



THE WITNESS

VOLUME 75 NUMBER 3 MARCH 1992

Money and faith:
Is it Lent already?

Evangelism

THANK YOU SO MUCH for your strong issue on evangelism, in all its many facets. As usual, I plan to preach from it Sunday and continuously integrate these insights into my teaching and preaching in the future. This week I am packing up after twenty-five years teaching the Bible as Literature at Eastern Michigan University and five years of also pastoring the Northside Community Church. I find I am taking all my issues of *The Witness*, even if I have to chuck *Atlantic*, *Harper's*, even *Ms.*!

On January 19th I will become the pastor of the University Baptist Church of Minneapolis. This is newsworthy because it is the first church to call an OUT gay person to become pastor. The congregation voted 56 to 1 to extend the call after I candidated the weekend after Halloween. I had shared my lesbianism with the search committee, and they encouraged me to tell the congregation. The response was enthusiastic. It pleased me that my years as the mother of four and grandmother of one, followed by years as a lesbian caused one young mother to rejoice:

"You can minister to all of us!" The congregation of 160 has 22 gay men and a number of lesbians and is noted for its ministry to that community.

Nadean Bishop
Minneapolis, MN

Monogamy and Hermeneutics

PRAISE GOD for the new format of the *Witness*! The art, poetry, and book reviews enhance an already great publication. I feel God's Spirit within your own writing, Jeanie, as well.

As with any good journal, my old assumptions find themselves challenged and I'm moved to respond. The issue "Confession" touched me deeply as a recovering co-dependent.

I must agree with Reta Finger (Letters,

11/91) that adequate biblical exegesis when taken in its proper historical context must undergird positions taken. Furthermore, I agree that promiscuity is unhealthy for anyone. Let us not assume that all lesbian persons are promiscuous. Many of us, in fact, have quite stable, faithful, monogamous unions that are in better shape than many heterosexual ones.

In my own life, I've had to face my bad choices of the past, recommit myself to the spiritual life, knowing with God's help, that I would make better choices. I've had to assert myself as a Christian who happens to be gay and strive to follow Christ's call to faithful love. As a result, I've been, for some time, in a marriage with a very spiritual man who also strives to place God's will first. The yield of such a spiritual harvest is a hundredfold what I ever imagined and I thank God for that. The more we all strive to be our truest selves, the more we allow the Spirit to forge genuine community.

Patrick J. Schwing
Covington, KY

AT THE RISK OF PROLONGING the conversation too far, I would like to respond to Roger-Michael Goodman's letter (1/92) replying to my letter (11/91) which critiqued some of the ideas presented in Malcolm Boyd's article, "The Sexuality of Jesus" (7/91). I have three items.

First, if a bias came across that I was assuming lesbians and gays are a promiscuous people, I was misunderstood. I was speaking of homosexuality and promiscuity in the same paragraph because it was in context of the article, which linked them. I would never make such a generalization, especially because the lesbians and gays I know best are not promiscuous. My point was that I am not convinced that promiscuity of **any** kind — same-sex or opposite-sex — is healthy.

Second, I believe the purpose of letters to the editor in a magazine is to interact with *ideas* in previously published material. Yet I was called homophobic and self-righteous, which calls my *character* into question — without the writer having any personal knowledge of my character. Because character evaluation can be hurtful and inaccurate

and tends to polarize, I do not think it is appropriate in a public forum like this. I would rather Mr. Goodman would contact me personally on this matter.

Third — and this is on the idea level — back to hermeneutics. I see the process of biblical interpretation having two parts in constant dialogue with each other. On one hand, we need to understand as well as we can what are the literary and historical contexts of a biblical text. What did the author intend to say? What was the cultural milieu out of which the text was written?

In light of that understanding, we can ask what the text means for us today. Are we called to the same ancient behavior or belief? If not, what has changed? What things may have been unethical then that are ethical today (such as charging interest on loans) and why? What may have been tolerated then which is not acceptable in our culture (such as slavery or polygamy), and why?

As a feminist I must deal with the fact that the biblical writings and the cultures out of which they emerged are primarily androcentric. It is not appropriate to read 20th century feminism into the New Testament, though I can extrapolate radical egalitarian theory from the gospel message. In the same way, though I believe no biblical writer supports homosexual relationships, our increased knowledge of biology, psychology, and sociology means we have to rethink that ancient Jewish taboo.

Mr. Goodman seems to be conflating this two-part process into one, which can result in making the biblical texts say whatever we want them to say, which certainly is not treating texts or their writers with integrity. And that, as I said before, seems to be a problem for both fundamentalists and liberals.

Reta Finger
Chicago, IL

The Economy

ON LAST NIGHT'S ABC news, Peter Jennings's lead story was about the thousands who had waited for hours in savage wind and brutal cold outside a Chicago hotel offering jobs to a few hundred applicants. He pointed out that many in the crowd had been out of

Letters

work as long as three years, and thus were no longer counted among the unemployed; that most were highly overqualified; and that all were desperate — a word so frequently used today as to have become almost a meaningless cliché.

I live in New Jersey in a community far less cold and windy, which nevertheless yesterday had a near-zero windchill. It was a day on which I thought I could barely survive pushing my shopping cart across a parking lot, and before unloading groceries into the trunk I had to sit in the car catching my breath and waiting for my face to stop aching.

Mr. Jennings pointed up his story by ending with a brief reference to Dan Quayle's announced discovery, in California, of a harbinger of better times. The Vice President had seen a hiring sign outside a McDonald's. As Mr. Jennings impassively commented, the opening was for one part-time minimum-wage position. (Incidentally, I don't know where Mr. Quayle gets about, but here in the northeast many a fast-food restaurant has hiring signs. At most of them, the combined salaries of a man and his wife, both working full-time, would not support their family of four.) Mr. Quayle, scion of wealthy parents, gets along on a comparatively maximum-wage salary, with perks exceeding the worth of a McDonald's stipend.

A very recent TV program featured a politician defending Vice President Quayle and speaking admiringly of Quayle's character, abilities, and accomplishments. Nothing, it seems to me, so graphically shows a person's credentials for high office than his touting of the competency and integrity — and sensitivity to desperation — of such of our leaders as Harding, Coolidge, Hoover, Nixon, Reagan, and Quayle.

**Constance Lane
Flanders, NJ**

The Witness welcomes letters to the editor. We are most able to accommodate letters of 200 words or less. Please send comments to *The Witness*, 1249 Washington Blvd., Suite 3115, Detroit, MI 48226-1868. It is our policy to edit letters for length when necessary, but not for style.

Witness Criticism

I AM NOT RENEWING my subscription as I am disappointed in *The Witness* since it has changed location and editor.

**Mary A. Poor
Newton Square, PA**

Witness Praise

I AM VERY IMPRESSED with *The Witness*. Both word and picture keenly explore and address issues that help to demarginalize those being kept at the edges of power, wealth, and acceptance. Thanks for being a voice that reminds us of God's embrace: it is big enough for us all.

**Barbara O'Neill
Northbrook, IL**

OFTEN I DESPAIR of the church — and then I read *Witness* and my spirit is *again* revived. Thanks! Last issue (Jan. 92) — marvelous.

**Andy Carhartt
Boulder, CO**

ENCLOSED FIND my check in the amount of \$40 — my payment for a 2-year subscription to *The Witness*. Thank you for my free issue — I read every word of it and can't wait to receive my next copy. Please send info on how to order back copies.

**C. Chenoweth
Fort Worth, TX**

WE'VE SUBSCRIBED to *The Witness* for many years. Your new style, format and editor are exciting and stimulating. Keep it coming! Especially social justice, women's issues, ecology, anti-racism, anti-homophobia, peace.

**Jade and Greg Dell
Oak Park, IL**

AS AN IMPOVERISHED female theological student in this oppressive land of Australia (where women *still* cannot be ordained to the Anglican priesthood) I value receiving your magazine more than I can say. Thank you for its faithful entry into my house.

**Diane L. Heath
Croydon Victoria, Australia**

I AM A WIDOW, living on a limited income but I cannot live without your courageous publication.

**Mrs. Robert P. Moore
Sewanee, TN**

Old Witnesses

VERY MANY THANKS for sending me the two "old copies" of the *Witness*, which I'm delighted to have, as I seem not to have saved any myself. I always admired Bill Spofford and his wife, they were a team, and I met them when their daughter, Sue, was a Park College student. I knew Bill Spofford, Jr. (Bishop Spofford) and wife Polly and five sons when they were small, and all lived here. Wonderful people and fearless! I recall when Spofford Sr. was supposed to be a danger to the country, but he could not be intimidated. I've read *The Witness* for many years, and was glad when it was revived a while back.

**Constance Vulliamy
Parkville, MO**

THANK YOU SO MUCH for the old copies of *The Witness*. It brought back many happy memories. I remember Bill Spofford, Sr. during my days as Rector of Epiphany, Glenburn during the sixties. I spent many a happy hour with Bill and Dottie at their home in Tunkhannock, Penn.

Also, please find enclosed a check in support of *The Witness* for 1992.

**H. Arthur Doersam
Binghamton, NY**

Renewal Policy

THIS IS A BELATED RESPONSE to your letter of December 6 letting *Witness* subscribers know of the status of the magazine. I think it was the only piece of year-end mail that did *not* ask for money. It was unique and a breath of fresh air!

Your renewal notice carries the same nonsense, fresh approach! These other renewal letters that we receive with the "more is better" philosophy are getting tiring.

Please know that you are appreciated by those of us "out there!"

**Carole Jan Lee
San Francisco, CA**

THE WITNESS

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THE WITNESS

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Cover: *Dinner* by David Amdur of Brooklyn, NY.

It is the policy of *The Witness* to use inclusive language whenever possible.

Choosing kingdoms

When I was growing up at the Church of the Advent in Boston, my family did not have a lot of money. But on

some level I understood that I would have access. I would have a good education. I would learn which forks to eat with. I would have some parity with the parishioners who invited my family to their elegant summer houses.

My understandings of class were deduced alone, breathed in like the incense on Sunday morning. It almost seemed we had the best of both worlds. We travelled to Europe. We visited museums and attended occasional concerts, but we never even scanned the stock market figures because we had no investments.

I wonder if a lot of Episcopalians have that relationship to questions of class. For the most part, Episcopalians today are not fabulously wealthy. [Globally, most Anglicans are African.] But somehow we may hang onto a sense that we enjoy the taste and sophistication of those with old wealth. We are not the *gauche nouveaux riches*. We are staid. Our houses are old stone. We have keen intellects and a strong streak of independence. If we are not the decision-makers in government and industry, we at least have the sense that we could be.

Embedded in this myth is something I don't want to cast away. It has to do with

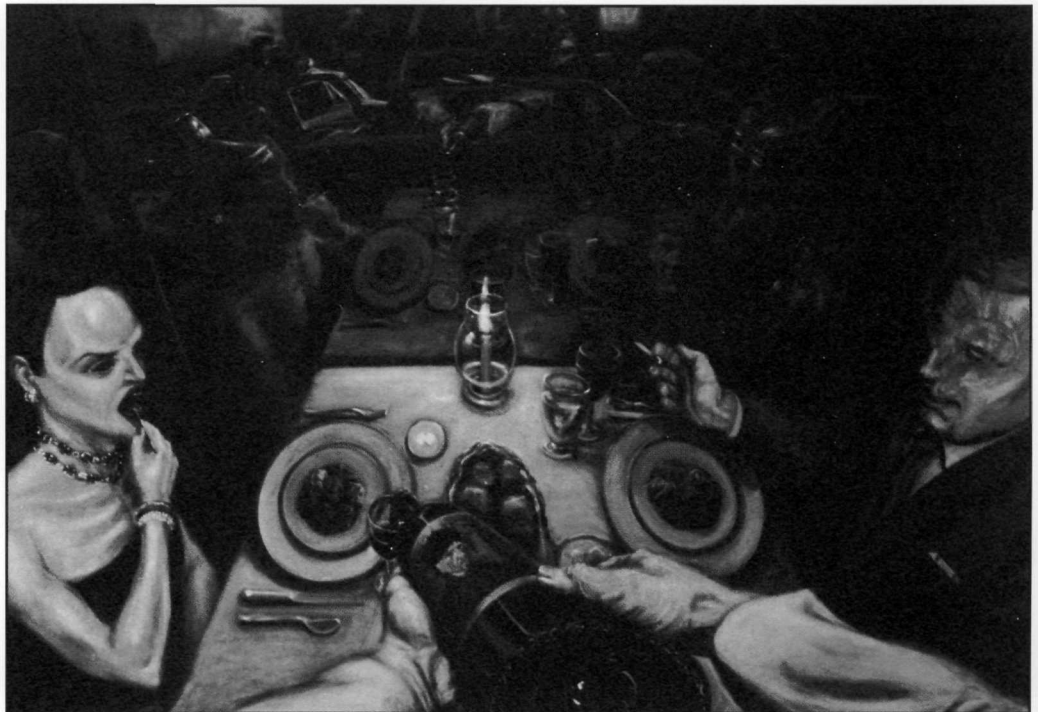
Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is editor/publisher of *The Witness*. Artist **David Amdur** lives and works in Brooklyn, N.Y.

the quiet of ancient churches in small cemeteries and with reading the Narnia Chronicles before a fire. It may have to do with being heirs to the kingdom of heaven.

of society. It affects what we can do for change. And in this time of economic decline, we'd best have our eyes open.

