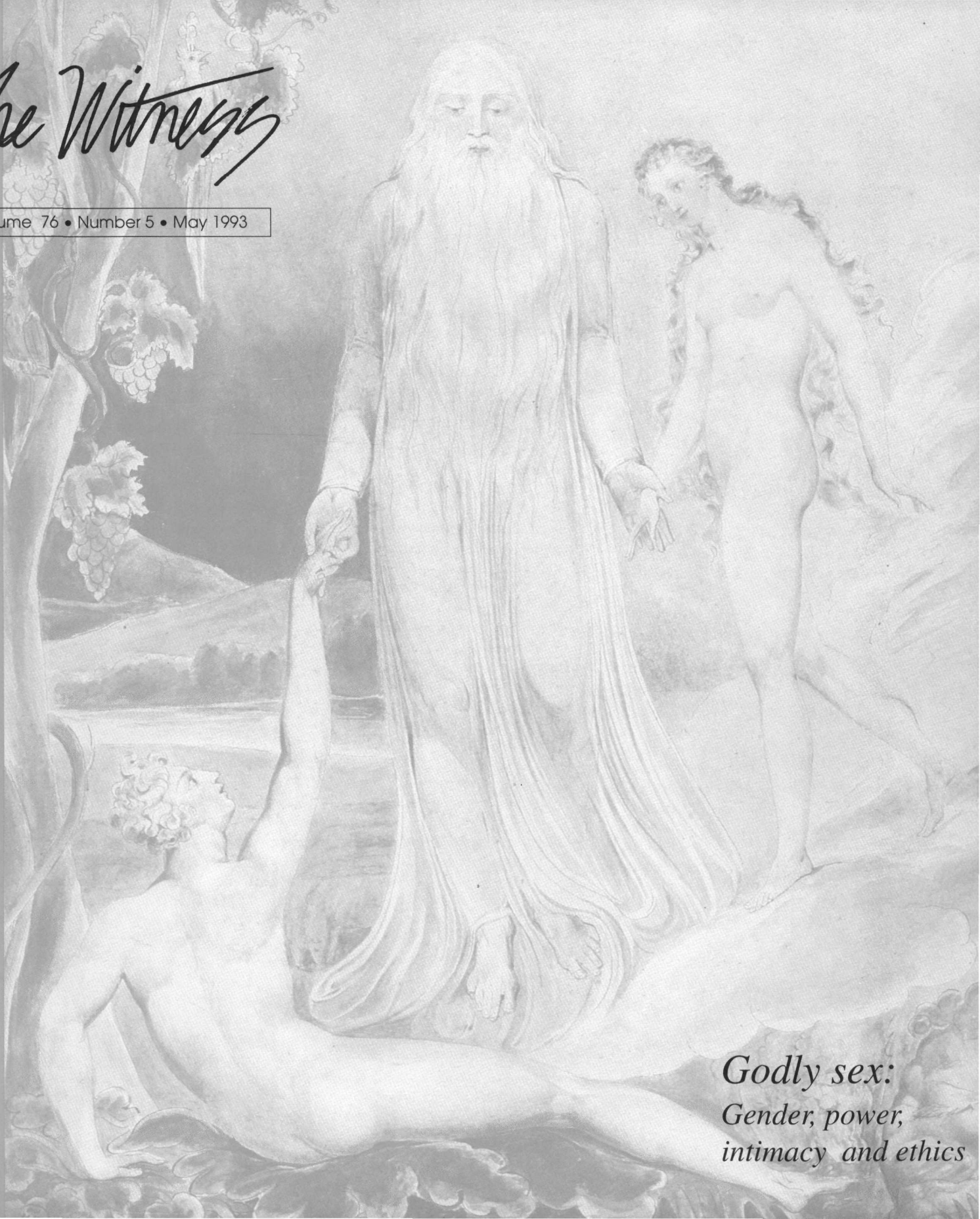


The Witness

Volume 76 • Number 5 • May 1993



*Godly sex:
Gender, power,
intimacy and ethics*

Perfection

YOUR INTERVIEW WITH Verna Dozier was so helpful — she is a beautiful woman.

Her comment, "... I think about this — I'm under judgement every time I write a check to the IRS, because with all my heart I oppose the weapons industry. But I know, not just intellectually, that check I send off is going to be used to support the weapons industry. I write that check out in sorrow ... but I write it." raises the uncomfortable question of praying for peace while paying for war and preparations for war.

More of us in the movement must take a step of faith, and say no to Caesar and yes to God by *refusing* to pay war taxes.

As April 15 approaches us yet again, we have the opportunity to say no to the empire and to Caesar. Perhaps a good redirection of some of our war taxes would be to contribute to the work and voice of *The Witness*?

Enclosed fine \$10 of refused war taxes, to contribute to the fine magazine you encourage so many of us with month after month. Thanks for helping me by your work and *witness*.

**John Bell
Kalamazoo, MI**

FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS I have been reading copies of *The Witness* that are provided to seminar-

ians here at General. I have much appreciated the voice of *The Witness* which continues to tackle hard, and oftentimes divisive issues. I also appreciate the editorial board's attempts to balance readers' views that are expressed in the Letters Column — even when such views are deemed offensive and insulting.

It would be encouraging if Raymond Lawrence's letter of March 1993 receives negative reactions beyond this letter. I am offended and insulted by his patronizing and insensitive response to Holly Elliott's article on sexual harassment and abuse by clergy.

Contrary to what Mr. Lawrence states, it is possible for unwelcome deep kissing and body contact to infringe on someone's space. One does not need to be classified as a "social retard" (that label unto itself is appalling) to

be so overcome by fear as to become paralyzed. When one is in a relationship involving a power imbalance and where one *thinks* there is trust, one easily can lose sense of where boundaries are. I reiterate that it is the person with the power who holds the responsibility of maintaining proper boundaries. In the case of Miriam, it was her parish priest's responsibility to observe boundaries. Mr. Lawrence appears to have missed the point.

I hope that readers will recognize Mr. Lawrence's demeaning letter for what it is worth: a letter from a frightened male who is desperately attempting to maintain the status quo — which includes sexual harassment — for those invested in a patriarchal and hierarchical system.

**Lee Alison Crawford
New York, NY**

RAYMOND J. LAWRENCE, JR., (Letters, 3/93) objects to the account of "an incompetent professional" forcibly kissing "a socially inept naif" ("Sexually Assaulted by the Shepherd," 12/92) because it is "a highly peculiar example" of sexual aggression.

Sexual aggressors occupy all classes of society, all age levels, and include both stupid and brilliant persons. They violate their victims by unwanted fondling and kissing, incest, pederasty, rape (acquaintance, stranger, homosexual, oral, sodomy, foreign object, *et alia*) with victims ranging from infants to senile patients.

Two moral crimes are involved in sexual assault: betrayal of trust placed in the attacker by the victim (most rapists are known to their victims), and use of either physical power or social dominance to overwhelm their victims.

Kissing a woman against her will is not rape, but it is sexual aggression. A vulnerable woman can be devastated by the act. If such an incident is too bizarre for a rational discussion of sexual aggression in the church, can Mr. Lawrence define some *normal* examples of sexual abuse?

**Edward P. Allen
Mashpee, MA**

WHAT A SURPRISE AND WHAT a very discerning story about Quentin Crisp. Quentin Crisp is a very extraordinary person, very sharp, also an excellent movie critic. It was

good to see him in print.

**David McReynolds
New York, NY**

I FOUND THE MARCH *SHORT TAKES* particularly stimulating. However, because credits for each item are brief, they sometimes leave one's curiosity dangling, i.e.: how do I find out more, read more, contact the person highlighted? I would be interested in knowing if *The Witness* also serves as a clearing house for referrals via phone, fax or mail.

I would be very interested in reading more of *Ministry of Money*, from which you excerpted "Reasons for Working."

