same thing that white people are doing—they know what's best in those ghettos over there.

But to speak more directly to your question, I do perceive that what Latin American theologians who are Marxists can help us at is to help us recognize the contradiction of class in our own community and in this society, and also the relationship between the richer nations and the poorer nations as a primary contradiction. I think we can teach Latin American theologians who are influenced by Marx the contradiction of color in their own society. There are more black people in Latin America than in the United States of America. Thirty per cent of the people in Brazil are black people. My question to them is, "Why is it that there are no black theologians from Latin America in your group? Why is it that there are no black theologians, period, in Latin America writing about the theology of liberation? Why is that?" It is not an accident. They have been systematically excluded.

QUESTION: In the City of Detroit several groups have appeared in the last few years, black and white groups, that have joined together on the issue of integration of the schools and quality education in the city. These groups have been formed as they have gotten involved in Marxist thought. It is the first time in years that a joining together of whites and blacks with some solidarity in this city has occurred. How would you account for this?

CONE: I don't know much of that phenomenon in its own particular instance, but I can speak of it in a general sense. I think it is an example of what is the possibility when you have people that struggle together. They break down barriers that separate them. But you can't break them down before you join the struggle. I sense people wanting to break down the barriers of color, class, etc. before they join the struggle together. They're talking struggle, they are not joining struggle. And the only reason you get what you're talking about is because you've got people, black and white, who see something concrete that they both want

done and they go and they get it done. They begin to understand how their own lives are being made human in the process. But you can't talk that into people's heads, it has to happen in history, in struggle.

Black people have had a bad experience with Marxism in the United States. Therefore, when I talk about Marxist ideology and class, in my own community, I just don't mention Marx. I don't mention communism. I just talk about the real of it. I talk about why some people are poor and some are not; and I talk about how they are made that way, it's not accidental. And I begin to have to explain the structures that make that happen. I think one has to be sensitive that there is a lot of Marxist ideology being operated in the community of the people without making Marx into a savior. I think that is very important to keep in mind. I would never call myself a Marxist, although in reality that's what I'm known for, that's what I want to be. In my gut that's what I think needs to happen, but you have to be realistic that there are certain symbols that turn people off not because of *who* they are but because of who represented them. There are some communities that I go into where I will not mention Jesus Christ. They are the Black Nationalists. They are the people who have seen Christ in such a negative representation, they think you're talking about white people. You follow me? It's the same kind of thing.

QUESTION: Do you think that this is a time to do some study of Marx?

CONE: I think it's a time to do some study of Marx, but let me make this point very strongly. I think the resources for the struggle for liberation must come out of the people, the community, the culture and the history of the people who are victims. I do not believe that you can import a methodology of liberation from the outside, because the people didn't create it. What you have to be careful about is that you really show a disrespect for oppressed people's history when you do not believe that they have the resources in this history to liberate themselves.

QUESTION: How does this history of the oppressed people relate to the story of the Bible?

CONE: When black people were in slavery, they had very little historical resources for their liberation. They believed that there was a god that was working in this history to liberate them, and it was that knowledge and that hope that enabled them to keep doing the little things they could do, the little struggles they could make, to make those struggles worthwhile. Only people who share the consciousness of the enlightenment period, which believed that human beings could do everything, actually can be calculated into employing their own resources. But oppressed people, while they have to use their resources, can never be exclusively depended upon.

I see this not only present in my history. I think you should read the autobiography or some of the stories of Martin Luther King. Several significant points happened when King had his back against the wall and he thought that that particular struggle was lost, and all of a sudden something happened from out of the blue, don't know why it happened—the point is it came as a moment of grace that made him recognize that struggle is worthwhile.

One example is the first time he led the boycott in Montgomery. They were boycotting the buses, using cars, taking people to work. Well, it got hot and it went on for more than a year and that was a long time. Then suddenly it was declared illegal and they were going to put anybody in jail who took anybody to work. King didn't know how he could take that, how he was going to get the people to work. They walked into court that morning and they didn't know what to do. They knew they were going to lose. And all of a sudden, for some strange reason at that very moment, the court declared segregated busing to be illegal. Now, King didn't do that, the people in Montgomery didn't do that, but somebody shouted, God done visited Washington today, or something like that. That's what I mean.

Now, it's not only that incident. There are several incidents like that in which black people have their backs against the wall. They have done everything they can do and it seems like all is for nothing; and then all of a sudden something breaks that gives the people the hope and openness to see that their struggle is not in vain. I would not want to lose that connection in my history and in my struggle.

QUESTION: What did you want to come out of the Detroit conference?

CONE: Two things that ought to be considered seriously; one, is some kind of contact or conference that would bring together black people and other oppressed minorities in this country—Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, black people, Chicanos—all of the minorities, just them, without white suppression. That's the first.

Two, I'd like to see representatives from this group in North America, U.S.A. hold a conference in Latin America. Because Latin America is an abstraction to me. They want us to say something, they want us to feel, so they have a feel for what it's like over here. So I need contact over there. I feel a need for that so we can talk; oppressed minorities over here talking with Latin Americans in their struggle for liberation over there, so we can see what it's like. I think that would help to understand more the contradiction of class.

Also, I want to see people of color. I'd like the conference held in Brazil or somewhere like that where there are people of color to see how that's working. So when I bring up color, they can't dodge it. After two such dialogues we would be ready to talk to American whites and Europeans. With that kind of preparation we would have a kind of knowledge of each other. When I meet Latin Americans for the first time, basically in a conference context, there are white people out there all of whom I respect and I know, been working with—I know all the theology professors and church folk. They just talk liberation until they're blue in the face. I know what they do, nothing, they're working against the struggle. There are one or two exceptions here and there, but they're clearly exceptions, and I don't know what they're going to decide to do next week. You follow what I'm saying? So that kind of suspicion is there.

QUESTION: Our time is up. Is there a last thought you would like to share with us?

CONE: One experience vivid in my mind is when I spent a month in Asia—Japan and Korea. I was invited there during the month of May and June (1975) by the Korean Christian Church in Japan, which is a very small church, but they wanted me to come because I had been talking about black theology, the theology of the victim. And they being Koreans in Japan having a

similar history but shorter in which they were enslaved by Japanese, they wanted to know how I began to think this way and what it was about. We held four retreats and I was there for a month.

Now what I'm saying is that those people were not trying to join the black struggle in the United States. What they were trying to see was the kind of connections they could make between their own political struggle and their Christian faith. And by looking at another context they might begin to see how they could do that. But not only that; eventually, the kind of missionaries we ought to have going to Japan for Koreans or Koreans in Korea, ought to be other oppressed missionaries. Missionaries don't know anything about black people, they know all about white people. No black church has missionaries over there.