Dispensing with illusions however, is complicated by the fact that the Episcopal Church does have at least a loose claim on the hearts and minds of people like George Bush, and Ollie North.

A brochure promoting advertising in



The waiter

credit: David Amdur

But there is, of course, something delusional about the belief that we are, by virtue of being Episcopalian, among the matriarchs and patriarchs of the nation. It's a confusion we can ill afford.

A recent *Detroit Free Press* poll shows that 94 percent of the nation considers itself middle class. No one wants to be identified with the rich or the poor and yet, the gap between the rich and the poor is widening and the middle class is disappearing. Are we, as a nation, in a state of denial? Unconsciously assuming that we are among the elite affects what we tolerate and what we consider the right order

Episcopal Life (the newspaper of the Episcopal Church, produced by the national Church) states:

"If you'd like your advertising to be read by... Corporate executives in most of Fortune 500; Partners in some of the nation's leading law firms; A number of

editor's note

ranking members of Congress, the Senate and Judiciary; Surgeons, medical specialists, dentists; University professors, public and private school teachers; Executives in publishing, advertising and television and others like them, along with their families...it will be when it's in *Episcopal Life*."

The ad goes on to state: "While most of our readers are Episcopalians, they are also consumers — and good ones, too!"

We are a Church where Mammon has infiltrated our sanctuaries with singular power and subtlety. We — more than most denominations — must struggle with questions of allegiance. Will the power of the Church be used to buttress the claims of the rich? Will *noblesse oblige* be the word of the Episcopal Church in this day?

— J.W.-K.

Garrison Keillor's View

To me and my little radio congregation, a Lake Wobegonian moving to Minneapolis and turning Episcopalian was a case of social climbing straight up the hill, no doubt about it. Our clear picture of Episcopalians was of wealthy people, Yale graduates, worshiping God in extremely good taste. Episcopalian was the Church in wingtips, the Church of the Scotch and soda. So, when I moved to New York and walked into Holy Apostles, I was surprised to see no suits. Nobody was well-dressed. A congregation of 100 souls on lower Ninth Avenue, a church with no parking lot, which was in need of paint and the sanctuary ceiling showed water

damage, but which managed (I learned the next week) to support and operate a soup kitchen that fed 1,000 New Yorkers every day, more than one million to date. Black faces in the sanctuary, old people, exiles from the midwest, the lame and the halt, divorced ladies, gay couples; a real good anthology of the faith. I felt glad to be there. When we stood for prayer, bringing slowly to mind the goodness and the poverty of our lives, the lives of others, the life to come, it brought tears to your eyes, the simple way the Episcopalians pray.

— Garrison Keillor
from *We Are Still Married*,
Viking, 1989.

Breaking illusions

by Donna Schaper

Despite the fact that I don't respect rich people, I want nothing so much as to be just like them. I am not unlike most Americans. We have been taught well that rich is better.

What other reason can possibly be given for tax structures that disproportionately tax? Or national flood insurance that gets all taxpayers to bail out those who enjoy second homes on ocean sites? We don't have "enough money" for shelter for the homeless or mental health care for the deinstitutionalized but we do have "enough money" for insurance protection for second homes. We have freely elected people who have consolidated the power of the wealthy.

Donna Schaper is pastor of First Congregational Church, Riverhead, N.Y.

Advertising is the engine of this favoritism. I can't even ride a subway without having my greeds reinforced.

Desire works in such a labyrinthine way that it would be hard to find the first knot it ties around our soul. Is it in grade school, as we dress like each other? Or—as a mother who swore she wasn't going to do these kinds of things—do we begin with Christmas presents equal in sparkle to those of our children's peers? Does anything happen in this culture that ignores money? Perhaps worship? Or birthing a child? Or getting married? Or getting sick?

What I notice most about the generation coming of age in the 1990s is that, to them, money is everything. I get a request for a wedding and all the questions are about costs. I get a request to do marital counseling of non-members and the first

questions are about payment. If I do a baptism, somebody hands me an envelope. Do I remember these things happening all 20 years of my ministry? No. Am I glad to see all those envelopes? Yes. I have a daily feeling that I can hardly get by. Which is to say I live the anxiety of a lie.

The anxiety about recession which has blanketed most people I know is a misplaced anxiety. The recession is an opportunity to think a little differently about the big-ticket items. Like wealth and what it takes away while bringing goods and services much too close to our front doors. Like advertising and the way every time we turn on the television we invite it into our homes to lie to us about what is important. Like children and the kind of depression we have caused in them because we have internalized their greed. Like our own paradoxical selves, people who are afraid because they have been taught to be afraid and not because they have anything genuine to fear.

The Consumer

by Marge Piercy

My eyes catch and stick
as I wade in bellysoft heat.
Tree of miniature chocolates filled with liqueur,
tree of earrings tinkling in the mink wind,
of Bach oratorios spinning light at 33 1/3,
tree of Thailand silks murmuring changes.
Pluck, eat and grow heavy.
From each hair a wine bottle dangles.
A toaster is strung through my nose.
An elevator is installed in my spine.
The mouth of the empire
eats onward through the apple of all.

Armies of brown men
are roasted into coffee beans,
are melted into chocolate,
are pounded into copper.
Their blood is refined into oil,
black river oozing rainbows
of affluence.
Their bodies shrink
to grains of rice.
I have lost my knees.
I am the soft mouth of the caterpillar.
People and landscapes are my food
and I grow fat and blind.

from *Circles on the Water*, by Marge Piercy
New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985

When, in Disgrace with Fortune

by William Shakespeare

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweepe my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,
Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.



Famous Coins of Holy Week

by Bill Wylie Kellermann

There is an axiom of investigative journalism which goes: Follow the money. When it comes to comprehending the public execution of Jesus as portrayed in the gospel narratives, it's not bad advice for the biblical investigator either. The financial intrigues of the Holy Week story so proliferate, that it's astonishing more isn't made of it in our common theological reflection. Money as a power is practically a character, a force and a power, in the Jerusalem drama. Informers are handsomely paid and hush money can be had. At the Roman trial charges of inciting tax resistance are brought along with evidence from provocateurs who had set a political trap. Moreover, for his part, Jesus does make shrewd public proclamations over the tribute coin, undertakes disruptive action at the currency exchange, even occupying the temple court, and he foresees in the widow's copper coin the collapse of the whole system. The story, it seems, is littered with coins. They roll across the temple floor and ring at our feet.

And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made

it a den of robbers." (Mark 11:15-17)

Jerusalem was a one-industry town. The temple completely generated the city economy. Between the service industry geared to pilgrims (who even had a legal obligation to spend the "second tithe" within its walls) and the artisans engaged

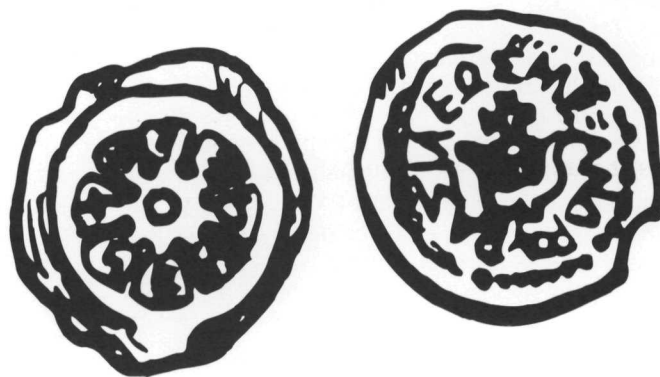
Money as a power is practically a character, a force and a power, in the Jerusalem drama.

in the ongoing work of temple rehabilitation, the city had its base. The temple was being completely redeveloped in a longstanding public works project begun by the Roman client king, Herod the Great. Crafty, paranoid, and every bit as repressive as Matthew's birth narrative suggests, Herod had ruled as king of the Jews despite his marginal and dubious claim to the title, simply because he'd proved himself deft at backing the right Roman horses in their shifting power struggles. His own heavy taxes won him

few friends among the commonfolk, so his development project of the temple was a shrewd public relations maneuver to shore up Jewish public opinion.

Herod made the temple stand out on Jerusalem's signature skyline. Frankly, it was beautified and rehabbed at the expense of the poor. It was nonetheless an economic boom for the city. The enlargement went on for decades (it was still in progress when the Zealots took it over in 66 C.E.), and provided jobs for the skilled tradesmen and construction workers. Festival time brought a huge influx of pilgrims. A city with a population of 30,000 people could swell to 180,000. That's a lot of rooms at the inn. And big agricultural business was involved: as many as 18,000 lambs could be sacrificed at Passover. The temple was a huge stockyard and slaughterhouse.

Moreover, it behooves us to understand the extent to which the temple was itself a financial institution. The temple had received a special dispensation from Rome to collect its own tax (a dispensation some have compared to our own churches' tax exemption for its capacity to exact complicity and ecclesiastical quietude). This was the famous half-shekel tax concerning which a Gospel controversy arose: does your teacher pay (Matt 17:24)? In that instance Jesus de-



The Hebrew (bronze) Dilepton, likely the widow's mite. Face: "Jonathon, the king" in rays of a star. Reverse: an anchor, inscribed "King Alexander."

Bill Wylie-Kellermann is a United Methodist minister, author of *Seasons of Faith and Conscience*, Orbis Press, 1991 and book review editor of *The Witness*. Art from *The Interpreter's Dictionary of The Bible*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1962.



The Roman (silver) Denar, Roman tax coin. Face: "Caesar, son of the divine Augustus." Reverse: Pax seated with branch, inscribed "High Priest."

clares his freedom from the tax and then allows payment as produced from the depths of "chaos," "the sea," from the mouth of a new-caught fish. Pilate himself was able to dip into that half-shekel treasury on occasion without objection of the temple authorities. Indeed, he financed his aqueduct in part with just such funds.

The Sanhedrin, the governing council before whom Jesus (and eventually the disciples) would be tried, was made up substantially of the Sadducean party, landed aristocrats and absentee landlords whose economic interest in the status quo made them collaborationist backers of military rule, *Pax Romana*.

Add to all this that the temple functioned as a bank, being not only a source of loans (for those with proper connections or credit) but also the place where records of indebtedness were kept. In the sense that small farmers had lost their land in a squeeze between incredibly high taxes and runaway interest rates (thereby forcing them into sharecropping and debt slavery), the temple was an instrument in the whole system and cycle of oppression. (No wonder that in the Great Jewish War of 66, the first thing the Zealots did was burn the temple treasury where the records of indebtedness were kept. They "forgave the debts" in some-

thing of a first-century "draft-board raid.")

All in all, here was an institution corrupted (in large part by money) and confused in its purposes. Originally a central storehouse which functioned to redistribute produce through the tithe system, the temple had become a mechanism for consolidating capital, a house of prayer become a den of thieves.

Which is to say that when Jesus goes to the currency exchange in the temple court of the Gentiles, he's not spontaneously miffed at the high price of doves. He's undertaking a strong and well-planned action at the public heart of the system: the very intersection of the imperial economy and the local money market. He's come on behalf of the poor among whom his ministry was based in Galilee.

The story, it seems, is littered with coins. They roll across the temple floor and ring at our feet.

He also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. (Luke 21:2)

There is virtually an economic analysis in the tight movement of this full passage (20:45-21:5). It is a movement

whose meaning is obscured in part by the "arbitrary" division of chapter breaks. Sometime following the action, Jesus is teaching in the temple. In a dangerously public way he warns the disciples against the Pharisees who "devour widow's houses and for a pretence make long prayers." He looks up and sees the rich putting in their gifts and beside them a widow who has, as he notes, "put in all she had to live on." What do the disciples see? They look up and see how beautifully adorned the temple is.

Jesus replies, the whole filthy rotten system is coming down: "There shall not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." He makes connections. Built on the backs of the poor, the den of robbers will be destroyed. Indeed, the testimony at his trial that Jesus threatened the destruction of the temple is no ignorant misconstruing of his words, it goes to the heart of the threat his challenge signified.

But Jesus aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the money for the tax." And they brought him the coin, a denarius. And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said, "Caesar's." (Matt 22:18-21)

Apart from the political entrapment being set up by the authorities and the gathering of evidence for an indictment, there are several issues pertinent to our topic herein. Jesus underscores a point: money is a realm of authority. It is stamped with the seal of empire and ultimately belongs to and defines imperial dominion. This of course is the hot potato of the political trap. But Jesus pushes the meaning deeper. Images, as we know, were more than troublesome in Israel — they were counted idolatrous. (Jewish coins, from those minted in the Maccabean period to those struck in Jerusalem during the Zealot occupation, 66-70 C.E., employed nationalist symbols like the

palm branch or pictured vessels and artifacts from temple worship. There were no images of kings, even revolutionary ones.) Jesus, however, mentions not only the idolatrous image, but the inscription as well. We best look it up, no? The coin itself is a text in the text. The inscription read, "Tiberius Caesar, Son of the Divine Augustus," which is to say, "Son of God." Most commentary on the tax question focuses on Jesus' clever render saying, but the debate is done before he utters a single logion. He's rubbing their noses in the image and its claim. Jesus thereby pushes a political question to an issue of spiritual discernment: is the imperial tax idolatrous? The question abides for us even today.