Most especially, the two "Takes" on the situation of mass raping in Bosnia-Herzegovina were very much appreciated. Combined with the *Detroit Free Press* editorial, I found the spark of direction to take my feelings of private horror and turn them into feelings of responsibility. Prayer and a lot of help from the Holy Spirit guided me through various decisions about my approach to action. To that end, I enclose a flyer I created and am distributing by mail.

**Deborah Rochon
Southfield, MI**

[Ed. Note: We are glad to provide addresses of publications and organizations upon request.]

I WOULD LIKE TO JOIN THE MANY writers in your "Letters" section and congratulate you on a fine publication. Responsible publishing includes material often viewed as controversial, unpopular and biased. Thank you for including all "points of view" in your magazine. Too often we find forms of censorship in the media. Everyone's opinion should be welcome and should be heard. Never will we all agree on any one issue. That's what makes the world an interesting place. Our diversity is our salvation. Mutual respect, honesty and peace are three things we *MUST* work towards in this world.

Your very interesting article on "Skinheads" (3/93) was a good example of a controversial topic. This alarming trend is running rampant all over our world. By spreading the word through an article such as this, we can all work towards understanding the needs of violent gangs and what we can do to



work towards peaceful activism.

Another striking article appeared on page 19 (same issue). The column, entitled "Bailing out, digging in," reports there is now a schism in the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States. The new group, the Episcopal Synod of America, has separated from the former group. As the article continues, other conservative groups within the original (PECUS) organization are focusing their attention on "homosexuality." When will church leaders come to realize God's involvement in sexual orientation? When will the absurd notion that homosexuality is a "choice" stop? When will churchgoers wake up and realize that being gay, lesbian or bisexual is a given — no different than being born as a left-handed person. Fortunately, left-handedness is no longer dealt with as a sickness or disease. The day is at hand to begin dealing with homosexuals in the same respectful way. No evidence exists showing homosexuals are *not* fit to lead, minister, prophesy, administer sacraments, hold office, serve in the military, and/or set an example for the rest of the world by living a loving, responsible life. Sexual orientation has nothing to do with being a respectful human being and it has nothing to do with being a Christian. After all, Jesus was not one to follow absurd rules and regulations set forth by those in power at the time. He marched to a very different drummer. Thank God he did!

Jayson Rod Engquist
Weston, CT

Witness Forum

I WRITE AS A RETIRED BISHOP — Iowa — in response to the dialogue you initiated with Trinity seminary. That, it seems to me, is just what we need. I, for one, am grateful to you for conceiving and initiating the idea. Bill Frey deserves some credit for sticking with it as well. I thought the account in *The Witness* was superb.

Walter C. Righter
Keene, NH

I WOULD LIKE TO OFFER my appreciation for your presence at Trinity Episcopal Seminary during *The Witness* conference. Although we clearly do have areas of disagreement, it was helpful to come together

and encounter each other as people, rather than as stereotypes. The path to reconciliation within our church may indeed be a difficult one, but only when we learn to view each other for who we are instead of marginalizing one another will there be any hope for honest, even if painful, healing within the body of Christ.

Kathy Phillips
Ambridge, PA

I'M WRITING TO EXPRESS MY REGRET that I participated in the conference held by *The Witness* at Trinity. More than regret, I want you to know that I have had to repent to God for a cowardly, unprotesting acceptance of the plans for the conference and for cowardice at the conference itself.

The god worshiped by many, if not most, of the people in *The Witness* constituency is not the God I worship. Your god apparently does not want herself or itself referred to with masculine pronouns. My God has revealed Himself in the writings of Holy Scripture as one who may be spoken of as "He" or "Him."

Your god accepts those who engage in abominable sexual practice without requiring repentance and amendment of life. My God is holy; He requires that I repent of that which He has declared to be sin.

Your god allows you to consort with whatever spirits may be encountered through animistic rituals and prayer. My God is jealous. He has commanded, "You shall have no other gods besides Me."

It was wrong — indeed, it was sinful — for our community to allow ourselves to be led in worship and prayer by those who worship another god. It was sinful of us to discuss sin with people who are proud of sin, and who are defiantly unrepentant. We know full well from Scripture that those who are practicing abominable sin and who are boldly unrepentant must be excluded from a fellowship of Christian believers. It was wrong for us to discuss sexual perversion as if it were no more than a clash of opinions, when we know what our God has spoken.

It became shamefully clear that our knowledge of the Scriptures is deficient, since the debates which occurred did not center around the meaning of specific texts.

There is one true God, the creator of all things. He has offered us what we do not deserve — forgiveness of sins and eternal life, through Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son.

Peter Barry
Ambridge, PA

THOUGH YOU HAVE RECEIVED at least one personally insulting and abusive letter from a Trinity student, I hope you will not see it as a reflection of the entire school. A number of us appreciated your courage and openness in approaching Bill Frey about holding the 75th Anniversary celebration in Ambridge. The presence of *The Witness* at Trinity represented an important moment in the school's maturity in Christ — those of us who attended learned a great deal (whether we wanted to or not).

Having been exposed at a relatively young age to the Christian radicalism of the Catholic Worker movement, I confess I was surprised to discover the dominance of pantheistic, even monistic theology, over more traditional theology at the Conference. Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day could never conceive of effective social action proceeding out of anything but a passionately lived and firmly believed orthodox Christian faith. They believed in a Trinitarian God. Their faith drew on the Scriptures, the Gospels and prophetic writings in particular, for its dynamism. I'm not sure how they would have reacted to God described as a female "ground of being," a non-traditional Immanence. They would most likely have found the theology insufficient to sustain any commitment to cooperating with the Biblical God in making real the vision for us found in the Scriptures.

Daniel F. Crawford
Ambridge, PA

Witness criticism

I DO NOT LIKE YOUR MAGAZINE worth a damn but I feel that I cannot be well informed without it so keep on printing the articles I despise, think unfair and pejorative, believe to be incendiary And at times borderline in the truth department. As long as I am alive and have \$20, I will be a subscriber.

Sam T. Cobb
Charleston, SC

THE WITNESS

Since 1917

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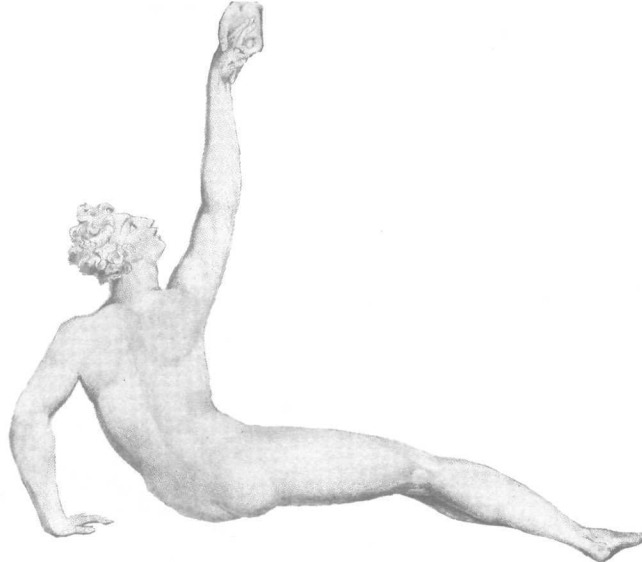


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Cover: *The Creation of Eve*, William Blake, c. 1803-05, Metropolitan Museum of Art, N.Y.

Sex, truth and God

In the beginning there was an inhaling breath. It was full, Wakan. Amazed by her beauty, there was an exhale of appreciation, Squan. Wakan and Squan were the female and male within the Great Spirit. Through their love-making they created the world. —Twisted Hair
Metis Medicine Society

The one thing no one in the church tells the truth about is sex. There are elderly female parishioners for whom Jesus is not only Lord, but lover. They will never say so, but this accounts for their absolute resistance to inclusive language.

— Douglas Evett, St. Clare's Church, Ann Arbor, MI

In many traditions the male and female aspects of God wrestle and unite; their relationship is stormy and generative. A thing of power and beauty.