Also, one has to recognize the sharp difference between oppressed people identifying the gospel with their struggle and oppressors with military power. In Nazi Germany you had the state identifying the gospel and Jesus with their military power and struggle. That's what the German people did. That's a different thing from God—being present with the Jews that were victimized. That's a different reality.

I don't think it would be wise, for example, for African nations to begin to talk about "God is with us," and fighting each other. One has to be careful about how one does that. One way in which you judge it is that the victim is speaking, and you have to remember that that is never permanent. Theological statements, that is, the prophetic word, comes at times and then goes. You can see that in the ministry of Jeremiah. It changes from period to period. At one time Sarah becomes the wrath of Yahweh's anger and at another time it's a totally different thing. So I think people have to be sensitive, but the clue in biblical prophesy and biblical history is that God is with the victim. When the victim becomes the oppressor and begins to use that favor as a means of oppressing the poor, then God takes the side against the situation.

James Cone is professor of Theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York City.



Dana Martin

Response to Cone The Offense of Black Theology

by Mary Adebonojo

It is clear from the preceding interview with Dr. Cone that Black Theology is certain to be an offense to many people. It will be offensive, first, because it is addressed to and emerges from and in the name of a particular people, and because it makes certain claims concerning the relationship between God and that people. To many it will seem that Black Theology is fragmenting a universal faith and starting a disastrous and heretical trend toward the proliferation of ethnic and national theologies. Some undoubtedly think that we shall next have Puerto Rican and Korean theologies.

In truth, Cone's Black Theology brings to the fore an age-old problem for Christian faith called "the scandal of particularity". Yet, many twentieth century Christians have not had to face this problem squarely before. Two thousand years removed from the manger and the cross, the particulars of our faith are no longer offensive to us. It is not a scandal to us that God chose the *Jews* as His people, that Jesus touched leperous flesh, that He died a condemned criminal by a method more likely to give rise to nausea than to pious devotion. When Black Theology claims that God is involved in the struggle for freedom alongside black, sweaty bodies, crowned with thick lips and kinky hair, it confronts twentieth century Americans vividly and inescapably with an incarnational confrontation. And it does so just as the Christian faith has always done, through its offensive particulars.

At the same time Black Theology forces recognition of the concrete realities on which true Christ faith is always built, it reveals the symbolic and universal dimension which makes Christianity a faith accessible to all peoples. Cone makes clear that God is identified with black peoples in the Americas today because they are poor and oppressed. The God of the oppressed continually identified Himself with such people not only, as Cone cites, in the Exodus, cross and resurrection, but throughout the entire Bible. It is not wise, Cone tells us, for Africans fighting one another to claim that God is with them. Thus, while describing a particular contemporary reality, "black" is also a universal symbol for oppression and poverty. It follows that the

intimate relation between God and the oppressed blacks is thereby open to all others. When whites actually join the struggle for freedom, Cone points out that they, too, participate in the wholeness and reconciliation of human salvation.

Black Theology is likely to be offensive to some, too, because of its style of theology. For Cone, "doing theology" is unabashedly active. It answers question and helps oppressed peoples "see . . . connections between their . . . political struggle and their Christian faith". It is not a pristine system beyond the reach of situations. It is a practical tool which helps oppressed Christians realize the promises of Christianity in their own day. In both content and style, it would seem to have much to offer all Christians.

Mary Adebonojo is a black student at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and a candidate for ordination from the Diocese of Pennsylvania.

Response to Cone Black Liberation Must Begin Within

by J. Carleton Hayden

James H. Cone has correctly noted that ideological and institutional racism resulting in the subordination and control of the black community by the white community has been and continues to be the major factor defining the needs of black Americans. Furthermore, he has demonstrated that all language, including theological, is reflective of a particular socioeconomic context. European (white) theology is both consciously and unconsciously an instrument of white supremacy. Consequently, a pressing necessity is a theology relevant to black liberation.

The explication of liberation themes in Biblical theology, such as God's deliverance of the enslaved people of Israel is necessary but not sufficient. An adequate black theology must do justice to the fullness of the Christian faith as contained in the Scriptures and tradition. The human malady is more than racial oppression. The root cause is human (not white or black) self-centeredness resulting in the misuse of human beings. This self-centeredness is accentuated by racist institutions that limit blacks and may well be more pronounced in whites as a result of their centuries long exploitation of colored peoples; but it is very evident among blacks. An adequate theology must deal positively with the need for personal conversion to Christian living and reform within the black community.

continued on page 15

Look at Yourself, America!

THE AMERICAN JOURNEY, PART II

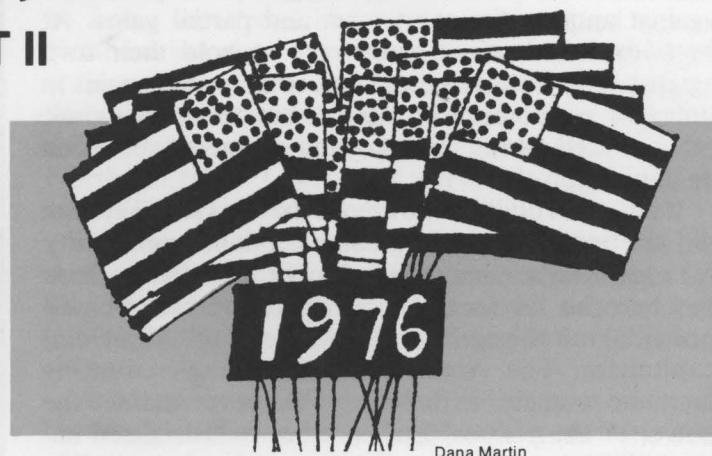
by Edward Joseph Holland

The Frontier & Expansion

This second section of THE AMERICAN JOURNEY recalls some elements of the massive tale of American history from the period immediately after the foundation of the young nation to the recent end of what has been called the "post-World War II era". This period basically is the period of American expansion—the time when the young nation stood up and stretched out its arms to reach its broadest limits as a cultural, military-political, and economic power in the world. On the one hand, the period is the tale of a great success story, for America emerged from World War II as the most powerful nation on the face of the earth. On the other hand, it is a tale marked also by great suffering and exploitation, because those whose labor was spent and whose blood was shed to make this possible were not always the beneficiaries, even though many dreamed they would be. It is important that this period be critically reviewed by the American people, because the expansion may have now reached its limits, and the American Dream which nourished it seems swiftly evaporating in the contemporary crisis of the United States, both within domestic society and as a world power.