No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the

other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. (Matt 6:24)

The oil, says the woman, says Jesus as well, is oil. It is not a commodity. It is neither a medium of exchange, nor a measure of value. It is oil. Her action is not even extravagance, but evinces a freedom beyond that.

Though this is not a Holy Week utterance, it bears consideration because in it Jesus identifies what money really is: a principality, a spiritual power. This personification, this sense that money demands love and allegiance, that it affects bondage and obedience, this setting of wealth beside God as an autonomous alternative is an insight of Jesus' unique to his cultural milieu. He affirms that money claims divinity for itself! It is, as in the Holy Week drama, an active agent, an invisible hand reaching out to lay spiritual claim to its own.

"What will you give me if I deliver him to you?" And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.

(Matt 26:14-16)

The motives of Judas are open to intriguing speculation. By John's accounting he kept the community's common purse (John 13:29) and is represented as embezzling over time (12:6). On the other hand his name, at once Maccabean and perhaps Zealot, may suggest a political agenda different from that of Jesus. He may well have suffered frustration or sought to force his teacher's public hand. What is clear by all accounts is that money figures into the deal. It seals the secret bargain and verifies the official claim. By it he becomes their man on the inside. At the most intimate sacramental moment of the community's underground meal, he labors under obligations and allegiances not openly on the table. The silver is in his pocket and he in theirs.

Now Matthew is always thick with echoes from the Hebrew Bible and here is no exception. A prophetic parable from Zechariah (11:4-17), the compensatory price paid for the death of another's slave, that is "blood money" (Ex. 21:32), or even the sale price of Joseph by Judah to the Ishmaelite traders enroute to Egypt (Gen. 37:25-28) — all these are in the

In Terror of Hospital Bills by James Wright

I still have some money
To eat with, alone
And frightened, knowing how soon
I will waken a poor man.

It snows freely and freely hardens
On the lawns of my hope, my secret
Hounded and flayed. I wonder
What words to beg money with.

Pardon me, sir, could you?
Which way is St. Paul?
I thirst.
I am a full-blooded Sioux Indian.

Soon I am sure to become so hungry
I will have to leap barefoot through
gas-fire veils of shame,
I will have to stalk timid strangers
On the whorehouse corners.

Oh moon, sow leaves on my hands,
On my seared face, oh I love you.
My throat is open, insane,
Tempting pneumonia.

But my life was never so precious
To me as now.
I will have to beg coins
After dark.

I will learn to scent the police,
And sit or go blind, stay mute,
be taken for dead
For your sake, oh my secret,
My life.

from *A Geography of Poets*, ed. Edward Field, New York: Bantam Books, 1979.

wind. Still, on narrative face-value the presence of silver coins (presumably Tyrian shekels) in the temple treasury or in the hands of the chief priests is irregular to say the least, for only Jewish coins, all of them coppers, were fit by Torah to be donated in the treasury — hence the money changers in the Gentile court.

The fate of the coins varies in the Gospels. In Matthew Judas flings them in remorse back into the temple where the priests now count them suitably unclean (Matt. 27:3-10). But in Luke, the coins spill over into the Book of Acts. Just as the community revived is about to sell their lands and properties, pooling the income in a common life, there is Judas spending his shekels on a field which will be his deathbed and grave (Acts 1:18-19).

But there were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment thus wasted? For this ointment might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and given to the poor." And they reproached her. (Mark 14:4-5)

This passage, set as it is close against the betrayal bargain of Judas, is truly a scandal to our sensibilities. We are hard pressed not to join the indignation. It only makes good sense. Then Jesus coins the phrase repeatedly thrown in our faces for centuries to come: "The poor you have always with you." Adding insult to confusion. The monetary value of the oil is so precise; its potential for charity exact. One could practically count the loaves of bread it would buy. (In Mark, the disciples grouse that it would cost two hundred denarii to feed the five thousand.) This, however, is precisely not the point. The oil, says the woman, says Jesus as well, is oil. It is not a commodity. It is neither a medium of exchange, nor a measure of value. It is oil. Her action is not even

extravagance, but evinces a freedom beyond that. Pure and simple and precious. She has done the truth and anointed him, prophet, priest, king, for burial.

The scandal is perhaps that this event breaks the grip of money on the whole story. The free gift (be it oil, or loaves and fishes, or eucharist, or death on a cross) breaks the bondage and logic of exchange. There will be poor aplenty (look around today) for disciples to walk with and attend to. Whatever authorities are rebuked, or idolatries named, whatever systems are challenged on behalf of the poor, whatever charities or communal mechanisms of justice are arranged, at root must be the freedom of grace which undoes the tyranny of exchange. Cost is no object.

And they crucified him, and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. (Mark 15:24)

There is a famous photograph of Mohandas Gandhi's possessions at the time of his death. Set out in elegant symmetry are two pair of sandals, his spectacles and a copy of the Gita, an oil lamp, a pocket watch, two rice bowls, little more. It is striking and powerful for the freedom and simplicity it implies. I believe we have the same sort of snapshot at the foot of the cross. Here are laid out all the worldly possessions of the one who had no place to lay his head. In a footnote to the military ritual they are claimed by the Roman auxiliary.

And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sum of money to the soldiers and said, "Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.'

And if it comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." So they took the money and did as they had been directed. (Matt 28: 12-15)

Against the news of the resurrection, the power of money reasserts itself. In a bitter irony the authorities, privy to the eyewitness reports of the Roman watch, are among the first to hear the glad news. They are neither astonished nor converted, but simply hatch another phase of the program. The truth is a matter of indifference to them. Information is a commodity to be controlled with sufficient financial power. Damage control and coverup are the business of the day. Official sources will have a censored and carefully worded version of events. Confusion will be encouraged. The credibility of the women and the other disciples will be impugned with a campaign of disinformation.

It is implied that the Roman soldiers worry perhaps for their jobs, their records, and their military careers. They are a vulnerable and easy mark for the temple crew. No sweat, say the planners, we can cover your backsides with the governor.

But above all they are bought off, paid handsomely to advertise a lie, to publish abroad the anti-Word, to bury again the truth.

The Big Lie, a bankrolled affair, declares: the resurrection never was.

That, however, is not the last word, either in the Gospels or in our common history. What remains is rendered

a choice. Call it, for our purposes, God and Mammon. And still the allegiances compete.

The scandal is perhaps that this event breaks the grip of money on the whole story. The free gift (be it oil, or loaves and fishes, or eucharist, or death on a cross) breaks the bondage and logic of exchange.

The end of the Age of the U.S.

by Joseph Summers

It is no accident that people in this country are turning to fanatics like David Duke, or "Dr. Feel Goods" like Reagan.

Nor that the mass media seems intent on finding a new devil for us to blame all our problems on every six months (liberals, the school system, drugs, Manuel Noriega, Saddam Hussein, leftists in Universities). As the economic foundation of the middle class slips, people are terrified that their world is being destroyed.

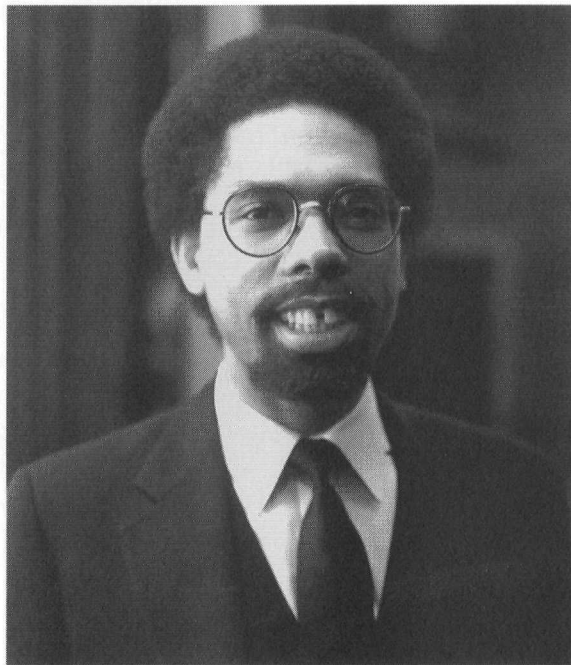
Cornel West, professor of religion and director of Afro-American Studies at Princeton University, recently offered a perspective on the challenges ahead at a day-long workshop at Eastern Michigan University.

West defines the Age of Europe as being from 1492-1945. It was an age marked by discovery, the expansion of the known world, which in turn led to the development of a world market economy. It was an age that saw the birth of industrialism, bringing with it tremendous new productivity and the possibility of overcoming scarcity. It was an age which saw science enshrined as the cornerstone of knowledge.

It was also an age of genocide, the genocide of native American peoples

Joe Summers is vicar of Incarnation, Pittsfield Twp, MI, a mission church begun by lay people who wanted a church which would take their ministry seriously and speak out clearly on social issues.

which began with Columbus himself. It was an age of the conquest and enslavement of the peoples of the Third World, with whole civilizations destroyed and their peoples enslaved. The year 1492



Cornel West

credit: Robert Matthews

Cornel West argues that since 1973, the U.S. has been in a period of civil, political and economic decline and cultural decay. As the economic foundation of the middle class slips, people are terrified that their world is being destroyed.

also marked Spain's deportation of its Jewish population. This is but one of many actions which testifies to European civilization's fear of peoples who are different. Racism takes on a whole new meaning within this civilization, West says. World War II and the Holocaust appear not as some mindless destruction, but as the logical extension of racism and the drive towards domination that were so central to the age.

West argues that what has been called the century of the United States really lasted from 1945-1973. The Age of the United States began with the Marshall Plan and the reconstruction of Japan and Europe. The first nation to successfully overthrow colonialism now emerged as the world power and the U.S. took the place of European colonial powers throughout the world. The creation of a mass middle class transformed U.S. society from the shape of a pyramid to that of a diamond and promised to fulfill the hopes of working people. The development of mass culture which was exported throughout the world brought the promise of change and movement, symbolized by the automobile, to millions around the world. As aspirations of Third World peoples throughout the world grew, the civil rights movement challenged the structure of internal colonialism which had kept millions of black people living without political and economic rights within the United States.

Since 1973, West argues, the U.S. has been in a period of civil, political and economic decline and cultural decay. One of the most visible signs of this decline was the OPEC oil crisis, which reflected the growing independence of Third World countries. (In 1945 there were 50 independent nations in the United Na-

tions; by 1973 there were 172.) Since 1973 there has been a decline in the real standard of living for a large portion of the U.S. population. The industrial working class, which had been a vital part of the middle class, has been devastated. The middle class dream of economic security, owning your own home, getting a college education, and seeing a better future for your children has faded for a large portion of the population.

In the midst of this economic decline we have witnessed the increasing incapacity of the government to respond to the crises. It cannot raise the resources necessary for the public welfare, whether replacing aging bridges or subways, caring for the de-institutionalized mentally ill, building housing for the homeless, or providing access to basic health care. Instead government officials participated in the decline as policies of de-regulation laid the foundation for the economic cannibalism which is called the economic prosperity of the 1980s.

All this has meant that we have seen the dramatic widening of the gap between the rich and the poor as wealth has been redistributed from the bottom up. This has meant the loss of the most basic forms of livelihood on the part of millions of people. In the U.S. today 21 percent of all children, and 50 percent of all black children, live below the poverty level.

With poverty has come cultural destruction, as many low-income children live uprooted from any broader frame of meaning and purpose and the love and care necessary for any human being to flourish, West points out. Increasingly we see the transformation of America

With poverty has come cultural destruction, as many low-income children live uprooted from any frame of meaning and purpose.

into a market culture. Buying and selling have become the primary activity, whether in terms of drugs or bodies. Market-driven hedonism is a concrete form of nihilism,

West says. The pursuit of pleasure is only a thinly veiled mask for meaninglessness, hopelessness and lovelessness.

All of these conditions are heightened for those at the bottom of our society. The problems associated with the black community, West argues, are simply an exaggerated expression of the problems in the society at large. Poor and urban areas throughout the U.S. have witnessed the radical erosion of the family and other institutions that nurture the young and transmit love and care. This translates directly into a rise in self-loathing expressed in self-destructive forms of behavior.

One of the clearest signs of civil decline and cultural decay is the increasing crime and violence directed against racial minorities, homosexuals, women and children.

The churches have not escaped this transformation as marketplace religion has become increasingly dominant, turning prayer into "let's make a deal" with God, and the Church into an institution meant to promote comfort and convenience.

In the midst of this present crisis, West argues that the Church is called to a prophetic witness which challenges all unnecessary forms of human suffering. Four basic elements are necessary to pursue this vocation:

1) a broad and deep analysis of the present in light of the past, a nuanced historical sense which will allow us to discern the forces fundamentally shaping the present.