In Christian tradition, all-male visions of the Trinity stifle many of us. Some are content with petitioning for inclusive language. Others are resurrecting the Goddess. In the Goddess many women search for an organic appreciation of their own bodies, abilities

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is editor/publisher of *The Witness*. The first graphic is courtesy of **Visminas Co.**, P.O. Box 10189; Pittsburgh, Penn. 15232. The second graphic was provided by the **Nicaraguan Cultural Alliance and Quixote Center**, P.O. 5051; Hyattsville, Md., 20782.

and perspective. They are reweaving the web.

And there are men who are learning to curl into the recesses of the earth and to call her mother, reclaiming their feminine, shedding the skin of the white, male patriarch.



from *L'art de Bien Vivre et de Bien Mourir*, Paris, 1492

In Jungian and New Age circles there is a serious effort these days to bring the male and female into balance, to reconcile the archetypes within us in order to heal the world. They promise an experience of yin and yang, a chance to burn outward and to recede.

The Christian church has a harder time addressing the struggle between male and female and the need for intimacy, whether heterosexual or same-gender.

The language, the hierarchy and the focus of the church is male and in many ways deliberately exclusive of women. If the message is that God is male and woman is human, union between the two comes in the form of Zeus' disguises and rapes. Zeus' self-understanding will be better served by a struggle with Hera, someone his own size.

Despite efforts to raise Mary to superhuman proportion, she is not always helpful in unearthing the ferocious love and destructive powers of women.

Marital union within the Christian church for too long has been one in which the church and state coalesced to ensure the husband's authority. He was head of household and surrogate for Christ. As depicted in the woodcut here, it's a mold so unforgiving that it would seem to invite a prayer to Isis even from the lips of those who fit the standard.

The variations and gradations in our experience are skirted by the church or condemned.

In contrast there are the hugely-publicized forays of John Spong, Bishop of Newark, into the area of sexual ethics. Spong's attempt to redefine sin has been rightly criticized as an effort to redefine the ordinary as sacred, a sleight of

editor's note



Baila! Baila!

Edda Maria Bird

hand that curtails God's freedom to care about how we receive and treat one another.

that is exclusively heterosexual, but one that insists on monogamy and fidelity, a standard that conforms to the contours of

If the feminine images of God in scripture formed frescoes in our minds — the God who feeds us at her breast, the woman searching for the lost coin — maybe women would not project spiritual power onto men. Maybe men would observe the holy and furious strength in women.

When a marriage is free and unencumbered by patriarchal assumptions — when a woman knows her independence and passion and is loved — this may mirror the image of God.

Diluted ethics that conform to the situation, blessing any and all attempts at intimacy, don't hold a candle to the stormy and generative love of God.

I want the church to hold a standard, not one

God's jealousy. If God is one God who demands my heart and soul and mind, I want the standard for sexual intimacy to be nothing less.

And I do not mind that I have sometimes been outside that standard.

We can walk the perimeters of the distance God can call and count on God's love still. Everywhere in scripture there is affirmation of the prodigal, the lost coin, those who run hot or cold but never tepid.

Choosing to step outside the standard is not to step outside God's love, but it is to hold God at arm's length. There's little to gain by redefining the standard as though that arm's length detachment is God's preference.

I know when I am choosing my own wisdom over God's and I know how it feels when my name is called and I jump to serve. I do not want the two confused.

However, if the church holds to monogamy, as I hope it does, it still needs to give Christians the tools by which to try to share intimacy ethically. These are critical in a sacred union. They are also base line in discerning how to explore intimacy outside of a vowed relationship without doing major damage to one's soul or to the other's. In this way, Spong's work and the work of others can be useful to the church.

TTW

Song of Songs, 2:2-7

Bridegroom: A lily among thorns is my dearest among the maidens.

Bride: Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among young men. To sit in his shadow is my delight, and his fruit is sweet to my taste. He has taken me into the wine garden and given me loving glances.

Sustain me with raisins, revive me with apples; for I am faint with love. His left arm pillows my head, his right arm is around me.



Bridegroom: I charge you, maidens of Jerusalem, by the spirits and the goddesses of the field: Do not rouse or awaken love until it is ready.

Editor's note

To demonstrate that we have good boundaries, we want to say that while we encourage people to be more honest about their sexuality in church settings, we are not asking that graphic descriptions of readers' sexuality be sent to *The Witness*.

Also, we have received very few responses to our request for fiction, children's art and children's writing.

We continue to welcome these submissions and will file them for eventual use. We also plan to publish requests for these in other publications.

How to Get a Baby

by Judith Ortiz Cofer

To receive the waiwaia (spirit children) in the water seems to be the most usual way of becoming pregnant ... They come along on large tree trunks, and they may be attached to seascum and dead leaves floating on the surface.

— Bronislaw Malinowski

Baloma: The Spirits of the Dead in the Trobriand Islands

Go to the sea
the morning after a rainstorm,
preferably
fresh from your man's arms —
the *waiwaia* are drawn
to love-smell.
They are tiny luminous fish
and blind. You must call
the soul of your child
in the name of your ancestors:
*Come to me, little fish, come
to Tamala, Tudava, come to me.*
Sit in shallow water
up to your waist until the tide
pulls away from you
like an exhausted lover.
You will by then
be carrying new life.
Make love that night,
and every night,
to let the little one
who chooses you know
she is one with your joy.

Puerto Rican-born poet and novelist Judith Ortiz Cofer is the author a collection of poetry, *Terms of Survival* (Arte Publico Press, 1987) and a novel, *The Line of the Sun* (University of Georgia Press, 1989). These poems were taken from *Puerto Rican Writers at Home in the USA* (Seattle: Open Hand Publishing, Inc., 1991).



Spring

for Sue Ellen Thompson

On windy days
she wears a skirt woven
from sighs
by an old Indian woman
going blind.
It wraps around
her thighs like a lover
on his knees
pleading obsession.
The design (faded now)
must have been a chase: a shower
of arrows and a deer
leaping out of reach,
set in motion when she walks
past my window
on a windy day
smoothing her skirt down
as it tries to fly
away like a bright blue
kite with a woman in it.

God's vulnerability in our sexual choices

by Gene Robinson

Think for a moment about your growing up and the messages you received about sexuality. For most of us, it will come as no surprise that we have a difficult time with sexuality. At best, we were confused about it; at worst, we were downright frightened. And indeed, I believe that fear is precisely the message we were meant to get: NOT that sexuality is a wonderful, wonderful gift from God, meant for our joy and pleasure, and a means of communication with a beloved — but, rather, that sexuality is a horrifying Pandora's box that must be kept sealed up, lest the demons of desire and passion come rushing out, like so many uncontrollable banshees, to devour our hearts and souls.

My favorite of these crazy-making messages we are given (first articulated for me by James Nelson) is this: "Sex is dirty; save it for someone you love." We're told that sex is this horrifying threat that must be tamed and controlled. Indeed, we're taught, sometimes explicitly, but mostly through dirty jokes and innuendo, that sex is sinful and dirty and disgusting. Then, somehow, in some magical and mysterious way, on our wed-

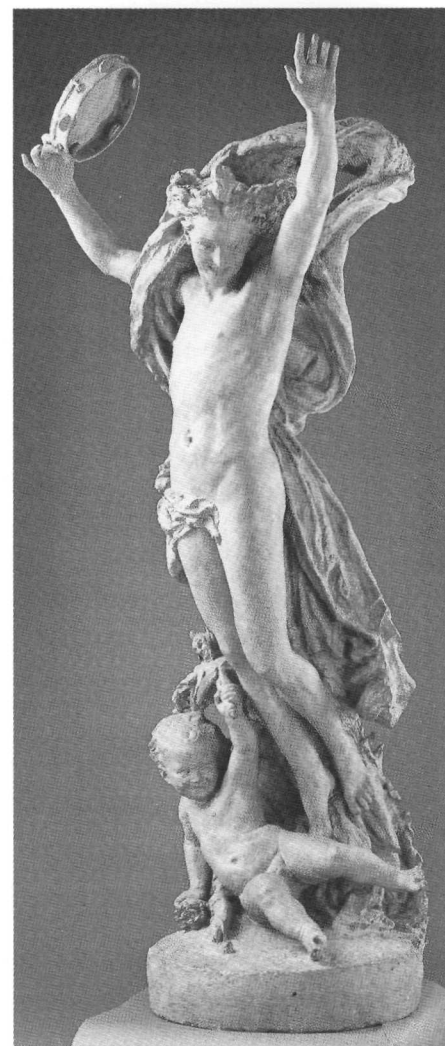
ding night, it is supposed to become this wonderful, easy thing. How can this fact of life, this force inside us, that has produced more guilt than anything else in our growing up, suddenly become the joyful gift of God in marriage? That kind of turnaround is crazy-making.