The political leadership of the young nation believed that the structures of formal democracy (prejudiced toward the top classes) depended upon sustained growth. So long as there was a social movement both outward and upward, with which a majority of the population could identify, there would be no serious challenge to the elitist political structure of the society.

The process of growth guaranteed two things politically. First, expansion would act as a safety valve releasing threatening social pressures. Discontented white workers from the Northeastern seaboard, for example, could always quit their jobs (or even run away, if they were indentured servants) and head West to stake their claim to a small family farm in the "Free Soil" movement. Even later, when the continent was covered, the upward mobility of economic expansion, with America serving more and more as the world's industrial center, played the same role. Second, the



dynamic of social instability in a growing economy enabled the top social classes to keep forming fresh political coalitions with new groups, and in the process preempting the possibility of a truly broad populist coalition from the distinct regional economies of the nation, from the nation's many races, and from the two sexes. Thus, the powerful Northern capitalists could at different times back the Black Freedom Movement, massive European immigrations, the Free Soil Movement, and even the later Women's Suffrage Movement. The net effect of these selective and shifting coalitions across class, racial, and sexual lines, however, was not the creation of a fully democratic society. What resulted instead was the growth of the capitalist economic base and reinforcement of the political power of the social classes which presided over that base.

Growth, so far at least, has been a fundamental law of capitalism. In fact, it is from this process of economic growth, whereby a significant percentage of national production is re-invested for further growth, that capitalism takes its name. It is that mode of production whose total social life is organized around the accumulation of capital, which law in turn takes expression in maximization of profit and maximization of technological or instrumental rationality. The unleashing of this growth under capitalism brings with it unprecedented material productivity and also unprecedented social recklessness. In the process, the enterprise creates a productive base capable for the first time in human history of responding to a wide range of human needs. Yet the productivity emerges within the boundaries of a social system whose political and cul-

tural institutions repress both the vision and vehicles of the common good. Within the resulting process of fragmented pluralism, competing groups are pitted one against another for short term and partial gains. At best, exploited social groups try to hold their own against such structures, and indeed they make gains in times of economic expansion—but these gains are often eroded during the following periods of recession or depression.

It must be admitted, however, that this social system did continually provide greater economic prosperity for a growing number of people. For that reason, there has been so far no truly sustained and broad-based political challenge to the system of American capitalism. The American Left, though counting dramatic moments in its history, has never attained the power of the political Left in other industrialized nations. This is partly due to the historical and geographic situation of the new American nation, which could muster such productive forces within an entirely new society. Even so, there are at least two reasons why the expansion period of American history merits critical re-examination.

1) While there were significant periods of generalized and increasing prosperity, there were many Americans who did not share in them. Also, those periods were more limited than we realize. American expansion in many ways was built on the exploitation of America's peoples and of peoples beyond our shores. The most dramatic exploitation occurred among the peoples of color in our land—the natives who were driven from their homes and pushed farther and farther back, finally into shrinking enclaves, in what in many cases became a genocidal process; the plunder of Africa for slaves and the brutal exploitation of their labor in the Southern plantation system; the seizure of land and homes from the Mexican-Indian peoples of what is now the Southwestern United States, and their subsequent conversion into an agricultural proletariat; the enticing of European peasants by the millions to undercut the bargaining power of organized labor in the early stages of American industrialism, as well as the nearly all-out wars against the labor movement which the immigrants later joined; the manipulation of small farmers across the country by giant financial interests in the East which controlled credit, transportation, and markets; the restructuring of women's oppression, marginalizing middle class women from productive roles in society, while driving poor working class women into some

of the foulest industrial jobs in competition with working class men. At the same time, the triumph of instrumental rationality aggravated sexuality's reduction to a commodity and concentrated its locus on woman as sex symbol. Finally, the process resulted in the creation of a neo-colonial American empire concentrated in Latin America and parts of Asia, after the collapse of European colonialism.

This story of exploitation—the other side of the coin of expansion—is not simply a story of oppression, but also of resistance. There are thousands of tales of bitter battles by American men and women of every color and culture against their exploitation. Unhappily, these tales either have been forgotten or repressed in popular consciousness by an educational system which tends to sterilize our history. The unfortunate result, in many cases, is a crippling of political imagination—the blinding of the utopian faculty. It is very important therefore, to unshackle this faculty today—and not just out of historical curiosity.

2) It seems to many that America's expansion period has come to an end. John Kennedy's search for a "New Frontier" sounded the era's swan song. Since the late 1960s it has been clear that the nation could no longer afford both guns and butter. As a result, fundamentally new social policies—cultural (including religious), political, and economic—would have to be designed for the nation's future. If the analysis of this restructuring (to be described in Part III) is correct, it will mean the collapse of the American Dream, the shutting of the trap door on the American ladder of upward mobility, increasing repression of the labor movement and of progressive social forces, as well as more bitter suffering for the large body of America's poor. Within that context, it is possible that both racism and sexism will become more severe. The neo-imperialism of international capitalism also may become ever more ruthless.

Recalling the tragic and heroic tales of America's complex past, however, rather than constituting an anti-American attack on the nation's people, might prove the most important step in equipping Americans to continue the long struggle for real freedom.

It is impossible to tell the full story of these struggles in so few pages, but let us at least recall some of the richer tales.

Manifest Destiny

Perhaps the crassest expression of American imperialism came from Sen. Albert J. Beveridge, when he

announced: "We will not renounce our part in the mission of our race, trustees under God, of the civilization of the world. God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-admiration. No! He has made us the master organizers of the world adept in government that we may administer government among savages and senile peoples."¹

Labor and Slave Labor

As early as George Washington, economic questions were raised about the institution of slavery. It was Washington's feeling, shared by many other Southern gentry, that slavery was too costly and inefficient to be of service in an expanding empire. They and their successors believed, a larger, cheaper labor force was needed which focused more skills and independent initiative than a subject slave population. It was for this reason that millions of immigrants were recruited from Europe to form the white working class.

Revolution and Counter-Revolution

Just as the Revolutionary War had enlisted the colonial workers in a temporary coalition with the colonial merchants and planters against the English, the Northern industrialists enlisted Northern workers, the middle classes, and the slaves themselves against the Southern planters. This second revolution became most radical when the industrialists were forced to arm the black population and enlist them in the struggle.

As long as the industrialists held their power in the North, they could afford to unleash a democratic revolution in the South. Once other forms of resistance against the industrialists grew, however, they had to betray the black freedom movement in the South and allow the Southern elite to preside over a counter-revolution. The counter-revolution restored near slavery under a tenant-farmer and share-cropper system, backed up the black codes and guerrilla terrorism of the KKK. Thousands of blacks, a few years before had moved to dramatic gains in education, civil rights and political participation, became the victims of vicious and murderous attacks encouraged by the elite.