2) a clear Love ethic, to attempt to keep track of the humanity of others, to acknowledge every individual as unique and irreplaceable, every life as of equal worth in God's eyes — Jewish or Black, women or men, gay or straight, Iraqi or American. This truth is simple but hard to live.

3) a willingness to point out human hypocrisy. Paul Tillich called this the Protestant Principle. We need to point out the discrepancy between practice and promise, rhetoric and reality. This prophetic task is a moral imperative, as there is no renewal that is not rooted in open and honest critique.

4) and, finally, hope, which West defines as against the odds, rooted in struggle, the audacious attempt to awaken a world-weary people, many of whom are on the edge of misanthropy. Hope does not deny the tragic, but it keeps us from being pathetic as it never gives in to victimization.

If Cornel West is correct in his reading of the signs of the times, then the challenge before us is nothing less than spiritual renewal, political reformation, and cultural reconstruction. The

In the midst of this present crisis, West argues that the Church is called to a prophetic witness which challenges all unnecessary forms of human suffering.

Book of Hebrews says those who shrink back are destroyed, but those who live by faith shall live.

Cornel West is the author of *Prophesy Deliverance: An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity*, *Prophetic Fragments*, *The American Evasion of Philosophy*, and co-author with Bell Hooks of the recently published *Breaking Bread*.

TW

Indian wealth transformed Europe

by Jack Weatherford

In the first 50 years of the conquest of America, the amount of silver and gold circulating in Europe trebled, and the annual output from America was ten times the combined output of the rest of the world. Royal customs agents in Seville, Spain's only official port of entry for goods from the New World, recorded 16 thousand tons of silver entering during this time, \$3.3 billion worth in today's silver market; illegal trade and pirating may have brought in another five thousand tons or more.

At the time of the discovery of America, Europe had only about \$200 million worth of gold and silver, approximately \$2 per person. By 1600 the supply of precious metals had increased approximately eightfold. The Mexican mint alone coined \$2 billion worth of silver pieces of eight.

The coins flowing through Europe at first promised to strengthen the feudal order, but in the end they forged whole new classes and changed the fortune of many countries. The new coins helped to wash away the old aristocratic order in which money games could be played only by the privileged few; massively larger amounts of

money opened up new games to new people. Even though all the silver and gold went into Spain, it did not stay there. From Spain the money spread throughout Europe. The Hapsburg monarch

Spaniards."

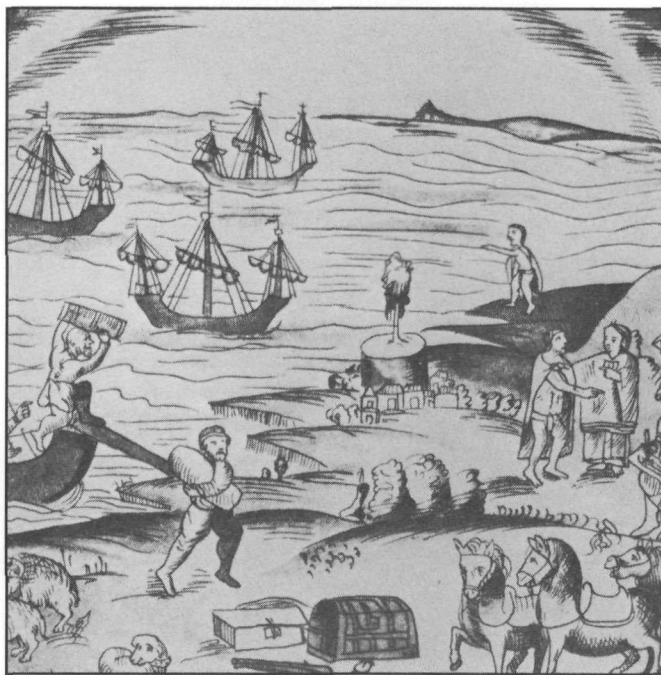
Precious metals from America superseded land as the basis for wealth, power, and prestige. For the first time there was enough of some commodity other than land to provide a greater and more consistent standard by which wealth might be measured. This easily transported and easily used means of wealth prepared the way for the new merchant and capitalist class that would soon dominate the whole world.

The American silver traveled around

Europe very quickly; and it made a quick and heavy impact on the economy of neighboring parts of the Old World, such as the Ottoman Empire, which controlled Turkey and Greece and most of the Near East, North Africa, and large parts of eastern Europe in the 16th century. The Ottoman silver *akce* coin suddenly fell to half its former value before the end of 1584 in a bout of uncontrolled inflation. The coin lost its important place in world trade and never regained it. After centuries of struggle between the Moslems and the Christians, American silver probably did more to undermine Islamic power for the next half a millennium than did any other single factor.

In *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith discussed at great length the impact of American silver in causing worldwide inflation. He wrote that within a generation of the opening of the mines of Potosi, the silver from them started an inflation that lasted for approximately a century and caused silver to fall to its lowest value in history. The new wealth in the hands of Europeans eroded the wealth of all the other countries in the world and allowed Europe to expand into an international market system.

TW



The Spaniards landing at Chalchicueyechan

credit: Florentine Codex

Charles V occupied his throne both as emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and as the king of Spain; this facilitated the spread of money from Spain to the Hapsburg holdings in the Spanish Netherlands and across Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and the Italian states. Three-fifths of the bullion entering Spain from America immediately left Spain to pay debts, mostly those incurred by the profligate monarchy; as Cervantes wrote in *Don Quixote*, Spain had become "a mother of foreigners, a stepmother of

Jack Weatherford, is the author of *Indian Givers: How the Indians of the Americas Transformed the World*, New York: Random House, Ballantine Books, 1988. This article is adapted from pages 14-16 of that book.

War Tax Refusers Evicted

After a long battle with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Randy Kehler and Betsy Corner were arrested on December 3 by federal marshals for refusing to vacate their Massachusetts home, which was officially seized by the IRS in 1989. The couple has refused to pay federal taxes since 1977, in protest of U.S. military policy, opting instead to pay the equivalent amount to non-profit organizations assisting the poor and victims of war.

Supporters from western Massachusetts — as well as others around the country — have rallied in support of Kehler and Corner and their 12-year-old daughter, Lillian. The day after Kehler and Corner were arrested, nearly 100 neighbors and supporters held a rally in front of the couple's home in rural Colrain, Massachusetts.

Corner was released from jail, but Kehler, who could serve six months in jail, told *Religious News Service* in a phone interview from the Hampshire County Jail that he hopes the resistance will encourage others — especially in the churches — to question the morality of paying taxes that go to the military.

"As the mainline churches increasingly call for acts of conscience, I think eventually that must include the call to refuse to pay taxes for war," he said. "I would like to think Betsy's and my actions will help in some small way to help open that discussion in the churches."

Sojourners, Feb/March, 1992

Women and Poverty

- Women make up the majority of the world's poor. Among the estimated 1.2 billion people living in extreme poverty in the global South, 59 percent are female.

- Two-thirds of the world's citizens who cannot read or write are women; in 17 countries, 90 percent or more of the female population is illiterate. Worldwide, the literacy gap between men and women is widening.

- Eighty percent of all refugees are women and their dependent children.

- Everywhere, women are paid less than men, typically earning half to two-thirds of what men earn, and with fewer benefits and less job security. Women nevertheless are the primary income-earners and household heads in one out of every three households worldwide.

—**Oxfam America News**
Winter 1991-92

Rally for the Cities

Bishop Paul Moore and Osborne Elliot, former editor of *Newsweek*, are working with the U.S. Congress of Mayors and the National League of Cities to organize a May 16 rally for housing, jobs, education and health care. The rally will follow the May 15 mayoral lobbying day on the Hill. A vigil at the National Cathedral may be held the evening of May 15. Details will be available from the Episcopal Peace Fellowship. Call or write Mary Miller for more information: (202) 783-3380; EPF, Box 28156, Washington, D.C. 20038.

Union Help Requested

Clark Wills, an Episcopal priest in Chicago reports that the Communication Workers of America are experiencing resistance to their efforts to organize Sprint's customer service agents. The union is asking customers to call Sprint's executive vice president in charge of customer service, Faerie Kizzire (913-624-6501), to ask that the company take a neutral stance, allowing workers to decide for themselves. At present, according to Rick Braswell of CWA, the company is circulating memos, showing videos and complaining during meetings denigrating unions in general and CWA in specific. Asked if this kind of resistance is normal, Braswell said it was, adding, "If it's commonplace that doesn't make it ethical."

White Privilege

Thinking through unacknowledged male privilege as a phenomenon, I realized that, since hierarchies in our society are interlocking, there was most likely a phenomenon of white privilege that was similarly denied and protected.

I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious.

- I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.

- When I am told about our national heritage or about 'civilization' I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.

- I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.

- Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.

- I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who might not like them.

- I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.

- I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.

- I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to the 'person in charge' I will be facing a person of my race.

- I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places I have chosen.

**Peggy McIntosh, associate director
of the Wellesley College Center for
Research on Women.
Creation Spirituality, 1-2, 1992**

Short takes

For most of those who attended the Episcopal Church's 1988 General Convention that summer, the prospect of spending nearly two weeks in Detroit had not been very appealing.

This one-time engine of economic prosperity was just too embarrassingly out of gas, its promised renaissance too impossible a dream.

There hadn't been just a little "white flight" here, but wholesale evacuation. Bulldozers and wrecking balls hadn't wiped out just a few buildings, but entire neighborhoods. What life remained seemed listless, dazed and nodding.

There had been some satisfaction, of course, in knowing that this triennial gathering of the Church would bring a dose of badly needed money to this beleaguered town. Concerned deputies reminded peers to leave tips for hotel housekeeping staff, and complimentary shampoo and soap was collected for redistribution at local homeless shelters.

But the Diocese of Michigan hadn't invited the General Convention here to solicit charitable concern for its ailing see city or to showcase its own extensive direct-service ministries, although it could have. Instead, Michigan intended to use the spectacle of Detroit's economic disease to persuade the Church to commit to a Churchwide ministry of community investment and economic justice.

To that end, the host diocese spent the first few days of the 1988 assembly ferrying busloads of deputies, bishops

and other convention participants around the city for a crash course on urban economics. It used test-tube ministries like Detroit's Church of the Messiah to show that a Judeo-Christian approach to economics is one that puts people and environment ahead of financial profits.

Tour groups learned that, given the chance to participate, people who need housing can build their own, people who need a trade can find one and people who need jobs can create them.

For most, it was an eye-opening — even converting — experience.

When Michigan's proposal for wider Church involvement in community development was finally put to a vote, an overwhelming majority eagerly said yes.

Knowing it was a pledge to help reform existing economic practices, Michigan's Bishop H. Coleman McGehee, Jr. and the resolution's other proponents hadn't expected easy passage — after all, this was a Church that at this very same convention barely found it possible to boycott Shell Oil Company to protest its business dealings with South Africa. But the General Convention seemed untroubled by the resolution's potential political or social repercussions. The participants had seen a new side to Detroit, and they had been encouraged, even excited, by the view.

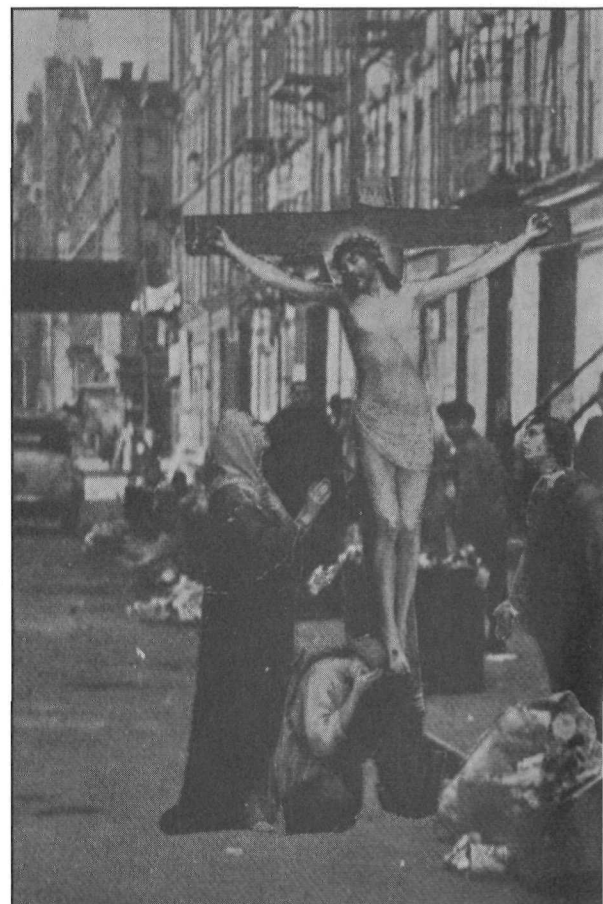
"People were impressed," recalls McGehee. "It was a very comprehensive program. The Church hadn't ever done anything so extensive, with so many opportunities for dioceses to be

involved. It was very Biblical and very practical."

The Michigan plan called for an economic justice ministry "directed to community-controlled economic develop-

The Michigan plan called for an economic justice ministry, including land trusts, housing cooperatives, worker-owned businesses and community development credit unions.