Now, in defense of parents everywhere — including myself, now faced with a 14-year-old daughter who speaks and looks and acts about 22! — I must say that such a characterization of sexuality as a beast-to-be-tamed, rather than a gift to be cherished and enjoyed, comes from fear. I love both my daughters very, very much. I don't want them to be hurt. I fear that they will make themselves vulnerable to deep and lasting pain. And because the potential for hurt is so great in matters sexual, it is tempting to paint sexuality with a frightening brush — in hopes of scaring them off.

There is hardly a more vulnerable place to be than in a sexual relationship. There is hardly a better place to experience both the joys and the dangers of vulnerability. In few places is "love of self and love of neighbor" more important. When I do AIDS education and people ask whether or not I believe in abstinence before or outside of marriage or a committed relationship, I can say "you bet I do."

We need to talk to kids and 30-year-old singles and 40- and 50-year-old divorcees about how vulnerable lovemaking makes you. Not just vulnerable to pregnancy and AIDS, but to damage to one's self-esteem, disappointment, and feelings of incredible loneliness in the midst of the most intimate physical connection two people can have.

Gene Robinson is Canon to the Ordinary for the Diocese of New Hampshire and Executive Secretary of Province 1. He serves as a consultant to the committee on the A104sa resolution of the 1991 General Convention, which called the church "to work to reconcile the discontinuity between this teaching [that physical sexual expression is appropriate only within the life-long, monogamous union of husband and wife] and the experience of many members of this body."



Le Génie de la Danse, Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, c. 1872

Detroit Institute of Arts

It seems to me that the vulnerability inherent in God's own creation of the world and in God's vulnerability in becoming flesh in Jesus Christ is a central key in unlocking the power and meaning of human sexuality. The spiritual and physical union between two people mirrors the relationship God desires with humankind. The longing of a husband for a wife, a lover for the beloved, who has been away for a few days or a few weeks, mirrors God's longing for us. A lover's sheer delight in the body of the beloved reflects God's sheer delight in us when

we give our attention and our love and our hearts back to God.

When one fully gives oneself to another in lovemaking, it's a participation in the kind of self-giving love that God IS.

If vulnerability is at the heart of the nature of God, and if one of the ways we come close to God is through the vulnerability we share in our intimate sexual relations, what can we say about those interactions? Are there standards by which we can judge our intimate sexual relationships? Let me offer three criteria: equality, authenticity and appropriate vulnerability.

First, I believe that any healthy, moral relationship which is sexually intimate requires equality of the lovers. For me, sexual partners need to be on the same footing for their sexual acts to be moral. Virtually every sexual problem that has been brought to me as a priest, most of the pain and discomfort and disease in the sexual relationships I've counseled inside and outside of marriage, has been related to this inequality. Someone feels pushed too far, unable to say no; someone feels powerless in the face of the partner; someone feels like the entire responsibility for the sexual relationship is on his/her shoulders.

At its worst, this inequality actually defines the abuse and sexual misconduct we hear so much about. At its root, child abuse is wrong because of the unequal power held by virtually any adult over any child—an unequal-

ity of power, experience, perspective. Sexual misconduct by clergy or professional counselors is misconduct precisely because it is an inappropriate and im-

moral use of the inherent inequality of the counselor/counselee relationship. Rape is by definition a circumstance of inequality. Incest is the manipulation of someone through fear of physical or emotional violence or the fear of the loss of an important family relationship. The inequality of these settings indeed *defines* the immorality.

Let me point out that while most of us are not guilty of such gross immoralities of inequality, we should not congratulate ourselves too quickly. The overt and covert inequalities between men and women in this society carry over into our relationships and marriages, and until we are willing to look at that, we'll never get very far in our discussions about wholesome sexual relationships between equals.

I would maintain that authenticity is another way of judging those relationships. By authenticity, I mean that what we exhibit on the "outside" with our bodies is reflective of what is going on "inside" with our spirits. For Christian moral relationships of sexual intimacy, there must be an integrating of one's life,

so that the "outward and physical" actions of sexuality become the sacramental signs of an "inward and spiritual grace."

Finally, I would propose as a third criterion Karen Lebacqz's notion of "appropriate vul-

nerability" [in "Appropriate Vulnerability: A Sexual Ethic for Singles," *The Christian Century*, 5/6/87]. This notion builds upon the earlier standard of equal-

ity, and gives us some direction with respect to specific levels of depth in our sexual relationships. For a sexual relationship to be healthy and moral, there must be a shared and equal vulnerability.

Each partner must be a willing participant in the level of vulnerability that is chosen — unmanipulated and unthreatened.

In addition, Labacqz maintains that in order

to be proper, "the level of sexual expression should be commensurate with the level of commitment in the relationship." In other words, you don't have intercourse on the first date — even if you are equally vulnerable. It is simply crazy and dangerous to make oneself so vulnerable to hurt in a relationship in which no trustworthiness is present. "Appropriate vulnerability" is a criteria by which to question intimate sexual relations between very young people, between casual acquaintances or for anyone *not* in a relationship that includes a mutual commitment to love, honor and trust the other and, in turn, to BE trustworthy. **TW**

The spiritual and physical union between two people mirrors the relationship God desires with humankind.

A lover's sheer delight in the body of the beloved reflects God's sheer delight in us when we give our attention, our love and our hearts back to God.

Requesting Art

Creative peacemakers' responses to the Persian Gulf War are sought for compilation. Please send examples of your art, poetry, storytelling, writing, music, drama, etc. to Patricia Lay Dorsey, 86 Kerby Road, Grosse Pointe, Mich. 48236 or call her at (313) 886-0967.

Sex in God's house

an interview with Margo Maris and Katherine Ragsdale

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann: Do you have a shared definition of what constitutes clergy sexual exploitation?

Margo Maris: Clergy sexual exploitation is taking advantage of other people's vulnerability. When a person seeks to understand how God is working in their lives and the clergyperson to whom they come turns the person's spiritual vulnerability into sexual activity, that is crossing into exploitation.

Katherine Ragsdale: We're really talking about people abusing power in relationships with other adults, taking advantage of power imbalances.

J.W-K.: What's the church's track record on this issue? And what's at stake when the church doesn't deal openly with it?

M.M.: Until three years ago, the church — in confronting exploitation, abuse or harassment — was putting things under the rug, not dealing with it, afraid of it. I want to believe they were afraid and didn't know how to handle it any other way.

K.R.: I think they have not understood the dynamics. They have addressed it well or badly in terms of adultery or promiscuity, everything except the real issue which is the power dynamic and the potential for exploitation. It took women like Margo and Marie Fortune [see *Witness* 12/92] and others to frame the issue in such a way that they could begin to understand it.

M.M.: We needed to frame it — not in sociological/psychological terms, but in theological/ethical terms. People were using incest terms, but we needed to own it in spiritual language. It took a while for us, as women, to use the information that we had been given in seminary to retake the understanding of scripture so that women could be seen as courageous rather than as the teller of the secret.

J.W-K.: When you say we need to move beyond psychology do you mean the problem is not one priest's neurosis?