Search for Solidarity

William Sylvis, one of the great names of American labor, devoted himself to the principle of white-black labor solidarity and to the solidarity of working class

men and women.² Born of a poverty-stricken Pennsylvania family and never able to raise his own family out of deep poverty, Sylvis was no liberal. But he knew that freed blacks, formerly locked out of Northern industry, were being hired at reduced wages at the same time that Northern ports were bringing in thousands of industrial indentured servants. Together these groups were being played off against the old Northern labor force, and eventually against one another.

He knew too that women were being pitched into the skirmish, often working from 6 a.m. until midnight for \$3 a week. He found cases of women and children fainting beside their looms and living in horrid urban slums.

Although many trade unionists wanted to reject black offers of cooperation, Sylvis insisted: "The line of demarcation is between the robbers and the robbed, no matter whether the wronged be the friendless widow, the skilled white mechanic, or the ignorant black. Capital is no respecter of persons and it is in the very nature of things a sheer impossibility to degrade one class of labor without degrading all."³

The Secret Weapon

The secret weapon in many strikes was the courage and dedication of the women involved. Perhaps one of the greatest figures in all labor history was Mary Jones, affectionately known as "Mother" Jones.⁴

An Irish immigrant school teacher and seamstress, she became one of the principal organizers of the United Mine Workers of America. When police attacked the miners' pickets and forced them to flee, Mother Jones rounded up the women to drive away the police with sticks and brooms, and the strike was on again. Fighting hard for worker solidarity, over against narrow craft viewpoints, she supported the One Big Union concept and was in a prominent position for the opening convention of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), known more often as the "Wobblies". Later she supported the Mexican Revolution and went to Mexico as a "guest of State".

A fervent Catholic, she insisted that God Almighty had taught her "... to pray for the dead but fight like hell for the living". In 1921, at the Pan-American Labor Federation in Mexico, she supported the Russian Revolution and, despite the opposition of Samuel Gompers, secured adoption of a resolution demanding the release of political prisoners. Fighting for all workers, even going to jail in her 80's, Mother Jones was an American legend.

2. Staughton Lynd, *Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism*, (New York, 1968)

3. Richard O. Boyer & Herbert M. Morais, *Labor's Untold Story*, (New York, 1971)

4. Mary Field Parton, *The Autobiography of Mother Jones*, (Chicago, 1972)

FOOTNOTES:

1. Manuel Maldonado-Denis, *Puerto Rico: A SocioHistoric Interpretation*, (New York, 1972) p. 56.

The Knights of Labor

The largest early labor organization was Terence Powderly's Knights of Labor. Between 1885 and 1886, membership in the order grew from 100,000 to 700,000. Some 60,000 blacks joined the order. The foreign born and unskilled rushed in. Women workers increasingly were active in its ranks under the direction of Leonora Barry. The slogan of the movement was, "An injury to one is an injury to all." Powderly himself was a pacific person. But the hostility and violence directed at his members by the National Association of Manufacturers (which employed countless spies and private armies organized by the Pinkerton Company) prompted him at one point to urge, "I am anxious that each lodge should be provided with powder, shot and Winchester rifles when we intend to strike."⁵

The Eight-Hour Day

A small early labor organization destined to outlive the Knights of Labor was the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada. It had its base among skilled workers organized along craft lines. Originally it was very militant. Founded in 1881, it adopted this preamble to its constitution: "A struggle is going on in the nations of the world between the oppressors and oppressed of all countries, a struggle between capital and labor which must grow in intensity from year to year and work disastrous results to the toiling millions of all nations if not combined for mutual protection and benefit."⁶

Accepting class struggle, international solidarity and the strike weapon, the organization made its great issue the eight-hour day.

In the ensuing battle, centered in Chicago, the upper class mustered all its strength in defense. Their feelings were expressed in the Chicago Tribune on November 23, 1875. "Every lamp-post in Chicago will be decorated with a communist carcass if necessary . . ."⁷

Labor Recruitment

The journalist, John Swinton, writing in 1883 of the tactics used in the Pennsylvania coal fields, said: "The contractors make their appearance under the American flag among the half-starved mudsills in some of the most wretched districts of Hungary, Italy or Denmark, tell the stories of fabulous wages to be gotten in America, bamboozle the poor creatures, rope them in and make contracts with them to pay their passage across the sea, upon their agreeing to terms that few

5. Boyer & Morais, *ibid*, p. 89.

6. *Op. cit.*, p. 90

7. *Op. cit.*, p. 91

can understand. When they reach the districts of this country to which the contractors ship them, they find their golden dreams turned into nightmares, as they put to work in mines, factories or on railroads, at even lower wages than those of them whom they throw out of work . . ."⁸

Eugene Debs

The great socialist hero of the era was Eugene Debs. Folks thought of Abraham Lincoln when they saw this giant, gawky midwestern figure. A former locomotive fireman, Debs fought against monopoly as Lincoln fought against slavery. Politically conservative to begin with, Debs abandoned the Democratic Party and proclaimed himself a socialist.

Al Capone and the Red Scare

Primarily for the unskilled and unorganized, the IWW brought together migrant workers, blacklisted members from other unions, lumberjacks, cowboys and farm hands.

Many workers were jailed and beaten in IWW-sponsored strikes. Because so much of the white labor militancy came from foreign-born workers, particularly the Irish and Italian workers, labor struggles were branded unAmerican, or the work of foreign agents.

In the meantime the Progressive movement tried to steer the country away from socialist influences. "Ford, not Marx" became the rallying cry of those championing increased production and worker speed-ups. Even Al Capone, foretelling subsequent collaboration between the CIA and the multi-ethnic crime syndicates, warned "We must keep the worker away from the red literature and red ruses."⁹

Ku Klux Klan

The Ku Klux Klan, the movement to "protect" the nation from foreign influences, also was the instrument of anti-black terror in the South. Calling itself "100 per cent American," the Klan was against blacks, trade unions, communism, Roman Catholic and Jews.

The C.I.O.

Labor solidarity and militancy began to emerge again. In 1936 the CIO was born, the expression of the old fighting spirit. Growing out of forces critical of AFL leadership, it soon split the conservative leadership. For the first time in the century, it organized thousands of black workers on a basis of equality into the indus-

8. *Op. cit.*, p. 66

9. *Op. cit.*, p. 234

trial unions. The potential power of white-black labor unity was quickly perceived, and CIO men and women were flogged, tarred and feathered, even killed, by the Ku Klux Klan.