Julie A. Wortman, is the former staff writer for *Episcopal Life* and is editor of a new *Witness* column, *Vital Signs*, which will appear next month.



Crucifixion

Economic justice

by Julie A.

ment programs of the disadvantaged, with a special focus on land trusts, housing cooperatives, worker-owned businesses and community development credit unions."

"Every level" of the Church was to decide how best to apply resources to this ministry, and to advocate for public policies that support community economic development. Dioceses were urged to get involved by establishing their own economic justice commissions and a Na-



credit: M. Czarnecki

Or charity? man

tional Episcopal Fund for Community Investment and Economic Justice was to provide a total of \$24 million over six years for "the economic empowerment of the disadvantaged." An implementation committee would "oversee" these efforts for the coming triennium, with \$200,000 per year being allocated for its work.

Nearly four years later, about a third of the Church's domestic dioceses are now actively involved in community invest-

ment work, and another third are in various stages of getting started, according to Gloria Brown, the national Church staff person assigned to work with the implementation committee.

Although a sub-committee of the implementation group has not yet gotten very far in raising the \$24 million intended for the national community investment and economic justice fund, it has received \$3.5 million from the Church's non-designated trust funds to use in making five-year loans of up to \$100,000 to dioceses with projects. The first of these loans, to Pittsburgh's worker-owned City Pride Bakery, was made this past fall.

But Churchwide implementation has taken longer than most would like, and there are those who argue that more might have been accomplished with less. Investing expert and some-time committee member, Amy Domini, has suggested that a smaller implementation committee — the group reportedly had between 22 and 35 members at different points during the triennium — might have been more effective, and Chuck Matthei, former board chair of the National Association of Community Development Loan Funds and an expert in the field of community economics, believes more staff, with more practical experience, could have helped get more projects going faster.

Still, the methods adopted reflect the national implementation committee's prime objective, that of widening the circle of those locally who understand what community investment means and how to do it. Much of the committee's annual budget for this reason went to provide educational, planning and technical as-

sistance as dioceses organized economic justice commissions and began taking on projects.

"You condemn people to continue reinventing the wheel if you don't share the knowledge — the knowledge base is the power base," Brown explains. "We want new houses and more jobs, sure, but we're really in the business of transforming, of changing the system. This Church committed itself to making this economic system more equitably accessible, and that is what we are trying to do."

As the committee's 1990 handbook, *Organizing for Economic Justice*, stresses, this requires Church people to move from an approach to social outreach they understand well — that of charity and service — to something less familiar — advocacy and justice.

"In dealing with the economy and how it favors those who have and prohibits those who don't from participating, you can see the need for a means of equitable distribution, not just so immediate needs can be met, but so people can develop some security in their lives," says John Hooper, executive director of Michigan's economic justice commission.

Partnerships between suburban and urban dwellers, between individuals and projects, Hooper also points out, help overcome "the rift and chasm between middle and lower classes."

But is the Episcopal Church really committed to retooling for a ministry of community investment and economic justice?

If more and more

dioceses are discovering that McGehee and the other promoters of the 1988 Michigan initiative are right, that using Church resources to promote community - and people-focussed investment is not

The focus was on getting Church people to move from an approach to social outreach they understand well, that of charity and service, to something less familiar, advocacy and justice.

only a satisfying, but also a respectful means of aiding the disadvantaged, it is not clear how far national Church administrators have come in accepting that working for justice begins at home.

"You get the impression that this was hot stuff a few years ago, but not now," says Hooper. "Out here it feels like there's an ambiguity or ambivalence about this ministry at the national Church's offices."

On the one hand, there is the impressive witness of the trustees of the Church's trust funds. With little fanfare, this group has quietly gone about finding ways to rechannel Church money to community development — \$3.5 million of non-designated funds, for example, have been invested in intermediaries of intermediaries, like the National Federation of Community Development Credit Unions, to loan out to community development projects; another \$2.5 million from the trustee's 1974 minority bank deposit program has been reinvested for greater effect in community-minded minority- and women-owned banks in poor communities.

But there is also the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief's new major donor fundraising initiative, The Society of the Anchor, to consider. The first founding officers and members are to be invested this May as part of "Celebration '92" festivities honoring the Fund's 50-year history as a major vehicle for charitable giving.

Promotion of the new organization is intended to boost the Fund's annual outlay from \$4 million to \$10 million a year in the near term, and perhaps eventually to as much as \$20 million yearly. To become a member a person must raise or give at least \$10,000 over a two-year period. Those who give or raise \$100,000 are designated Co-chairs, those giving or raising \$50,000 are made Vice-chairs, and those who come up with \$25,000 are designated Executive Committee members.

The funds raised will be granted to projects similar to those already supported by the Fund, including a sprinkling of

"The time has come to acknowledge that the Episcopal Church is fortunate in having among its congregations people of great influence and power," said Bishop Furman Stough, deputy for the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief. "We are not hesitant to admit this because many of these people are also great humanitarians and philanthropists."

"development" projects aimed at combatting the root causes of poverty, but no consideration has been given to investing any of the money in the National Episcopal Fund for Community Investment and Economic Justice. According to the Fund's Bill Caradine, "there is no direct connection" between the two.



But shouldn't there be? Presiding Bishop Edmund Browning indicated in 1987 that the Fund is to become "the primary vehicle for raising funds for new mission initiatives," and Fund officials readily acknowledge that the long-term plan is for the Fund to be responsible for

extra-budgetary efforts like the economic justice ministry. If the Fund is expanding its resources, isn't it time now also to expand its focus? Perhaps it would be if working for change weren't a threat to the Church's *status quo*.

"The time has come to acknowledge that the Episcopal Church is fortunate in having among its congregations people of great influence and power," Bishop Furman Stough, deputy for the Fund, told reporters at a press conference announcing formation of the new Society of the Anchor last December. "We are not hesitant to admit this because many of these people are also great humanitarians and philanthropists."

Among the privileges of membership are participation in an annual "Commissioning and Investiture Service" led by the Presiding Bishop, an annual weekend retreat "where national and international leaders from Church, government, business, politics and academia meet to address global issues," and participation in the Anchor Enterprise and Initiatives Program, an opportunity to "go on-site, around the world, to experience and participate in the work of the Fund first-hand." Members also receive sterling silver "Anchor" crosses on beaded necklaces crafted and designed by Navajo and Lakota Episcopalians.

The Society's membership brochure reads: "As the major donor organization of the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief, the Society of the Anchor is a group of leaders from throughout the nation who establish new standards of giving" for the Church.

New standards of giving? So much for those who thought that those had been established in Detroit. Economic justice, it would seem, is an acceptable commitment for the Church to make so long as it remains no more than another pleasant, but not too uncomfortable, point of Episcopal light. **TW**

Money and idolatry

by William Stringfellow

For the Christians of America, money has become a perplexing temptation in the practice of the Gospel: an imposing encumbrance upon the Church in its vocation as an institution and a deceptive stumbling block in the Christian witness within this society.

No attack is made here upon "materialism" in the sense in which that term is so often juxtaposed with "spiritual" values. Neither is it implied that money is intrinsically evil, for nothing at all common to the existence of this world is essentially evil, so far as the Gospel is concerned, though most religions have a contrary view. In the Christian faith, rather, money is one of the institutions of this world which, like all other principalities and powers, is fallen. That means that money has lost its integrity as an institution, exists now in a state of distortion as to its real meaning and function.

By the same token, the owning of money is in and of itself no sin, if that provides any comfort to those who may own some of it. Where sin enters is, instead, in how people and institutions regard money and, hence, in how both use money and how money uses them.

The idolatry of money consists of imputing to the possession or control of money the present moral worth of a person. In this world people live at each other's expense, and the affluence of the few is proximately related to and supported by the poverty of the many. Let

any who would vainly account for American prosperity by simplistic rationalizations about individual ingenuity, free enterprise, the favor of God, or those who credit their wealth merely to their own diligence, remember how dependent, practically, investments are upon labor made cheap and plentiful by the prevalence of poverty in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and, for that matter, Alabama.

Christ offered the rich young man in the parable freedom from idolatry of money. Money is not inherently evil; neither is the possession of money, as such, sin. The issue is only whether a person trusts money more than Christ and thus relies upon money for assurance of their moral significance rather than grace.

The Church nowadays is so much in the position of the rich young man that it seldom has standing to preach to prosperous Americans, not to mention the impecunious.

Freedom from idolatry of money means that money becomes useful as a sacrament, as a sign of the restoration of life wrought in this world by Christ. The sacramental use of money has little to do with supporting the Church after the manner of contributing to conventional charities, and even less with the self-styled stewardship which solicits funds mainly for the maintenance of ecclesiastical salaries and the housekeeping of churchly properties. The Church and its mission do not represent another charity to be subsidized as a convenient benevolence, as a sombre religious obligation, or in order to reassure the prosperous that they are either generous or righteous. And, as the history of the Church has shown, donations for the upkeep of the ecclesiastical establishment too often re-

ally mean the sale of indulgences. Appeals for Church support as either charity or maintenance end up abetting the idolatry of money.

That is weekly dramatized in the offertory when it is regarded as "the collection" and as some intermission in the worship of the congregation. Actually, the offertory is integral to the sacramental existence of the Church, representing the oblation of the totality of life to God....

The sacramental use of money in the formal and gathered worship of the Church is authenticated in the sacramental use of money elsewhere. No end of ways exist in which money can be sacramentally appropriated and spent; but, whatever the concrete circumstances, the consistent mark of such a commitment of money is the freedom of a person from the idolatry of money.

The charity of Christians, in other words, in the use of money sacramentally in both the liturgy and in the world, has no serious similarity to conventional charity, but is always a specific dramatization of the Body of Christ losing its life in order that the world be given life, and, hence, for a member of the Church, always a particular confession that their money is not their own, but belongs to the world.

No doubt, some will think this imprudent, impractical, and, in any event, difficult to practice and apt to be unpopular. But the answer to that is that fidelity to the Gospel is not measured by the affluence of the Church but rather by how the Church loves and serves the world in deploying and spending its wealth. And, for an individual Christian, the answer is that, though money is a beguiling idol which is easy to reverence, money has yet to justify a single human being or secure for him or her the freedom to be a person, while there are many who, having feared that money is a god, have found it worthless except as evidence against themselves. **TW**

William Stringfellow, an attorney and board member of *The Witness* who died in 1985, circulated a longer version of this article through the Associated Church Press in 1966. Art from *The Witness*, Feb. 2, 1975.

If then you cannot be trusted with money, that tainted thing, who will trust you with genuine riches?...You cannot be the slave of both God and money. (Luke 16:11-18)

The lure of money is a powerful force. Lust for it has fueled the powerplays of Wall Street. Control of it has caused governments to manipulate world events and sacrifice their youth to war. Lack of it has given birth to revolutions. Money has become the basis for the workings of the material world. Consequently, money has also come to be seen as the antithesis of the transcendent spirit. As Jesus put it most succinctly, one can't have two masters, worshiping both God and money. Nevertheless, even Christian religions have not been immune to the corruptions and the distortions caused by the human affinity for money. From the riches of the Vatican to the bank accounts of Jim and Tammy Bakker, wealth has been hoarded in the name of Christ.

art and society

Neither has the world of art — after religion, the domain many would consider the most spiritually oriented — remained apart from the distortions of money. When Van Gogh's paintings sell at auction for tens of millions of dollars and when contemporary investors pay huge sums for contemporary artworks only to lock them up in vaults like gold bullion — it is a clear sign that the strongest spirit around is not that of creativity and the imitation of God, but instead a fascination for, and addiction to, the wealth and power of the here and now.

Gods of money

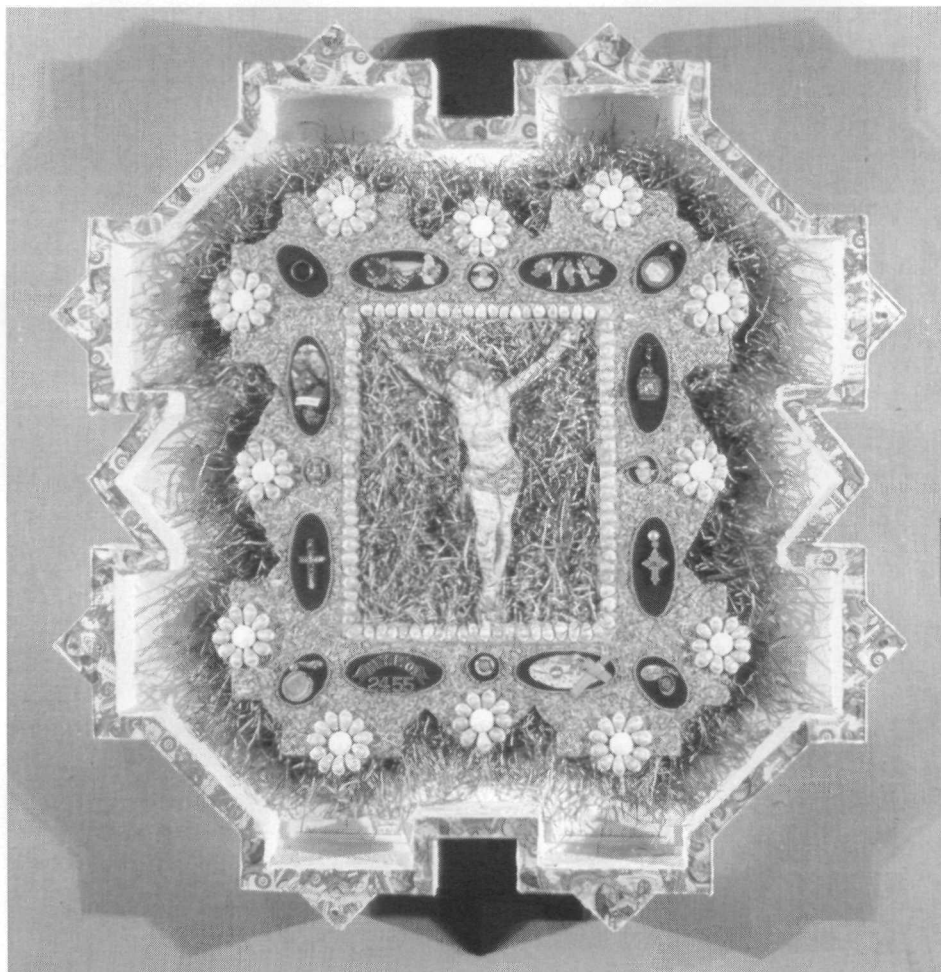
by Blaise Tobia and Virginia Maksymowicz

Artists respond, and learn to be more attentive to the bottom line than to their inner voice.