M.M.: Yes, and it's not just "you hurt somebody's psyche."

Margo Maris is Canon to the Ordinary in the Diocese of Minnesota. Ordained for 15 years, Maris has served for over eight years as an advocate for those who have experienced clergy sexual exploitation. She is co-chair of the sexual exploitation task force set up by the last General Convention.

Katherine Ragsdale is former advocacy coordinator for the Women in Mission and Ministry office at the national church center. She is a member of the advisory board for Marie Fortune's Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence.

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is editor/publisher of *The Witness*.



The ladder of divine ascent, Monastery of St. Katherine, Mount Sinai, 12th c.

When this happens a clergyperson has robbed them of their soul.

K.R.: For the victims there's a lot at stake, but for the church as a whole ... the integrity of our ministry is compromised.

M.M.: Let's just talk about the eucharist. If there hasn't been a change of heart and behavior on the part of the priest then there is no reconciliation and there is no integrity in receiving the sacraments. That's what is at stake.

J.W-K.: What leads clergy to be at risk?

K.R.: The warning signs of people who are at risk of being abusers are all the classic traits that get people success in the church — overwork, isolation, perfectionism, never saying no, being there 24 hours a day regardless of circumstances. This super-priest/saint syndrome is exactly the sort of thing that sets people up to be at risk for becoming offenders. We need a better understanding of clergy wellness.

J.W-K.: Say a little bit about why that's true.

M.M.: When clergy are overworked, they don't have clear

definitions about who they are and what their talents are. They are under stress and unable to keep appropriate boundaries. We have clergy who are acting as therapists and spiritual directors who have no training. They don't have the internal authority to say no. They underestimate how loved by God they are.

K.R.: When you find all the meaning of your life in your work then any time that's not going well, it takes a terrible toll on your self-esteem. There is nothing to boost your self-esteem better than being adored and falling in love. People who are feeling centered and good about themselves are better able to see through these sort of things and avoid them.

J.W-K.: There are, of course, legal implications if the church doesn't deal with clergy sex exploitation.

M.M.: The church will face lawsuits and be forced to pay insurance claims, but there is another way of meeting the needs of victims. The church can do this by paying attention and working with the offender and the person who has been hurt.

K.R.: Margo deals with a lot more victims than I do, but my understanding from her and from my colleagues in other denominations is that the overwhelming majority of victims sue only as a last resort. What they really want is to confront the offender, to make sure no one else is going to have to suffer, to have some sense of being heard by the church and some sense that justice and reconciliation work is being done.

J.W-K.: The church currently includes some priests who are gross perpetrators of exploitation. Obviously identifying them is a priority. But can either of you describe a situation in which a layperson has felt victimized, but you do not agree? And whose responsibility do you believe it is to make such a determination?

M.M.: I've done close to 400 of these and I haven't had anybody who hasn't been telling the truth.

When clergy are overworked, they don't have clear definitions of who they are, they are unable to keep appropriate boundaries. They don't have the internal authority to say no.

— Margo Maris

I can tell you that I know of no diocese or synod in the American churches that knows how to do an appropriate investigation. There is no clear process in Christendom for determining what should go to ecclesiastical trial or what should be disciplined. The best we can do at this point is to listen to people and maybe have a psychological exam of the alleged offender. The process has been left up to the bishop or to an informal committee, like a grand jury.

K.R.: I heard one story where someone was accused of flirting

and when the accuser came forward, the two people talked and the accuser said, "You're right. I was projecting." Unfortunately the person who was accused is still dealing with the repercussions, but I'm with Margo, at this point the cost of coming forward is so high that it's hard to imagine people [fabricating charges].

J.W-K.: What do you feel are the parameters for clergy/parishioner relationships? Can there be intimacy?

One of the things that scares clergy away from these conversations is the fear that we're saying, "If you're attracted to a parishioner you are in serious trouble and have violated ethical standards." The reality is everybody has been attracted to a parishioner.

— Katherine Ragsdale

K.R.: It's tricky because it's a professional relationship but ministerial relationships imply a greater degree of intimacy than the average professional relationship. What's clear is that romantic and sexually intimate relationships between clergy and people in the congregation are always suspect because of the power dynamics. I'm not prepared to say that they are never appropriate.

M.M.: No, I'm not either.

K.R.: But they are always suspect. The burden of proof is to show that this relationship is okay in spite of the dynamic. People also have to do the work required to make it okay.

M.M.: Let me go to the second part of that question. Can there be intimacy? Intimacy lives on a continuum. For people to trust their vulnerability with another person, especially with their understanding of who God is in their life, there has to be intimacy because with trust comes intimacy.

I would hate to see the relationship between a clergyperson and a parishioner become sterile, but how do you handle the intimacy? It can be done in an appropriate caring relationship. If it goes beyond that, when a parishioner and clergyperson get involved sexually, what the parishioner loses is a clergyperson.

J.W-K.: Is it all in the mind of the clergyperson whether a relationship is becoming sexually charged?

M.M.: It's something that clergypeople ought to check out with their supervisors and not put on the parishioners' shoulders. If they have those feelings, to be professional, they can talk with a supervisor, another clergyperson or do whatever the diocese works out for dealing with situations that tempt us.

K.R.: One of the things that scares clergy away from these

conversations is the fear that we're saying, "if you're attracted to a parishioner you are in serious trouble and have violated ethical standards." The reality is everybody has been attracted to a parishioner. Sooner or later in the course of your ministry you're going to be attracted to a parishioner. The question is do you then act and, if so, how? Supervision and colleagues are essential.

J.W.-K.: Is it appropriate to always presume that the clergyperson has the power advantage?

K.R.: I'd say there is always a power imbalance in every human relationship. It may vary from moment to moment ...

M.M.: ... and from place to place.

K.R.: A clergyperson in the work-setting with all the professional experience, educational credentials and sacramental mystery that people heap on the job, has a power advantage. On the other hand, there are other power dynamics too. Is this a woman priest in her first congregation? How does that compare to an older, white male professional who is the warden? The trick is understanding the volatility of power dynamics and their omnipresence. We don't talk about it enough.

J.W.-K.: It seems that in answer to a lot of these questions what you are recommending is not a formula so much as a process which allows people to speak to supervisors or to some form of community in order to discern what to do.

M.M.: Exactly.

J.W.-K.: Will doing this make clergy who confess an attraction to a parishioner become even more vulnerable?

M.M.: It isn't something that you take up in your local vestry meeting. You find a psychologist or another clergyperson or maybe a clergyperson from another denomination, a confessor.

J.W.-K.: I imagine that part of the motivation of bishops or people in the hierarchy who swept these stories under the rug was not wanting people to get incidental damage.

M.M.: And not knowing what to do. The church has difficulty understanding the division of power and authority. Bishops are called to be both disciplinarians and pastors to the clergy in their diocese around this issue. We have put too much authority and responsibility in one person. We don't have a judicial system, an executive system, an investigative system. We've left it to one person who can't do it without breaking all kinds of boundaries. We need to revise the structure of the way the church works in terms of discipline. The canons have got to be changed.

J.W.-K.: In what way?

M.M.: Currently, there's no legal way to discipline a bishop in these areas. The presiding bishop has taken it upon himself to develop a system so that people can be disciplined, but it isn't in the canons. Also, the statute of limitations in the canons prohibits bringing a case that's more than five years old. And most of

the cases people are remembering are more than five years old.

K.R.: It's not always a case of recovering old memories as much as seeing an experience through new eyes, all of a sudden having the tools to understand what happened to you.

J.W.-K.: How should the canons be changed?

M.M.: I'm not sure, but they do have to be changed because what they do is protect the clergy and the bishop, not keep safe the people of the church.

K.R.: I have a great deal of confidence in the Presiding Bishop's chancellor, David Beers, who is doing a first rate job of really listening to what people are saying.