Church and Labor

The dominant religion of the union movement was Catholicism. Because of its closeness to the Labor movement, the Catholic Church became organized labor's unofficial religious chaplain. At home with power, but reluctant to face class conflict, the Catholic influence reacted negatively to leftist strains in the movement and later became a major force in assisting the Cold War, both internally and externally. It was partly because of their usefulness in the Cold War struggle against socialist forces at home and abroad that Catholic leaders were taken into the confidence of the American upper classes.

The American Left

In turn the American Left, the only force capable of providing a theoretical framework for the integration of the multiple social struggles, proved incapable of creating a unified and mass political force. It tended toward sectarian isolation. Eventually isolated, without the support of labor, of peoples of color, or of the women's movement, it became the victim of the McCarthy era and was mainly forgotten.

Without a coherent social theory and a firm practical alliance, the distinct social movements in America faced their battles for the most part in isolation. Separate screws were turned upon white unions, the black freedom movement, small farmers, working class women and voices which criticized imperialism. The four major issues of injustice in America—class oppression, racism, sexism and imperialism—were not systemically linked in popular consciousness.

NEXT MONTH: What happens when there is no more room to roam? If expansion is a fundamental law of capitalism, what happens when military might is unable to push any further and the last wilderness has been settled? In our next issue, Joseph Holland probes "Limits and Crises."

Edward Joseph Holland is a staff associate at the Center of Concern, an independent center for policy analysis and public education, initiated by the Jesuits and dealing mainly with international social issues.

Francis of Assisi: His Challenge in Our Days

by Dom Helder Camara

There are men who are so human, who live so profoundly the problems and crises of their times and of their people, that they live on as an inspiration for all times and for all people.

It would be a great mistake to concentrate only on the words these men spoke, on the actions they performed. What is important is to be able to discern, to sense what they would say, what they would do in new times, in the new circumstances that each generation must face.

Francis of Assisi is one of these rare human beings who, through centuries, latitudes and longitudes, are continuously challenging, questioning, unsettling. It seems suitable to bring before us the major challenges which, in my opinion, Francis of Assisi brings to those who live at the dawn of the 21st century. Certainly, I hope the seeds of meditation that I bring you will afterwards provoke other aspects, other challenges springing up from the life and example of Francis.

The Triple Challenge of Francis to Our Age of Transition

1. *The Creator who is Co-creator, the Co-creator who Continues to be a Creator*

You, who saw Sun and Fire as true brothers, the Skylark, the Water and the Light as true Sisters, clearly could not forget man, a brother among brothers.

The social problems of our days are so acute that, to intone the Canticle of Creation, we must remind two-thirds of humanity, "Man, my brother, you are a creature, but you have been trampled on, degraded to such an extent that we must all remember, more than ever before, an eternal truth . . . Yes, you are a creature, man of the third world; yes, you are a creature, man of the poor areas of the rich world . . . To begin with, you are not a sub-creature . . . By the expressed will of God you participate in the divine nature, you are charged to dominate nature and complete creation. By the expressed will of God you are a Co-creator."

Meanwhile, one third of humanity becomes larger, stronger and more powerful to such an extent that, in practice, it does not feel a lack of God, it does not need to call out for protection . . . This one-third of humanity has the money that opens all doors, has the prestige that

makes everything easy, has the force that breaks down all barriers. To this third of humanity we must say: "My brother, you are a creature and God wanted you to be a co-creator. God is far from envying you, but for your own good, do not forget that, raised to the glory of co-creator, you are still a creature . . ."

But, to him who is hungry, sick, ragged and tattered; without a house worthy of the name; crushed by a job that doesn't give him even the indispensable for himself and his family; with no security, because at any time he may lose his job and be expelled from the poor dwelling he calls home; without the chance to study; without an effective participation in the life of his region and of his country; to this man in a subhuman condition, who has no prospect, who has no hope; what is the good of telling him that God, his Father, made him a creature, but also wanted him as a co-creator? . . ."

On the other hand, he who has comfort and luxury at home; who has a house in the city, a house in the country and houses abroad; he who has several cars in the garage and even his own airplane and his own yacht; he who has shares in the largest companies and credit in the largest banks in the world; he who is unable to spend all the money he owns; he who has power of decision in multi-major corporations, which are the true lords of the earth; he who can influence the mass media; he can intervene in the appropriate official areas for you; in case of illness, can obtain the best specialists and even call the greatest specialists in the world for a medical conference; he who lives on these heights will live with assurance and disdain for anyone who reminds him that he is not God, but only a creature.

Francis, it is important to invite mountains and water, night and darkness, plants and animals to praise the Lord . . . But how will man, the interpreter of creation and minstrel of God be able to intone the new Canticle of Creation if the number of men reduced to a sub-human condition is increasing, and if the rest see themselves as super-men?

2. How to Understand and Live Poverty Among Sub-men and Super-men?

Poor man of Assisi! Minstrel of Lady Poverty! What would you do in a world in which two-thirds of the population have by far exceeded the limits of poverty and have fallen into misery? What would you say, what would you do, if you had to announce the Beatitude on Poverty to people living in utter misery? . . . I am sure that you would not allow any mistake between poverty and misery . . . You had, and you still have, the greatest respect for Lady Poverty, but it seems to me that,

without doubt, you would never call misery a lady. Misery did not enter into the mind of Christ when he said: "Happy are the poor." You, Francis, you would say, oh yes, you would say clearly and openly that misery is an insult to our Creator and Father. I doubt that you would listen silently to any misunderstanding about the words of Christ: "The poor you will always have with you," as a pretext to maintain the structure that, throughout the world, crushes more than two-thirds of the sons of God.

Francis, you who rid yourself of your rich clothing and gave it back to your father, Peter Bernardone, what would you whisper today to the sons of the super rich, what would you say to the super-men who even forget that they are but creatures, who live as if they were gods! . . . You were not, are not, and never will be capable of hate, but, do tell me, would you speak of poverty to super-men? In what terms? Either I am very much mistaken, or I know that you would speak to them of Lady Justice, whom they forget as they oppress the poor, who fall into misery and hunger . . .

Would you, without losing your simplicity, without abandoning your joy, without forgetting for an instant to love all people in Christ; would you denounce the injustice that, at a national level, leaves the rich in poor countries to maintain their richness at the cost of the misery of thousands of their fellow citizens? Would you come to the point of denouncing injustice at a world level; the injustice which renders some countries always wealthier at the cost of other countries becoming poorer? . . .