There is, however, at least one artist who can be trusted with money — even huge amounts of it. Barton Lidice Benes has, for the past 15 years, been making artworks out of money — literally. He has gained such a reputation for working in this medium that friends mail him foreign currency whenever they travel. The Federal Reserve Board regularly

gives him cartons full of U.S. dollars — all shredded — which he applies to his works. Benes uses this unusually literal approach to what others often use only symbolically, to make some very telling observations. He has been able to use the taint still adhering to these bills to paint a picture of our money-obsessed western culture.

Benes starts communicating his warnings about money by being funny. He loves to make visual puns (like a wish-



Family Shrine by Barton Lidice Benes

photo: Blaise Tobia

bone wrapped in a dollar bill) and he can't seem to resist verbal puns either. *Laundered Money*, for example, is the title of a sculpture made out of a real washboard and a disintegrating dollar bill. In *Nest Eggs*, strips of money form birds' nests; real eggs laminated with dollars nestle inside. Some in the artworld have in fact criticized him for such easy joking, but Benes' humor becomes quite serious when we realize the meaning of his images: that our society is caught up in a dangerous obsession with consumerism, and money is its most tangible symbol.

Two larger-scale, more intense works strengthen and extend Benes' observations. In *Family Shrine*, personal mementos from Benes' past surround an image of the crucified Christ and the surface is entirely covered with shredded money. The decoration is gaudily beautiful, but it also obscures what should be the most important details. It seems as if the artist is asking: Where do we place our values? What is worth remembering? What is worth dying for? What is worth believing in? Where does religion fit in? *Green Goddess* uses a reproduction of the Venus de Milo. In this case, shredded money turns the familial sculpture into a contemporary version of the golden calf — a symbol of our society's sexual and material idolatry. The collecting of fine art is implicated in this lust for wealth, and by extension the artists who make it. The title is also the name of a popular salad dressing, implying that idolatry has become, perhaps, as American as apple pie.

Where are the "genuine riches" that Jesus speaks of in Luke's gospel? In mocking the facile answers provided by our society, and even in challenging two of its pillars — religion and art — Benes may be inviting us to be very careful about where we invest our hearts. **TW**



Green Goddess by Barton Lidice Benes

photo: Blaise Tobia

The owners of the land came onto the land, or more often a spokesman for the owners came....Some of the owner men were kind because they hated what they had to do, and some of them were angry because they hated to be cruel, and some of them were cold because they had long ago found that one could not be an owner unless one were cold. And all of them were caught in something larger than themselves...If a bank or a finance company owned the land, the owner man said, The Bank — or the Company — needs — wants — insists — must have — as though the Bank or the Company were a monster, with thought and feeling, which had ensnared them. These last would take no responsibility for the banks or the companies because they were men and slaves, while the banks were machines and masters all at the same time...The owner men sat in the cars and explained. You know the land is poor. You've scabbled at it long enough, God knows.

The squatting tenant men nodded and wondered and drew figures in the dust, and yes, they knew, God knows. If the dust only wouldn't fly. If the top would only stay on the soil, it might not be so bad....

Well, it's too late. And the owner men explained the workings and the thinkings of the monster that was stronger than they were....You see, a bank or a company...those creatures don't breathe air, don't eat side-meat. They breathe profits; they eat the interest on money. ... We have to do it. We don't like to do it. But the monster's sick....

Sure, cried the tenant men, but it's our land. We measured it and broke it up. We were born on it, and we got killed on it, died on it. Even if it's no good, it's still ours....

We're sorry. It's not us. It's the monster. The bank isn't like a man.

Yes, but the bank is only made of men.

No, you're wrong there--quite wrong there. The bank is something else than men. It happens that every man in a bank hates what the bank does, and yet the bank does it. The bank is something more than men, I tell you. It's the monster. Men made it, but they can't control it.

John Steinbeck, The Grapes of Wrath

Rooted in the world, not the system

by Walter Wink

[Ed. Note: Walter Wink suggests that the myth that dominates our society is based on violent domination. The myth is ancient, arising in Ancient Babylon as the story of Marduk. The moral is that violent action yields order and good. Wink suggests that Christ's ministry is a direct confrontation with the *Domination System*.]

The New Testament is thoroughly familiar with the Domination System, and has specific terms for describing it. One, which has sadly been obscured for many readers of the Bible, is the Greek word *kosmos* ("world").... Because the range of meanings assigned to the term "world" is so wide, I suggest that the special New Testament sense of world as an alienating and alienated ethos may be translated more meaningfully as "system."

For example, in South Africa, many blacks are fully aware that they are fighting the apartheid system, not merely white people. They know that they cannot gain freedom simply by changing the color of the people at the top and leaving the system intact. When police are at the door, people inside will warn, "The System is here." When they see propaganda on television, they quip, "The System is lying again." Of a strike: "We're struggling against the System."

In the light of our understanding of the Domination System, the translation of *kosmos* as "system" opens a new dimension of meaning. "The System (*kosmos*) cannot hate you," Jesus is shown as telling his own brothers, who refuse to believe in him; "but it hates me because I testify against it that its works are evil" (John 7:7). Whenever Christians have understood this as meaning that the *physical world* is evil, they have tended to reject the created order, sexuality, and even their own bodies, and to manifest open contempt for efforts at political change. "System" yields an entirely different meaning, however, one far closer to John's intent, which cannot have been to despise the creation that this Gospel itself affirms was created by God through the Word (1:1-5). But the Domination System *does* hate Jesus, regards him as a mortal threat, and sees to his brutal execution: it hates him because he testified against it that its works were evil.

Thus when the Pharisees challenge Jesus' authority to attack their religious order, he responds, "You are of the System, I am not of the System" (John 8:23). Again, as long as *kosmos* in this statement was translated as "world," the impression was given

Walter Wink teaches at Auburn Seminary, NY and is the author of a trilogy on the powers and principalities. This article is adapted from a section of *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a world of Domination*, Fortress Press, May, 1992. Artist **Sister Helen David** teaches art at the SE Community Center in Philadelphia, PA.

that Jesus was other-worldly, non-human, a “docetic” (only “seeming”) person: “I am not of this *world*.” With the meaning “system,” however, his statement is literally true. He belonged to God’s system. He was not “of” the Domination System. Rejection of the *kosmos*, as John H. Elliott remarks, is not anti-worldly but anti-establishment.

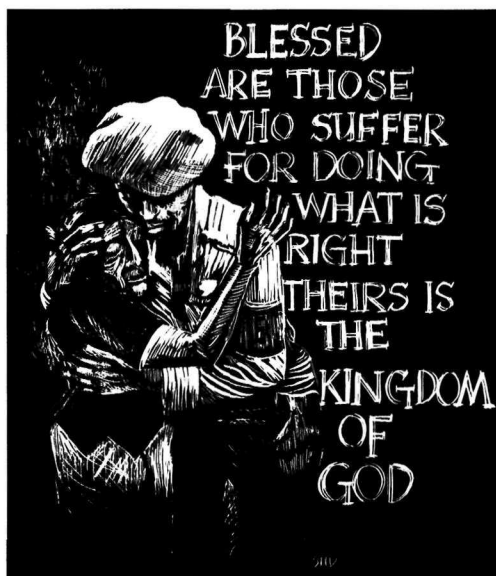
Those who belong to the Domination System cannot comprehend the values displayed by Jesus, or understand why he is turning their world upside down. Theirs is a hermetically sealed language-system: “They belong to the Domination System (*kosmos*); therefore what they say is determined by that System, and that System listens to them” (1 John 4:5). Thus the writer of Ephesians can speak of existence in the System as a living death: You “were spiritually dead all the time that you drifted along on the stream of this world’s ideas of living (*kosmos*) (Eph.2:2).” Literally, the concluding phrase runs, “You walked according to the *aion* of this *kosmos*.” This *kosmos* is the prevailing world-atmosphere that we breathe in like toxic air, often without realizing it.

Nazi Germany provides a striking example. As early as 1923, D. H. Lawrence, with his astonishing capacity to discern developments at their inception, accurately described the new spiritual atmosphere that was possessing Germany: *...at night you feel strange things stirring in the darkness, strange feelings stirring out of this still, unconquered Black Forest. You stiffen your backbone and you listen to the night. There is a sense of danger. It is not the people. They don’t seem dangerous. Out of the very air comes a sense of danger, a queer, bristling feeling of uncanny danger.*

The “atmosphere” that Lawrence so clairvoyantly discerned in Germany can be detected in any setting within the Domination System, even when it is less

portentous. This spirit-killing atmosphere penetrates everything, teaching us not only what to believe, but what we can value and even what we can see.

It teaches us what to *believe*: it offers us the acceptable beliefs that society at any given time declares to be credible. The current world-atmosphere has decreed that spirits are not real, nor God, nor miracles, nor spiritual healing. Therefore no respectable intellectual discourse is permitted on these themes....



credit: Sister Helen David

This kosmos is the prevailing world-atmosphere that we breathe in like toxic air, often without realizing it.

The world-atmosphere teaches us what we can *value*. In the Domination System generally, it teaches us to value power. In any particular society, however, power is given specific shape by the peculiar conditions of the time. What characterizes our society is the unique value ascribed to money. People in every age have coveted wealth, but few societies have lionized

the entrepreneur as ours does. Aristocratic societies—and most societies have been aristocratic — have tended to look down on acquisitiveness and despised merchants. Modern capitalism, by contrast, has made wealth the highest value.

Our entire social system has become an “economy”; no earlier society would have characterized itself thus. Profit is the highest social good. Consumerism has become the only universally available mode of participation in modern society. The work ethic has been replaced by the consumption ethic, the cathedral by the skyscraper, the hero by the billionaire, the saint by the executive, religion by ideology. The Kingdom of Mammon exercises constraint by invisible chains and drives its slaves with invisible prods. (Have you ever heard of a rich person who said, “I have enough”?) But Mammon is wiser in its way than the dictator, for money enslaves not by force but by love.

The world-atmosphere also teaches us what to *see*.... Whatever the System tells our brains is real is what we are allowed to notice; everything else must be ignored. Thus we are taught to mistrust our own experiences.... The result of this limitation on what we are allowed to see is a miniaturization of our living world.

These limitations of sight are to a degree merely a consequence of finitude. But to some extent they are also the result of a system that is deliberately blinding us to God’s true intent for humanity: “For judgment I came into this System, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see”— here the religious authorities, who believe themselves to be God’s spokesmen, but who have reduced religion to a male club that excludes all but the morally upright and the financially privileged — “may become blind” (John 9:39). “And this is the judgment”— the last Judgment, moved right up to the present moment of encounter with this

truth — “that the light has come into the System, and people loved darkness rather than light” (John 3:19).

Pilate, as Rome’s representative, does not, cannot understand that there is another order of reality breaking in on the hegemony of violence which, under the temporary guise of Rome, now straddles the world. Jesus answers him: “The New Reality (*basileia*) of which I speak is not of this old System of Domination (*kosmos*); if it were, my aides would fight, that I not be delivered to the Jewish authorities. But the New Reality of which I speak does not take its rise from the Domination System (*kosmos*)” (John 18:36). How different that sounds from the usual translation, “My kingdom is not of this world”! The values of the Domination System and those of Jesus are incommensurable. Violence cannot cure violence. The New Reality eschews violence, but it has its own, quite amazing forms of power, which those inured to violence cannot comprehend.

Jesus discovered that there were many, both women and men, ready to be delivered from the Domination System, who longed for the equalitarian, non-hierarchical sufficiency of the reign of God. To these Jesus declares: “What does it profit people, to gain the whole System (*kosmos*) and forfeit their lives?” (Mark 8:36). “Those who hate their life in this System will keep it for *aionic* life” (John 12:25)—not an injunction to self-loathing, but a very down-to-earth observation: only those who find their lives detestable under the Powers That Be will have the courage to reject the latter’s overblown authority.

“Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what appears foolish to the System in order to shame the wise; God

chose what appears weak to the System in order to shame the strong, God chose what appears low and despicable to the System, mere nothings, to reduce to nothing things that are.” (1 Cor. 1:26-28)

Jesus discovered that there were many, both women and men, ready to be delivered from the Domination System, who longed for the equalitarian, non-hierarchical sufficiency of the reign of God. To these Jesus declares: “What does it profit people, to gain the whole System (kosmos) and forfeit their lives?”

Those liberated from the tyranny of the old order receive a new Holy Spirit —“not the spirit of the Domination System (*kosmos*), but the spirit which is from God” (1 Cor. 2:12); “the Spirit of truth, which the Domination System is not able to receive, because it can neither recognize it nor comprehend it. You know it, because it is already in your midst, and will be inside your very beings” (John 14:17)....

Not only do those liberated from the old System receive a new Spirit, they receive a new world.... What had been invisible—the all-pervasive exploitation of the many by the few — was rendered visible, judged, and found wanting. And those with this new sight needed no longer to subject themselves to the delusions that formerly shaped their alienated picture of “world”....

“In the old System you face persecution. But take courage,” Jesus says; “I have vanquished the Domination System!” (John 16:33). The disciples

are still “in” the System (John 17:11), but not of it: “If the System hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. If you would collaborate with the System, the System would love you for it; but because you have turned your backs on it (because

I have extricated you from the System!), it hates you” (John 15:18-19). “Do not be astonished, brothers and sisters, that the System hates you” (1 John 3:13). For “the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the System” (1 John 4:4). “For whatever is born of God conquers the Domination System. And this is the victory that overcomes that System: our faith” (1 John 5:4)....

Until the new order of God arrives, believers are “to deal with the old System as though they had no dealings with it. For the basic structure (*schema*) of the dominant System (*kosmos*) is passing away” (1 Cor. 7:31). “I do not pray that you should take them out of the System,”

for that is the theater in which God’s sovereignty must be established, “but that you keep them from the Evil One,” that is, from succumbing to its spirituality (John 17:15)....

However it comes, God’s system *will* replace the Domination System, not by violent confrontation, but as increasing numbers of people find themselves drawn toward its values.... The old order begins to lose its intelligibility: “Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the Domination System (*kosmos*)? For since, in the wisdom of God, the System did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe” (1 Cor. 1:20-21).

Only God can bring about a new system in its entirety; a new kind of earthly existence will be given by the selective process itself. And yet, though it cannot be built, it is our task to try to create the conditions that would make that selection possible. Prayer, persuasion, and social struggle thus occupy the community that lives as if God’s reign has already begun.

TW

Chris Payden-Travers is a priest in the rural southeast and the mother of two daughters. Next year, she and her husband will celebrate 20 years of federal tax resistance.

"When Jack and I got married in 1972 I wasn't ready to be a tax resister. I was afraid that if we resisted we were going to lose our home the next day; Big Brother would appear on my doorstep like Superman."

During the year that followed, which included the progression of the Vietnam War, Payden-Travers says she met a number of war tax resisters. "They hadn't had their lives totally destroyed, so I came to believe it was possible to resist taxes and survive."

She says she felt called and ultimately willing to refuse to pay her federal income and the federal telephone tax.

"We felt increasingly that the priorities of the government just simply didn't go along with what we thought the priorities were. If we weren't willing to let our bodies be used for war, we shouldn't allow our dollars to be used. If I don't believe we should be in the Gulf, then I shouldn't pay for it. There's a hypocrisy in praying for the U.S. and Iraqi soldiers' safety, if I've paid the airfare and bought the guns they're using."

Instead, the Payden-Travers family sends the money it would pay for federal income tax to community groups which they know will meet human needs.

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is editor/publisher of *The Witness*. **Dierdre Luzwick** is a Wisconsin graphic artist. Her book *Endangered Species* was just released by Harper & Row.

Payden-Travers said that being ordained makes the mechanics of resistance easier, but the decision to resist more difficult for her.

Therefore, a pastor has a better chance at filing below taxable income. Lastly, pastors who live in rectories don't own their homes and can't have them seized by the IRS.

"I'm one of the few priests I know who likes a rectory," Payden-Travers says. "I don't want to be dumped out of my home. It's a scary thought — having the girls and not being able to have a home for them."

All these factors contribute an impetus to resist taxes, Payden-Travers says.

"Because I'm a minister I'm in a position to take some control over how my money is spent. I feel I am answerable to God for what I do with that."

On the other hand, being a pastor puts Payden-Travers in a dilemma which she takes seriously. While her decision represents her own individual discernment and conviction, it may also reflect back on her worshiping community if it becomes public.

After seminary, Payden-Travers struggled with whether to tell parishes that interviewed her that she was a tax resister. After conversations with many people, including one woman who asserted that "taxes and sex are very private matters," she decided not to bring it up.

But Payden-Travers felt misgivings during the Pittston coal strike when clergy members were arrested, wearing their

clericals and thereby pulling their congregations into that conflict. Unlike some, Payden-Travers does not see this as necessarily a prophetic opportunity.

"I'm aware that a lot of people cannot understand how you could ever commit



Trinity

credit: Dierdre Luzwick

Rendering unto Caesar: a story of tax resistance

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

Pastors are considered self-employed by the IRS, consequently their taxes are not automatically withheld and they are better able to refuse to pay. They are also all allowed deductions that others are not: deductions for housing, utilities, etc.

civil disobedience and *break a law*. It's not a case of evasion. It's not a case of keeping money for myself. I have to trust that that congregation would honor my conscience the way we honor any other member's conscience, but it's very hard to keep the boundaries straight between what you do as an individual and what you do as a representative of a church. How do you keep a personal witness from being something that reflects on a community that isn't part of it?"

She adds that tax resistance does not seem to be a universal calling.

"It's clear that God does not seem to call everybody to that absolute position. I have met people who feel as strongly about their call to be peacemakers in the military as I feel. I don't spend energy wondering why that is or if they have misheard their call. I do know this is the witness I'm called to make."

Payden-Travers says that to date her tax resistance has been a pretty private affair. It has stayed that way partly because they rarely owe taxes. When, re-

cently, they did owe and refuse to pay \$100, Payden-Travers felt responsible to inform her bishop, since the IRS might attempt to seize the money from her bank or from the diocese through garnishment of her wages. She asked that the diocese consider refusing to cooperate, saying there was precedence for this in the Diocese of Pennsylvania. (See page 27.) To date, the IRS has made no move to recoup the money.

But how do you keep a personal witness from being something that reflects on a community that isn't part of it?

Payden-Travers laughs when she says that tax resistance provides an extra incentive to simple living. The less they possess, the less interest the IRS has in them. On the other hand, they now have a new stationwagon partly because they do not want to live in fear.

Ironically, that self-same car is the thing most likely to cause the Payden-Travers' tax resistance to go public and to draw her congregation into the turmoil that would follow.

"If the IRS tried to seize the car, I know Jack would want to organize a protest. We'd have to wrestle that out, work that out, as a couple."

The Payden-Travers' have been audited by the IRS and a lien was imposed against a house they owned with another family in Michigan. Presumably if that house is sold, the IRS can exercise its claim against the sale price.

Payden-Travers said that sometimes tax resistance seems to have only symbolic value.

"Does it have any effect? On one level, absolutely not. But I know that I wouldn't be faithful if I didn't do it. But perhaps it will have more impact than I'll ever know — maybe some bored IRS agent has read some letters in the file. Some seeds do fall on good soil and the sower may never get to see it."

TW

The Episcopal Church and tax resistance

During the Vietnam War, when the Internal Revenue Service told the Diocese of Pennsylvania to garnish the wages of a diocesan priest, the bishop and diocesan council refused.

"The diocesan council, led by Bishop [Robert] DeWitt said it would not garnish my pay," because it would violate his conscience, David Gracie explains, but if the IRS got a federal court ruling that the diocese *had* to pay, it would comply.

Legal expenses were high and the court ruling predictable, but by the time the decision was made the war was over.

Gracie withdrew the money he had invested with the Philadelphia War Tax Resisters' Fund revolving community

development loan fund, and paid the tax.

The location of the council's decision to resist the IRS pleased Bishop DeWitt, Gracie said. It was made at Old Christ Church, George Washington's parish.

While the Church has no official position on tax resistance, the 1928 General Convention said: "*Warfare as an instrument of national policy or means of settling disputes between nations should be renounced. Such warfare, undertaken to further national policy and without recourse to judicial arbitration or other means of peaceful settlement, is a crime.*"

The registrar who keeps names of conscientious objectors for the national Church, will file the names of tax resisters upon request.

The Episcopal Peace Fellowship, which supports individual decisions not to pay war taxes, has issued a call to tax

resisters to send letters explaining why they are conscientious tax resisters and why they would like to have the legal relief of a peace tax fund to which the taxes could be directed. The EPF can also provide a 1988 pamphlet titled *Cross Before Flag*, which offers Episcopal statements (between 1916-1988) on war and peace.

"We support war tax resistance and war tax resisters," Mary Miller, director of the EPF, says. "We are pushing every way we can for the peace tax fund bill. It has been 12 years of hard work, but a needs assessment hearing on the bill is scheduled for this spring."

Correspondence can be directed to the Registrar for Conscientious Objectors, 815 Second Ave., NY NY 10017 and the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, Box 28156, Washington DC 20038.

Capitalism for Latin America

by Gordon Judd

The Hemisphere of Liberty: A Philosophy of the Americas. Michael Novak, The AEI Press, 1990; 153 pages, hard cover, \$18.95.

A banner sometimes appearing at demonstrations on poverty issues says: *If You Say Capitalism Is Working, Then You Are One of the Working!*

Michael Novak's book, a series of lectures prepared to be given in Latin America (he never indicates whether he actually gave them), is written from the perspective of someone who is working and for whom capitalism is working.

Novak implies that in northern countries poverty has ceased to exist, that in the United States, for instance, capitalism has enabled everyone to attain economic sufficiency and, thereby, liberty. Novak, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C., has apparently not seen the thousands of homeless who have taken up permanent residency on Washington's mean streets.

Novak writes that, "The economic desperation of some 200 million persons in Latin America...remains an outrage to our consciences," but implies that this economic desperation arises from too little capitalism. He says, "I have heard some Latin American priests say that Latin America's problem is 'savage capitalism.' In fact, the reality may be savage but it is not capitalist. Most of the nations of Latin America are mercantilist, almost patrimonial in structure; the economic activities of their citizens are heavily abridged, limited, and controlled by state

officials."

True and false. True, many countries have patrimonial aspects, especially in agricultural production, but false to suggest that because these countries may not operate as classic capitalist economies (what countries do?) that they have not been *savaged* by capitalism's excesses.

Michael Novak implies that in the United States capitalism has enabled everyone to attain economic sufficiency and, thereby, liberty.

The practices of Canada, the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and other northern or developed nations ensure that the nations to the south will continue to ship their precious minerals, lumber, and agricultural products that are needed or wanted in the north. The primary Latin American experience of capitalism has been victimization.

Novak elsewhere suggests that the primary reason for human rights abuses and political and economic servitude in Latin America is that capitalism has not been well used. He says that business leaders "must be the architects of liberation, offering a vision of how the poor will be liberated from traditional poverty to become economically creative." Of course, his clarion call rests on two large assumptions: that business leaders are committed to liberation and that *those who have* should be creating a vision for *those who have not*.

If someone reads only one book on capitalism's past and potential contributions to liberty in this hemisphere, this is

the book to read, because if anything else is read, such as the pastoral letters from Latin American bishops' conferences, the economic pastoral of the U.S. Roman Catholic bishops, or even the Scriptures, Novak's thesis quickly unravels.

The Hemisphere of Liberty is seriously flawed. What Novak has written is a defense of capitalism grounded neither in truth nor fact. He claims that his is a "practical philosophical" approach in what he calls the *Whig tradition*, a tradition, he says, that emanates from *Genesis*, Aristotle, and Thomas Aquinas. It is not practical, however. More significantly, it is not even honest, implying as it does that capitalism is working for developed countries. It is clearly not working for the millions in the United States who now form a dislocated and homeless population larger than that of the Kurds.

In establishing his credentials as a contemporary Catholic Whig, Novak claims the tradition of *Genesis*. What about the rest of the *Pentateuch*, the prophets, Wisdom literature, the Gospels? It is this selective Scriptural, theological, historical and experiential method that makes his book more a tract than a serious piece of analysis.

book review

The book's flyleaf says, "For almost a decade now, Michael Novak's writings on religion and economics have caused a sensation in Latin America." Obviously.

If any reader is seeking sensation, then *This Hemisphere of Liberty* might qualify for a *must-read*. If the reader desires honest and helpful analysis, however, he or she will do better to look elsewhere.

TW

Gordon Judd is a Basilian priest and staff member of *Groundwork*, a Michigan grassroots lobby for social justice.