J.W.-K.: David Beers had a chance to talk to the board of *The Witness* about policy changes in the Diocese of Washington. My understanding of what he said is that new clergy coming into that diocese will be put through a process in which their former spouses, associates and employers will be questioned as to their sexual practices.

K.R.: I think background checks are probably appropriate, but they've got to be limited to whether this person has ever been charged or convicted of infractions.

J.W.-K.: I'm sure some folks are afraid — and there were members of the board who expressed this concern to Beers — that a witch hunt may result in which every relationship you may ever have had is opened up.

K.R.: That's what we've got to be careful to avoid.

M.M.: When we do our background checks in the Diocese of Minnesota we're very clear that we're asking about inappropriate sexual behavior with *parishioners*. We're clear that other things that might be illegal are not what we're checking on.

J.W.-K.: But is that question too narrow? People may have had inappropriate or abusive relationships outside the parish setting that you might want to be aware of.

M.M.: Well, because in Minnesota we have a state law, we're doing it within the state law.

K.R.: We're discussing professional ethics involving sexual conduct and all we really need to inquire about is professional conduct. Your private sexual ethics may have a lot of bearing on your ministry and they may be something that the bishop wants to consider with you but that's not what this is about.

J.W.-K.: What are some examples of what bishops can do?

M.M.: Bishops can listen to people who have been hurt and let them know that what they experienced isn't behavior appropriate to a clergyperson and that the responsibility to keep appropriate boundaries is the clergyperson's. The bishop needs to find help for the victim, the offender, the offender's family and the congregation. One of the best things a bishop can do, when it's true, is let the congregation and other clergy in on the information, because they can't heal from something they don't know.



The Dream
by Marc Chagall, 1939

The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.

K.R.: That's a good after-the-fact list. There are also before-the-fact things a bishop can do like promoting clergy wellness, promoting collegial, educational and reflection opportunities to help keep people from getting in these kinds of binds. The bishop can support clergy who try to move out of the 24-hour-saint ministry (which is hard to do because congregations like it).

A bishop can establish clear procedures so people know whom they can talk to, what's expected or required of them and what will happen if they are accused or if they choose to accuse.

M.M.: Our bishop will not install anyone as a rector or priest-in-charge unless they have a job description and a contract that outlines days off, continuing education, money for continuing education, supervision, money availability ...

J.W-K.: I've heard people suggest that focusing on the need for boundaries is restrictive and that what may actually be necessary is a reconsideration of ordination: "If the power balance is skewed then let's eliminate ordination."

K.R.: You could make a case for it. I'm not sure it's going to solve this problem. Assuming somebody in the congregation is there for you when you are in a time of crisis, that person is still going to have a responsibility not to abuse your vulnerability at that moment. If somebody's up in front giving the sermon and you are impressed out of your mind and lose all perspective that person has a responsibility not to take advantage of that.

J.W-K.: This conversation focuses on clergy people because

they work for and represent the church, but the issue has application for all relationships. What happens if members of the vestry become involved with people in the parish?

M.M.: One of the most poignant stories I've ever heard was a woman who realized that when she was about four, when the minister would start to preach, she would go out and get a drink of water. The usher used to raise her up to the drinking fountain and fondle her. There's somebody who was in church, in a position of responsibility, who took advantage of this little girl.

J.W-K.: Is the best that we can hope for that seminaries will teach ethical dialogue and it will then trickle down through alert clergy people into parishes?

K.R.: We've got to train parishioners ...

M.M.: We've got to go out and talk to lay people about preventing this kind of thing by the way they treat their clergy, by the way they treat themselves. The internal authority of who God is in your life has got to be developed; it isn't Father So-and-so who is the image of God. We've got to start training people to be responsible for their own spiritual development.

J.W-K.: It also means people will have to be willing to talk about their sexuality in church which hasn't been true.

K.R.: Perhaps even scarier, people have got to face an absence of hard, firm, across-the-board answers and live in the ambiguity of making ethical decisions.

TW

The evolution of a men's movement has met with criticism by some feminists who feel that, at best, men are trying to have a movement too—as if it were a club to join. Or, at worst, men are fashioning a supportive environment for retrenching patriarchal, and probably violent, male culture. Others argue that if men are going to be able to reshape their identities—in resistance to the culture—they will need time apart as has been true for many ethnic groups, women, lesbians and gay men. This article is a personal account of one man's participation in "men's work."

I became involved in what has been called the men's movement (participants now prefer calling it "men's work") three years ago when a friend invited me to participate in a men's weekend called *Woodland Passage*. The weekend spanned the first Sunday of Advent and I wondered whether I could rationalize (to myself at least) an absence from my parish on a day so significant in Anglican liturgical tradition.

We gathered on a clear, cold Thursday evening in late November at a rustic retreat center in Michigan. Most of us were strangers to each other, some coming from as far as New York and Washington State. Some gay members of a men's support group that I belong to were present and I wondered how inclusive this gathering of 30 (presumably mostly straight) men would be.

We danced and beat the drums. We touched, held each other and massaged each other's bodies. We wept

as we shared stories of pain and abuse. We cried for absent and too often brutal fathers. I shared the dynamic intensity of living with two independent and powerful women: I am husband to one and father of the other. We made masks and talked about the masks we often hid behind. There was ritual, movement, tears and laughter, but most of all we shared our stories. Some claimed that the week-



Headwrappers

Betty LaDuke

Men's work

by David Brower

end was the first time in years they didn't feel ashamed to be men. Some gay men said this was the first prolonged encounter they had had with straights where they could be themselves, not ruled by anger or fear.

At the closing eucharist, a baritone voice read the evocative imagery of *Song of Songs*' portrayal of a man:

*My beloved is fair and desirable,
a paragon among 10,000.*

His head is gold, finest gold.

*His locks are like palm fronds,
black as the raven.*

His eyes are like doves beside pools of water, in their setting bathed as it were in milk. His cheeks are like beds of spices, terraces full of perfumes; his lips are lilies, they drop myrrh. His arms are golden rods set with topaz, his belly a plaque of ivory adorned with sapphires. His legs are pillars of marble, set on bases of finest gold; his aspect is like Lebanon, noble as cedars. His mouth is sweetness itself, wholly desirable. Such is my beloved, such is my darling.

After the weekend, several of us, most already members of support groups, dreamed of gathering more regularly. Out of our collective mus-ing was born the "Men's Wisdom Council of Detroit," a monthly gathering of 100 men.

The Wisdom Council provides space (which many call sacred space) for men to relate as brothers in a non-competitive, non-hierarchical environment. The council is essentially leaderless. Any member can volunteer to present a program.

We meet in a circle with the talking stick, percussion instruments and other sacred objects in the center. Meetings begin with 30 minutes of drumming and dance. It is essential for grounding those of us who are too often alienated from the earth

and our primitive ancestors.

One of the programs which has followed dancing was an invitation to tie small red ribbons to parts of our bodies that are or have been wounded. Several participants shared stories of childhood

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sexual abuse and rape, a phenomena men have only recently dared to share with therapists, let alone other men. (In my work as a pastoral counselor, I've known men who were physically abused or beaten as children, but it is new to me to learn the number of men who have been the victims of sexual abuse as children.) Other programs have challenged us to look at our roles in society: *men and violence* and another on *homophobia*.

Men's work is barely a decade old. In its earliest stages it has focussed on hearing each other's stories. It is helping men realize that it is okay to feel, to be vulnerable, to share stories of pain. It allows gay men and straight men to interact, to even be intimate with each other.

Feminists who chastise those involved in men's work for not providing a structural analysis of the root causes of male and female oppression are right. But, I would argue, that analysis will follow. Some groups already join women in combating the evils of patriarchy, for example the National Organization of Men Against Sexism, to which several members of the Wisdom Council belong.