Would you no longer be Francis? Of course, you would lose all your prestige among those who only see in you the poetic sight of the troubadour, so sweet that he sings praises to Sister Death . . . You would lose all your prestige among those who are enchanted only by your spousals with Lady Poverty and with the new tenderness you implanted on Christmas, making us remember the nativity scene!

St. Clare! Brother Leo! you who knew so well the soul of Francis! Would Francis, or would he not, for the love of Lady Poverty, for the love of truth, for the love of people, of the Gospel, of Christ, identify himself with all those who nowadays accept incomprehension, suffer distortion and calumnies, but struggle on for justice and for love, as the ways to national peace!?

3. How to Help the Church of Christ that it May Help the World which is Being Born

Francis, you always were a man of the Church. If the Pope had condemned the rules you imposed on your-

self, and to which you invited your brothers, you would have understood, torn up your rules. If the Holy Mother Church, by a tremendous misunderstanding, had not recognized you, had expelled you, you would have never gone against the Church; you would have kept knocking at the door so humbly, with so much love, that the door would finally have been opened to you.

But my heart tells me, Francis, that your love of truth, which is summed up in your love for the Church, would lead you to make whatever sacrifice necessary to free the Holy Church of Christ from the jeopardizing weaknesses to which our human frailties have led her since Christ, when founding his Church, introduced her to our weak, human hands. There are those who think and proclaim that adversaries degrade the Church; that her sons, at least, should be enraptured by the spiritual body she embraces, and by the lasting sanctity of which she is the source, instead of wasting time pointing out little miseries, which, after all, are not hers, but her children's.

The illusion of him who thinks and speaks like this is to imagine that only the most intimate perceive the human failings of the Holy Church of Christ. The illusion of him who thinks and speaks thus, is to forget that young people of today, with their thirst for authenticity inspired by the Spirit of God, shall not remain silent in face of our attitudes as men of the Church, attitudes capable of jeopardizing the spouse of Christ.

Francis, with all your love for the Holy Church, from which of her greatest human weaknesses would you try to free her, so that she might have full capability to help create a more just and human world? The world of which we all dream!? . . .

If I am not mistaken, Francis, you would point out yourself three main failings:

The great poverty you want to see the church clothed with, and to see her free once and for all from concern with prestige; to see her thoroughly unleashed from the train of the powerful, so that she can effectively opt for the oppressed who are two-thirds of humanity, in this pre-vigil of the 21st century;

You would do everything to prevent us, men and women of the Church, from mistaking the prudence of the flesh for the prudence of the spirit. Christ exulted when the Spirit of God led Simon Peter to recognize in him the Son of the Living God. But Christ did not hesitate to address Simon Peter as Satan when the prudence of the flesh led Peter to try to divert the master from the suffering of the cross;

You would make whatever sacrifice so that without delay the Church of Christ would, in fact, put into practice the admirable encyclical Populorum Progressio and inspired texts such as those of Vatican II.

Invocation to Christ, the Master and Inspirer of Francis

Christ, allow me a final word directed especially to you. You identify yourself so much with him who suffers, with him who is crushed, with him who is reduced to a sublife, deprived of hope, that you allow your own wounds to become deeper; you allow your own crown of thorns to press your head all the more . . . You, yourself, are the picture of death and you can die no more. But you agonize and die with each of the millions of brothers and sisters reduced to agony and death.

Bring them to life, Lord Jesus! That they also be bathed by immortality and light!

Help us bring forth from darkness and from death a resurrected world, a new world, a world without wars, without racism, without hate, a world of brothers and sisters, not merely in word but in deed and in truth.

Dom Helder Camara is the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Olinda and Recife (Brazil). The foregoing is excerpted and adapted from his remarks in October, 1975 upon receiving an Honorary Doctor of Law degree from the University of Cincinnati and the 1975 Peace Award from the North American Federation of the Third Order of St. Francis.

continued from page 8

Both Jesse Jackson and the Honorable Elijah Muhammad have been providing this emphasis.

Black liberation theologians have yet to set forth a convincing rationale for the particularity of black unity and struggle within the context of the Christian Church which brings men and women of all races, nationalities, classes, and generations into a new relationship with God and thereby with each other.

It must set forth a rationale for blacks' perception of our own community as the beloved community. Any liberation of blacks will necessarily be posited upon black unity and strength. We require a theology that not only legitimates struggle against white power as God's own struggle, but that unifies and purifies the black community. The very first known Afro-American organization, the Free African Society of Philadelphia (1787), aimed at the purification and uplift of the community by providing psychological and financial support to family life. For example, intemperance and gambling were suppressed. (Drunkenness wreaked the same havoc on the eighteenth-century families that

continued on page 19

Nairobi Report: Naivete or a Saving Faith?



by Robert L. DeWitt

The plane approached Nairobi with a passenger list largely consisting of persons attending the World Council of Churches' Fifth Assembly. An hour earlier the pilot had come on the inter-com to inform the passengers that the visibility was very poor over Nairobi, but that it might clear sufficiently by the time of our scheduled arrival. Then he came on again, and said the visibility was still inadequate, but improving, and that he would go into a holding pattern for a while. After 15 minutes of circling, he announced: "Two planes ahead of us have just been cleared for landing. We will wait and see how they make out!" For that plane-load of delegates, the Assembly began with a stirring call to "wait and see!"

Yet, the Fifth Assembly in Nairobi was an impressive act of faith. It took place in a world which knew that the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse were riding as they had never ridden before. The previous Assembly in Uppsala was held seven years earlier. It was a gathering deeply affected by then current revelations of a world afflicted by racism, sexism, imperialism and classism. The seven years which followed did nothing but verify, soberly and painfully, the intransigence of those revelations. Despite that awareness, here were Christians gathered together from all races, classes and countries to proclaim that "Jesus Christ frees and unites." Surely this gathering must have been either an act of unprecedented naivete, or a world-wide witness to a saving faith. Or was it both?

There were unmistakable signs of naivete. For example, although the theme was pertinent to this world, was there not a serious misreading of reality?

The WCC was calling on its member churches to set right the wrongs of the world. But the churches are hardly free to respond. Individuals, it is true, can discern the difficulties, the threats to order in this world, and render significant service. Too, small groups of like-minded people can mount modest forays which attack specific problems. But to attempt to enlist for this purpose a major constituency, be it a member church or the WCC itself, seems to defy the facts. Simply put, large, organized bodies are caught, committed, coopted. They are immersed in the world, and seem unlikely to free themselves from it.