Witnessing and wealth

The *Witness* has, since its inception in 1917, challenged the social orders that create injustice. It has also been mindful that, by virtue of its own assets and the Church to which it belongs, it must be accountable.

Originating in 1917 with no assets, *The Witness* is now a \$300,000-a-year operation with a paid staff and a \$2.5 million endowment.

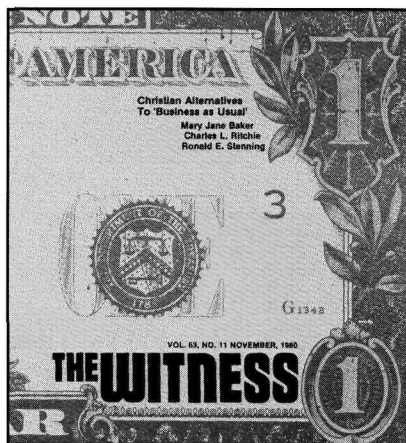
"How can a publication as adequately financed as *The Witness* by income from investments in 'the system' bespeak the cause of the poor and the oppressed without being hypocritical?" asked editor Bob DeWitt (retired bishop of Philadelphia) in 1979.

He responded by saying that the question is as old as the Church: "It goes back as far as 'the saints which are in Caesar's household' to whom St. Paul referred. Those early Christians are in a way the patron saints of privileged Christians in the Western world today. Like us, that was where they were placed, that was their calling, their vocation. We can only wish we knew more of how they lived out that vocation. The question they faced was how could their position of privilege best be used to preach the Gospel and live this life in the power of the life to come."

For those new to the history of *The Witness*, it originated as a newsprint tabloid that sold for \$1 a year, explicitly so that wage laborers could afford to subscribe. Production costs were covered by contributors and by editor/owner Irving Peake Johnson, Bishop of Colorado.

Later, when Johnson incorporated the magazine in Illinois, it had four stockholders, Johnson, (long-time editor) Wil-

liam Spofford and Benjamin and Frank Clarke. The corporation was nearly bankrupt during the Depression, but generated net assets of \$96,900 by 1937.



The cover from the Nov., 1980 *Witness*. The issue examined "Christian alternatives to business as usual."

During the subsequent decades, *The Witness* was edited, written, typed, published, addressed, bundled and even delivered by William Spofford, with the help of his wife, Dorothy. Spofford, whom I trust readers will come to know through this 75th anniversary year, was active with the Church League for Industrial Democracy and was listed as a "fellow traveller" in *Life Magazine*. Spofford lived frugally while investing money. At the time of his death in 1972 and his wife's in 1973, there were \$4.5 million in assets and no records to whom the money belonged.

In an effort to protect the money from possible IRS claims, the Spofford family turned the assets over to the Episcopal Church Publishing Company, according to ECPC treasurer Robert Eckersley. The ECPC board, for similar reasons, was reconstituted with Presiding Bishop John Hines as its chair and Bishops Morris

Arnold, Robert DeWitt, Lloyd Gressle, John Krumm, J. Brooke Mosely and the then Rev. Joseph Fletcher as its members.

When all was said and done, the ECPC ended up with \$3.4 million.

In the years that followed, the ECPC used the interest from the endowment, subscription income and, from time to time, the principal itself to produce the magazine and to support a community for social justice within the Church.

The ECPC board placed ten percent of its assets in socially responsible investments that offered a low yield. They also subjected their investments to the scrutiny of the Institute for Corporate Responsibility.

"We tried to invest socially responsibly," Mary Lou Suhor, editor from 1981 until 1991, explained. "We monitored our own accounts. We fought against plant closings and called attention to economic problems."

The ECPC developed a Church and Society Network which gave the Urban Bishops' Coalition \$100,000 and loaned it two ECPC staffpeople for the 1978 Urban Crisis Conference which yielded *To Hear and to Heed*, written by Joe Pelham. It also supported: the Consultation (which is a network of progressive groups within the Church), the Episcopal Urban Caucus, General Convention forums, a 1976 conference for religion editors, and the Grand Jury Project which publicized the arrest of two Episcopal Church staffers who refused to testify before a Grand Jury investigating the FALN, a militant Puerto Rican group.

The ECPC produced study guides, including *My Story's On* (a tremendous work by women about class issues and tensions within the feminist community) and *Struggling with the System, Probing Alternatives* (which Ronald Reagan called a "one-sided venture into political indoctrination" and columnist Jeffrey Hart said

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann became editor/publisher of *The Witness* in September, 1991.

was "nothing less than a Marxist handbook for the overthrow of the U.S. political and economic system").

In the mid-1970s, the board voted to change a 1940 by-law that stipulated that *The Witness*' editor must be a bishop or a priest. In time, people of color, women, later ordained women, and gay and lesbian board members helped shape the direction and finances of the ECPC.

From time to time constituencies on the board clashed, sometimes over preferences for the work of the magazine or for the work of the Church and Society programs. Sometimes they clashed over whether race or gender were paramount or even compatible issues.

"Our mission statement was pretty strong in those days," Suhor said. "We were against racism, sexism, classism and against imperialism/U.S. adventurism. Our programs flowed from those.

"People on the board came down on different sides of those four isms," Suhor said. "We were trying to integrate people around these isms. Later we made a statement that we saw the chief problems of the country as economic, fueled by racism and sexism."

Differences of opinion could be heated or paralyzing at times. "Certain people were unhappy at all times with all projects," Suhor laughed. "When you're slicing up the economic pie there are disagreements but that's only natural."

My impression, as a newcomer, is that the ECPC board had a ride-easy attitude toward the endowment, preferring for the money to be faithfully spent than quietly amassed. This attitude is similar to the character of the magazine itself, which I discern to be a preferential option for thought-provoking passion (even when wrong), rather than for tepid thought.

By 1990, the board of ECPC had spent \$1 million of its principal. Robert Eckersley predicted that if the board continued to spend money as it had, the

endowment would be gone in eight years.

The board considered its options.

What was the faithful thing to do with the money? Chris Bugbee proposed dissolving the magazine and using the interest to give grants to investigative journalists. Others preferred to focus the board's



attention on the magazine. Some considered a merger with *Christianity & Crisis*.

A new conservationist mood descended on the board. Many members were new to the ECPC (only five of the current board members have served more than one year on the board) and while they are all Episcopalians with lively and sometimes marginal view points, they seem inclined to scale down spending, to preserve the endowment and to concentrate solely on the work of *The Witness*.

In early 1991, the ECPC decided to relocate *The Witness* to Detroit for reasons of political geography and because it was anticipated that *The Witness* could save money in this depressed area.

"There has been a concerted effort to come to grips with the fact that our vision tended to exceed our financial reach," explains Bill Rankin, ECPC chairperson and rector of All Saints, Belvedere, Calif. "To be a steward means being responsible for not only the present, but for the future. My feeling now is that we have a wonderful coherence on the board."

The current *Witness* staff is following in the footsteps of the previous staff in trying to curtail expenses. We have streamlined tasks and tried to scale back expenses. By the end of the year, accounting functions which have been

handled in Scranton, Penn. will have moved to Detroit.

Last fall, for the first time in many years, the ECPC board passed a budget that would not draw on principal. There's some uncertainty in this, since we are living out the budget for the first time in this location, but there is a feeling that running the magazine like a small business reflects good stewardship.

Magazines like *Sojourners* and *Christianity & Crisis* depend on their fundraising and are forced to dedicate a lot of time and energy to scrambling for literally hundreds of thousands of dollars to subsidize subscriptions.

The Witness has been fortunate because it anticipates \$200,000 in interest and dividends annually. Unfortunately, although subscription prices were low (\$20 annually), subscription revenue brought in only about \$10 per subscriber. For this reason, *The Witness* staff recently had to eliminate the 4-for-the-price-of-1 Christmas offer.

Last June, the ECPC dissolved its social justice fund and established a *Friends of The Witness* campaign. The board is committed to raising \$32,000 this year. I am grateful to the board for taking the burden of fundraising off the shoulders of the staff and to those who contribute to *The Witness*. My hope is that subscription revenue will improve and offset some of the fundraising required. In January alone, we added 500 new subscribers.

There is a tension between riding easy with the endowment and trying to conserve it. The worst of the one is throwing money carelessly at projects and pork barrels. The worst of the other is becoming tight-fisted and losing sight of God's ultimate freedom. I'm glad to be working for a board that seems to have an appreciation of both truths. It is also satisfying, as editor, to be a voice for conservation that meets voices on the board that speak for real freedom.

— J.W-K.

Reform-minded community activists often find it difficult to gain a hearing from those who wield power in financial spheres. Elena Hanggi does not. For the past year, the 50-year-old former national president of ACORN (Associated Community Organizations for Reform Now) has been chairwoman of the Dallas regional federal bank board, which oversees savings and loan institutions in Texas, New Mexico, Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana.

Her appointment, made in January, 1991 by the Federal Housing Finance Board, surprised Hanggi and stunned financial industry members in that region.

"You cannot imagine the hostility directed at me," Hanggi says. "People were just livid."

Hanggi had come on the board 10 months earlier to fill out the remainder of a four-year term. She was appointed as one of the two "community interest" directors whose seats on each of the nation's 12 boards were mandated by the Congressional S&L bailout legislation, in a provision won largely through ACORN's lobbying efforts.

"I did the typical Southern female thing — got out of high school, got a job, fell in love, got married, quit the job, had babies. I shied away from attention drawn to myself, and was never particularly confident about my ability to do things."



Elena Hanggi

Chairing a bank board

by Marianne Arbogast

*Witnesses,
the quick and the dead*

"The law forced the board to incorporate people like me," Hanggi explained. "Just having to sit at the same table and be confronted with the fact that there are lucid, reasonable, intelligent people, who maybe see the world in a different light" has brought some bank officers to a new understanding, she said.

Concerned about whether she would

Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of *The Witness*.

be reappointed, Hanggi solicited letters of recommendation from other board members, the majority of whom were elected representatives of the S&L industry.

In a move that may have been "some perverse joke on the part of the Finance Board," Hanggi quips, she was not only reappointed to the Dallas board but also named its head.

"I had been fairly quiet during the first year," Hanggi says. "One year barely gives you enough time to understand what is going on. It's not fun. It's very, very frustrating to see the kicking and screaming, the manipulation of procedures, the stacking of the deck that goes on with regard to any issues we raise."

Through the Affordable Housing Pro-

gram — another piece of the bailout legislation won by ACORN — millions of dollars have been loaned to low-income housing developers and first-time buyers. Still, she laments, "a lot more will go into bank presidents' pockets."

Twelve of the board's 15 members can be counted on to vote in a block, she says. "It's always going to be as anti-community as it can be and claim some semblance of following the law."

Though she struggles with discouragement, Hanggi is supported by her faith and a strong sense of vocation.

A parishoner of St. Andrew's Roman Catholic Cathedral in Little Rock, Ark., Hanggi used to be troubled by the idea that "it was vain to think I as a layperson could have a calling from God," till a

priest friend in social justice ministry convinced her that she did.

Hanggi's community involvement was sparked 18 years ago, when the highway department decided to build a freeway through her close-knit, predominantly German neighborhood near downtown Little Rock.

When ACORN began organizing, Hanggi was drawn into the campaign. Her family remained in their home until a bulldozer was parked in their yard, then negotiated a deal allowing them to move the house to a location eight blocks away.

"Before ACORN I had never been one to get involved," she says. "I did the typical Southern female thing -- got out of high school, got a job, fell in love, got married, quit the job, had babies. I shied away from attention drawn to myself, and was never particularly confident about my ability to do things.

"ACORN not only gave me the opportunity, but shoved me into doing things I didn't realize I could do. The more self-confidence I gained, the more I wanted. It was an issue of me beginning to feel like I made a difference."

Hanggi went back to school, studying English, sociology, and Urban Affairs. Eventually she earned a law degree.

The process was sometimes painful. Her children were teased by schoolmates about their mother's activism, and her own growth strained family equilibrium.

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affordable housing.*

"When women, especially, begin to get involved in their communities, I'd like them to understand that there are going to be ups and downs in their work relationships, but also in their personal relationships," she said. "Changes come about in an individual's life as they develop self-confidence and competency. But it is possible to work this through and have mutually supportive relationships with one's spouse and family."

Hanggi was heartened when one of her

daughters, after being excluded from playing basketball, circulated a petition in her third-grade class which affirmed that "girls can do anything boys can do."

"I felt something had rubbed off," she said. "If you feel something about an issue, you should be able to take a stand and take some action."

Hanggi travels frequently to offer leadership training and consultation on banking and housing issues to community groups across the country. She addressed a House of Bishops meeting on the S&L bailout several years ago.

"I think Christians have to remain always alert to business in general and the financial industry in particular," Hanggi says. "There will always be an effort to undercut socially-right legislation. We need to continue to stand up and say, this is not right, we have a proposal to change it, and you need to look at this.

"The bottom line in this world is that good intentions don't build or rehabilitate houses. As long as good Christians allow people who do not have the same value system to have control over how money is spent, to whom it is lent, what sections of town it goes into, there will continue to be inequity, injustice, and lack of affordable housing." **TW**

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