The New Male Manifesto

- I. Men are beautiful. Masculinity is life-affirming and life-supporting. Male sexuality generates life. The male body needs and deserves to be nurtured and protected.
- II. A man's value is not measured by what he produces. We are not merely our professions. We need to be loved for who we are. We make money to support life. Our real challenge, and the adventure that makes life full, is making soul.
- III. Men are not flawed by nature. We become destructive when our masculinity is damaged. Violence springs from desperation and fear rather than from authentic manhood.
- IV. A man doesn't have to live up to any narrow, societal image of manhood. There are many ancient images of men as healers, protectors, lovers, and partners with women, men, and nature. This is how we are in our depths: celebrators of life, ethical and strong.
- V. Men do not need to become more like women in order to reconnect with soul. Women can help by giving men room to change, grow, and rediscover masculine depth. Women support men's healing by seeking out and affirming the good in them.
- VI. Masculinity does not require the denial of deep feeling. Men have the right to express all their feelings. In our society this takes courage and the support of others. We start to die when we are afraid to say or act upon what we feel.
- VII. Men are not only competitors. Men are also brothers. It is natural for us to cooperate and support each other. We find strength and healing through telling the truth to one another—man to man.
- VIII. Men deserve the same rights as women for custody of children, economic support, government aid, education, health care, and protection from abuse. Fathers are equal to mothers in ability to raise children. Fatherhood is honorable.
- IX. Men and women can be equal partners. As men learn to treat women more fairly they also want women to work toward a vision of partnership that does not require men to become less than who they authentically are.
- X. Sometimes we have the right to be wrong, irresponsible, unpredictable, silly, inconsistent, afraid, indecisive, experimental, insecure, visionary, lustful, lazy, fat, bald, old, playful, fierce, irreverent, magical, wild, impractical, unconventional, and other things we're not supposed to be in a culture that circumscribes our lives with rigid roles.

A Prayer by David Selvaraj

LORD.
I came to the dance.
Dazed by its splendour
mesmerized by the dancer.
Uplifted, humbled and crushed
LORD,
I stayed with the dance.

In awe and in fear
I sat still, captivated.
The thirst in his eyes
the beat of the drums
he stamped – he thundered
he roared
spitting out fire
Destroying, Consuming, Destroying
by his presence, by his dance
the demons, the demons, many
demons.
But Lord, I stayed with the dance.

Petrified
Fighting back the bile
I stayed with the dance.
And then,
As if satiated
by the destruction
the dancer emerged
A new Avatar.

Loving, caressing, serene
Graceful – Ah! so graceful
creating with every
flick of her fingers
The embodiment of love
drawing one and all to her bosom
Caressing, Nurturing, Caring
And I swayed to her rhythm
Engulfed by her love.

Soothed by the calm
lost in wonder and in praise,
I felt a nudge.
It was the dancer –
beckoning, beckoning,
beckoning me to join in the dance.
As if in a dream
one hesitant foot followed the other
faltering at first
Confident with each subsequent step.
But move I did
for choice I had none.

With the beat of the drum
the scales fell off.
My entire being awakened.
Moving in a frenzy
Keeping pace with the dancer

For it was then that I realized
the rhythm
the dancer
and the dance
Were you Lord.
The Creator and Creation
merging as one
inviting me to the Dance.

David Selvaraj lives in Bangalore, India.

Living feminist theology

by Julie A. Wortman

Penelope Jamieson, Bishop of the Diocese of Dunedin on the south island of New Zealand, became the first woman in the Anglican Communion to head a diocese in 1990.

Julie A. Wortman: Those who oppose women's ordination in the U.S. church say that the introduction of women into the ordained ministry is not just a matter of a change in polity, but a change in theology. Do you agree?

Penelope Jamieson: One of the advantages of being a woman priest and a woman bishop is that nobody every mistakes you for God! It's very liberating.

The only change in theology is a change from the rather rigid particularity of Victorian theological stances, both Anglo-Catholic and Evangelical, which is really where patriarchy found its political voice within church structures. Certainly, the New Zealand church was founded by the Victorian church, so any change there has been a change from the Victorian church.

Julie A. Wortman is an assistant editor of *The Witness*.

If you look at some of the ideas that shaped Anglicanism in its foundation times in the 17th century I don't think you'll find very much that is spiritually or theologically incompatible with the leadership of women.

J.W.: Before you were consecrated you talked about liking to do theology with other women in the church. With whom are you doing theology now?

P.J.: It's not as clear as it used to be in that the people I used to do theology with are scattered around the country. I think I'm beginning to do that sort of thing more with the women for whom I am bishop, and sometimes, when I have something to write, I pass it around for comment. Often the opportunities just aren't there, my schedule is so horrendous, but I try to maintain that accountability.

I have a good relationship with a number of Roman Catholic sisters, fortunately, and I'm involved with a couple of them in a sort of mutual supervision process, and that's very good. For that to work it needed to be with people who didn't have a stake in what I was doing. I couldn't do it with women for whom I was bishop



At her consecration, Penelope Jamieson was called into the sacred space and was escorted by a Maori woman elder wearing a feathered ceremonial headdress in Wellington, where she had served as a parish priest.

because they have too much of their own lives tied up in what I do, it matters too much to them. It needed to be somebody who could stand apart and for whom it didn't matter when I made mistakes. I have really experienced the separation from the community. But for me, as a feminist bishop, the challenge is not to let that boundary become a division.

J.W.: You have spoken about not having a role model as a woman bishop. Do you see yourself, as a woman, changing the church's understanding of the episcopal role, especially in terms of helping a hierarchical and patriarchal polity become less hierarchical and patriarchal?

P.J.: I would like to think we [women bishops and clergy] are changing the institution. But I know there are some women who would say that's not true and would say it's not true of me, as well. Whether it's a particularly oppressive streak in my own nature or whether it's the patriarchy reasserting itself or a mixture of both is something I constantly puzzle over, but I would have to be honest and say that is the experience of some women for whom I am bishop.



... of the cathedral according to Maori custom. She
... alape, along with friends and supporters from

South Light Studio

J.W.: ... That you're part of the patriarchy?

P.J.: That's right. That those hierarchical structures are inevitably abusive and are experienced as abusive. That's a constant and a considerably painful struggle for me. It's easy to claim a new thing but harder to *be* that in reality for people. Bishops traditionally confuse juridical and pastoral problems. But I don't think there's any need to act juridically at all. I don't see why the pastoral can't become the predominant mode of operating. I'm testing myself out on that one. It means that I make myself vulnerable with people and I rely on the quality and the nature of my pastoral interaction to get where I want. It might be thoroughly manipulative, but if I'm open about it, that's the way I'd rather go. I'd rather make a mistake in that way than in any other.

J.W.: Is it your impression that your colleagues tend not to be so pastoral?

P.J.: I think that at least some of my colleagues are very much in that mode. I don't think the fact that at this time in New Zealand's church life a woman has been ordained as a bishop is an accident.

Our church, in electing me, was saying something about the ways it wants the episcopacy to go. That's not only said about me as a woman, it's being said about other bishops, too. And other bishops are hearing that and responding to it. In some ways it's easier for me because people expect me to be doing a new thing and it's easier to claim that. I think it's harder for some of my male colleagues. They get the overload of patriarchy on them much more heavily than I do, and I find it bad enough.

J.W.: Do you find them coming to you for help?

P.J.: No.

J.W.: Do they go to each other for help?

P.J.: Yes.

J.W.: Why don't they come to you?

P.J.: There are two of them with whom I share a fairly reciprocal relationship. One of the reasons [for not having more such relationships], of course, is that I'm right down in the south of the country and I really am quite isolated geographically. But I also think it takes a long time for men to ask the advice of women. They're not quite sure that they want to follow my ideals and they certainly don't want to be seen to be a slave to women's ideals. They'd rather be seen to be working it out for themselves.

J.W.: Is feminist theology something you think men can ever understand?

P.J.: I find that very difficult. In theory, the answer would be yes. But, in practice,

I know of no man who understands it because theology comes out of experience and no man has the experience [from which feminism comes]. It's why I anticipate with some pleasure the time I could work on the theology of women's episcopacy with Barbara Harris [suffragan bishop of Massachusetts] and Jane Dixon

[suffragan bishop of Washington].