This is so not just in theory, but practically, politically, economically and ecclesiastically. With one of the major power cleavages in the world one which divides it into two camps—variously described as East and West, socialist and capitalist, communist and free—small wonder that a gathering of churches from around the world also bears the marks of this division. A resolution was introduced for example, which made a specific reference to the Helsinki Declaration on Human Rights, of which the USSR was a signatory. The resolution urged the USSR to stop its violations of that agreement. This resolution brought the Assembly to the edge of its ecumenical world, and threatened to push it off.

Vociferously and emotionally, the East European delegates presented virtually a solid bloc in opposing the resolution. They suggested that there might well have been violations by other signatory countries, that there was no substantial evidence of violations by the

USSR, that the Helsinki Declaration had been issued too recently to make possible fair condemnations for infractions, and that they had not been consulted before the resolution was put before the Assembly. In short, they suggested the resolution was unfair, and suggestive of a move to malign both their churches and the USSR before the world.

Western-world spokesmen, represented by delegates from the United Kingdom and North America, among others, pointed out that the practice of this and previous Assemblies had been to be specific in designating violations of human rights elsewhere, and suggested that the Russian and other Eastern-European spokesmen were speaking more protectively of the political interests of the USSR, than on behalf of the world-wide mission of the Christian Church. One spokesman said that the blunting of this resolution would commit the WCC to a policy of "selective indignation."

The debate was replete with amendments, and amendments to amendments, some of which attempted to conciliate by making the condemnation of the USSR more moderate. Time ran out on that day's session, and a special hearing was scheduled late that evening to continue the discussion. A standing-room-only gathering heard a rehearsal of the points already made, heavily dominated by the Eastern bloc. Said a delegate from Argentina, "Is this a question of right and wrong, or right and left?"

On the one hand, the Assembly risked the danger of having bowed to political pressure from the socialist countries, a not-inconsiderable danger, given the soft-on-communism image the WCC already had in the Western world. On the other hand, there was a veiled threat by the Eastern bloc to withdraw from the WCC if this resolution prevailed. The loss to the WCC of the Orthodox presence would be a devastating blow to WCC's claim to be a *world* council of churches. This was particularly true in light of the disappointment that no major steps were taken at the Assembly to advance the relationship between the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church.

God and Caesar seemed locked in a jurisdictional dispute, and the disputed jurisdiction was the WCC itself. A substitute motion was finally approved, which made only a passing reference to "the alleged denial of religious liberty in the USSR . . ." As one cynical observer put it, "The blood of nationality is thicker than the water of Baptism."

In terms of economics, too, the Assembly revealed

that the churches are not only "in", but "of" the world. The budgetary deficiencies which the WCC faces—in common with most other institutions of today—highlighted the reality of the economic factor in church behavior. Churches, like dogs, it is said, should not bite the hand that feeds them. Thus it was that when the Prime Minister of Jamaica posed a strong critique of capitalism, even though he was also critical of state socialism, an American delegate chided the Assembly staff for not having included on the program an apologist for capitalism.

There was also a peculiarly ecclesiastical manifestation of this same principle of group self-interest. A current American proverb has it that "Where you stand (on an issue) depends upon where you sit." Some 60 per cent of the delegates to the Assembly were ordained persons. Where *they* "sit" is in the church establishment. There is a strong convergence, inevitably, between their personal interests and the interests of the church as an institution. Reflecting former Defense Secretary Wilson's memorable and remarkable dictum, "What is good for General Motors is good for the United States"; these delegates were predisposed to believe that what served the prudential interests of their particular denomination was identical with the best interests of the world-wide mission of the Gospel. This point was illustrated with reference to certain areas of the Third World. The recent clamorous movements by Latin American groups for liberation from economic and political oppression were often muted in the Assembly by church representatives from those same areas, because their institutional and financial ties bound them closer to the powers of oppression than to the oppressed whom they purported to represent.

These are some of the signs indicating that the churches have so much stake in the present order—both their own order and the present world order—that they are not truly free to pull up stakes and go on pilgrimage to the Holy City, God's realm of justice and freedom.

Further evidence of naivete was found in the frequent assumption that a change can be made from the present world situation to a more desirable one on the wings of words, intentions and resolutions. The truth is that such changes are brought about only by entering the abyss of the hard human realities of economics and political action, and by facing the divisions and conflicts which those realities inevitably produce. This is the only access that exists.

From Europe comes the good-natured jibe, "The WCC is trying to lay eggs on a moving escalator." How much easier it would be for the programs of the churches if history would hold still, if targets were fixed, not moving, if problems and issues would stop escalating. Yet, Christians believe that God came into this world as it is. And so have we.

In other words, the church must abandon its posture of being above the world, and enter into the world. It must incarnate itself in the struggle for which it professes concern, as did its Lord. It must dare to become particular, as He did. It must dare to make a choice. It must dare openly to join the struggle of peoples seeking liberation. Yet this imperative seems an impossible demand.

And so this Assembly seemed to have set itself to an impossible task? Yes. Yet Scripture reminds us that with God all things are possible. And the Assembly was granted some glimpses of how that may be so.

There was, for example, unmistakable evidence of the earnest intention of Christians to be obedient to their Lord, and to bear a clear witness to His Lordship. This found expression in many different languages, and also in many differing approaches. Some of those approaches seemed at times to be mutually exclusive. But there was a basic unity. This is not an inconsiderable factor, and is worthy of reflection. One could safely generalize that every delegate was a person whose spiritual formation had included, at some point in life, a deeply serious religious commitment. That commitment had rendered that person permanently different from what he or she had been before, different from what that person would otherwise have become, and having a bond of unity with others who had been similarly affected. The dairy farmer from Canada, with his pan-Protestant formation in the United Church of Canada, the Methodist parson from London, the Dutch Reformed pastor from Holland, the Orthodox Bishop from Bulgaria, the native African who is dean of an Anglican seminary in his native Uganda—what do they all have in common? It is easier to sense the answer than it is to define it. But it was evident. Centrally, it was a common recognition of the authoritative truth to be found in Scripture. Partly, it was an affirmation of their common identity as "Christians." One is tempted to take refuge in the conclusion that this difficult-to-define unity was a "mystery." But a fact is no less real for its being mysterious. An official Jewish observer, after participating in the Assembly, remarked: "Now I know there is a Christian Church."

Another example: there was evidence that this Assembly was being united in a larger perception of the truth about the relationship which binds together nature, man and God. WCC studies, addresses and discussions all contributed to a deeper understanding of the character of God's gift in creation. There was a growing awareness that God had not placed man's feet on an alien world, which was to be exploited and expended. Rather, this world was a patrimony, a sacrament of God's bounteous love, a gift to be cherished and nurtured. With this came the deeper realization that we cannot faithfully be our brothers' and sisters' keepers without also being better stewards of the resources of the natural order which sustain us all.

At a press conference, a WCC staff member, in introducing a leading scientist, made the comment that "Scientists are no longer men pursuing truth. They are men pursued by technology." The scientist's remarks which followed, were strong corroboration of this observation. He stated that the world is a Titanic on a collision course and that only a change in course can avert disaster. This is now a rather familiar observation, no less true for all its familiarity. But he said more. He pointed out that the negative impact on the world environment has been disastrously accelerated by technology, and that technology is disproportionately controlled by trans-national corporations. He stated that the annual combined sales of the five largest trans-national oil companies exceed the gross national product of any but four countries in the world. He further pointed out there is a connection between human justice and renewal of the earth, and between human injustice and environmental deterioration. Nature, man and God are in this together.

We suggested at the outset that this Assembly was perhaps both an act of naivete, and a witness to a world-wide faith. As an observer, one perhaps would incline toward the former evaluation. As a believer, one would perhaps assess it as a witness to a saving faith. The final verdict is not in. However, in significant ways, faith creates its own justification. The question of whether God will use the WCC as an instrument to free and unite all the people of the world requires an answer which is as yet a hostage held by the future. Crucially, it depends upon the churches' response to their discernment of God's will for His world.

One of the veteran reporters covering this Assembly was asked what he thought of the WCC. After commenting on some of the problems it faces, he concluded by saying that nevertheless he felt the WCC expressed the best hopes for the world that he knew of anywhere.

Network Reports

The December issue of THE WITNESS told of the first meeting of the National Steering Committee of the Church and Society Network, and reported the statements of purpose and function which were formulated there.

Among the other actions taken were the determination of immediate tasks, and the assignment of persons to carry them out. One of the tasks was the preparation of a working paper on a theology for social mission, for consideration by the local Network groups. It was felt important that members of the Network be clear about the Christian imperative of the social mission of the church, to avoid a false dichotomy between religious motivation and secular concern.

Another task was the assembling of suggestions for worship and celebration appropriate to the on-going meetings of the Network in local and regional groupings. It was recognized that work should stay close to prayer, and prayer to work, and it was recognized that the celebration of hope is an essential ingredient of Christian social action.

Other tasks had to do with the need for effective communication amongst the various Network groups, and the question of funding for the on-going life of the Network.

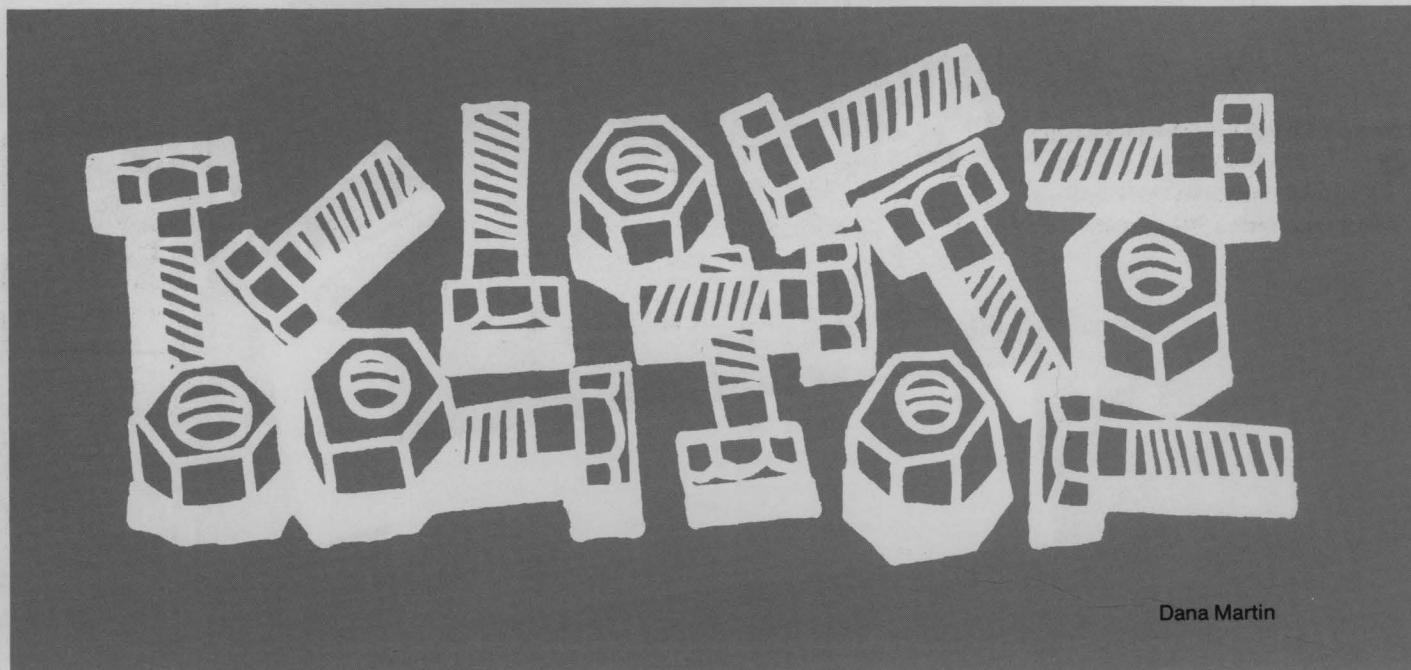
Those named to the National Steering Committee were: Ben Bagdikian, Cynthia Bourgeault, Robert L. DeWitt, Alice Dieter, Margaret Ferry, Richard Gresle, Edward G. Harris, Edgar Hartley, Jr., Fred Mahaffey, Betty Medsger, Joseph A. Pelham, Charles Ritchie, Harlan Stelmach, Henri Stines, Cabell Tennis, Harcourt Waller, Kathryn Waller, Lucia Whisenand, Hugh C. White, Gibson Winter.

continued from page 15

drugs do today.) Out of the Free African Society developed the northern black church. The black theologians of eighteenth-century Philadelphia clearly perceived the necessity of internal liberation.

Serious black liberation theology will not be successful until there is an understanding of black theology as formulated within the black religious tradition. Such a book as John Lovell's *Black Song: The Flame and the Forge* is a step in the proper direction. Lovell discusses the radical, revolutionary themes underlying the spirituals produced by the antebellum folk community. These black fathers understood the fullness of the liberation needed. Even such widely published black theological writers as Alexander Crummell and Francis Grimke are yet to be treated by black liberation theologians.

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The Episcopal Church Publishing Company
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Ambler, Pennsylvania 19002
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