So I would like to claim feminist theology for women. The real trap is that it then says that feminist theology is not "normative" theology. But it's a matter of claiming the whole [theological] experience as normative for the whole church. That's one of the powerful things about women in the episcopacy. It actually [identifies] women's experience [with] the unity of the whole church. And, although I'm very hesitant to claim any priority for diocesan bishops, I think that [infusing feminist theology into the church] can be done more strongly by a diocesan bishop than by a suffragan. It is still possible [for suffragans] to be marginalized. I sometimes say, "I'm a living work of feminist theology" — I don't need to talk about it.

J.W.: Speaking of being marginalized, I understand that the Anglican Church in New Zealand has recently changed its constitution to give equal decision-making power to people of Maori, Polynesian and European [called *Pakeha*] descent, so that no one cultural group has to be forced to accept the views of another. [Maori Anglicans have their own non-geographic diocese and bishop, and Polynesian Anglicans are represented by the Diocese of Polynesia.]

P.J.: There are three [cultural] "strands" [in New Zealand], three *Tikanga*, and they are now equal in decision-making power within the church. For the past

ten years the Maori church has been responsible for its own ministry and mission, its own selecting and training of ordained people. No longer are they sending Maori students to theological college to have all the Maori educated out of them and to be made utterly useless to minister

*It's easy to claim a new thing
but harder to be that in
reality for people.*

— Penelope Jamieson

in their own communities. People that *Pakeha* in our church would never have dreamed of ordaining are being ordained and are thriving and growing into the priesthood in a model and vision that would never have worked for our communities, but works in Maori communities.

What the Maori are doing is a real challenge to the mission of the *Pakeha* church. It's humiliating to think that all the years of *Pakeha* benevolence and paternalism toward Maori people has actually stifled Maori mission. It's a real object lesson in how depowering controlling behavior is to a whole community, not just to individuals.

White people are in New Zealand by right of treaty and not by right of conquest. If we have to honor that treaty and claim the right to be there, then we have to behave as partners to that treaty and the terms of it and not as conquerors, which our numbers have always allowed us to do.

[The new *Tikanga* voting system addresses] the totally undemocratic nature of democracy for minority groups. Majority rule does not work for minority groups — they will always get outvoted. Majority rule is not the same thing as democracy.

J.W.: It's a kind of vote that can be called for, like a vote by lay and ordained orders in which a measure must pass in both orders to win approval?

P.J.: Yes. I doubt there are many times when we will actually vote by *Tikanga* (and we haven't yet), but voting is very symbolic. And often a *Tikanga*, I expect, will abstain from voting if it wants to allow [another cultural group] to do something that it doesn't want to be part of themselves. Abstaining is a powerful symbol of saying, "Yes, we are still part of the same church with you and we don't want to stop you from doing this, but don't think that we agree with it. You haven't

outvoted us." It's a very strong statement.

J.W.: Is that what happened when Bishop Wakahuihui Veroe [the bishop of Anglican Maori] voted against ratifying your election as bishop? I believe he said the Maori people had not yet decided whether women should be ordained.

P.J.: With my own consecration, the Maori church was outvoted because the old constitution was in force. Women share marginalization with the Maori people, but it's a measure of the trust that white women have placed in the constitution that they supported the *Tikanga* voting system even though women know the Maori could easily veto the election of another woman bishop.

J.W.: How would that work?

P.J.: If they took a *Tikanga* vote on it and the *Tikanga* Maori decided to vote no, then that election would not go through. We have changed the process of ratification so that it is now always done by General Synod, and a *Tikanga* vote could be used.

But the Maori people's negativity about women bishops is a cultural issue, not a theological issue. They're not saying, "We're right and you're wrong." It's not parallel to what's happening in your church. They're saying, "That's not what is effective and good ministry within our culture. It doesn't work for us to have women in that position, so don't ask us to ordain women yet."

One of the things that we white women have learned is that for Maori women the primary oppression is being Maori, not being a woman. Maori women do not want us white women to fight their battles, they don't want us to take on their struggle, because if we take on their struggle we ask them to divide against their own people. We have to respect that if we're going to avoid this competing oppression thing.

It's Maori women who will sort out the Maori position on women's ordina-

tion. That's not my struggle. People in my diocese have a tendency to get very angry at what they see as the Maori rejection of me and I have to keep saying that it's okay, it's not rejection. It's just difference and we have to find a way of living with difference.


J.W.: Is abortion a major issue in your church?

P.J.: Abortion hasn't been a debate in the country for a long time, although that is changing. The church hasn't really engaged in the debate this time around.

It's a relationship between law and morality that is at issue. I think that we belie individual moral choice when we say, "you cannot do this by law." I will continue to say it is not an ideal situation for a life, pre-birth, to be terminated. That's not an anti-abortion position, it's a matter of how I hope people order their lives.

J.W.: What is the situation with gay people in the church in New Zealand? Is there as much debate over the sinfulness of homosexuality, or about ordaining gay and lesbian people as there is in the U.S. church?

P.J.: The short answer is no. There are a number of gay clergy in our diocese, but none are living in a relationship. I've said to each of them that if they wanted to enter into a relationship, they would be naive to expect that it could be done without questions being raised and without their being ruffled. But I'm committed to doing my best to sort those out. I think they know I'll barrack [argue] for them if I think they're good priests — some are better than others.

In other dioceses in New Zealand there are clergy living in openly homosexual relationships. In each case the issue seems to depend upon whether they function first and foremost as a priest as a competent, caring, committed priest. And if they do that, the experience of our church is that people will stand by them. 

Erotic celibacy

by Marilyn Thie

Taken as a life stance, celibacy describes a posture or fundamental orientation toward the world rather than specific sexual acts—a sustained way of being in the world which pervades our many activities. It is one way of channeling sexuality, one path among others.

This reading of celibacy broadens the meaning of sexuality beyond genital activity to “embodied energy,” thereby disclosing the close connection between sexuality and spirituality that traditional dualistic thinking keeps separate. Expanding our understanding of sexuality to encompass all our embodied energies locates the source of our personal energy — physical, intellectual, spiritual, emotional — within our bodies.

A commitment to celibacy, then, means finding a variety of ways to tap the energy within our bodies. Rather than repress or avoid sexual energy as if it is forbidden to us as celibates, we must become comfortable and knowledgeable about our bodies; in close touch, literally and figuratively, with our bodies and the sexual energy embodied there.

Using a feminist reinterpretation of the concept “erotic” to reflect on the energies which empower women living celibately can elucidate both the physical and social bases of our commitments. We can live religious celibacy dynamically — strongly connected to others and the earth; caring intimately and gently; passionately engaged in liberating possibilities toward wholeness; transforming relations, attitudes and structures that separate and divide — by tapping and channelling the erotic energy we embody into these Gospel-centered concerns.

The erotic refers to creative energies deeply burrowed within our bodies, so deeply that they are in fact spiritual energies. These are powers of attraction and allurements that pull us toward certain persons, ideas, causes, things. Erotic energies urge us to become one with, attached to, that which attracts us. This explanation accounts for the deep pulls we feel, the passionate drives we experience, to invest ourselves in what we love. Rather than prescind from such feelings, women religious need to become more attuned to them, discerning how to channel our

Marilyn Thie is a Sister of Charity of New Jersey and Professor of Philosophy and Religion at Colgate University. The original paper, entitled “A Feminist Revisioning of Celibacy,” is available from the author. A longer version of this article appeared in *PROBE*, the newspaper of the National Assembly of Religious Women. NARW’s offices are at 529 S. Wabash, Suite 404, Chicago, Ill. 60605.



St. Theresa in Ecstasy, Gianlorenzo Bernini, Rome, 17th century

attractions into celibate energy. We need to acknowledge that it is these erotic energies which enable us to live deeply committed celibate lives.

Intellectual work, as the Greeks knew, has strong erotic dimensions — think of the struggle to birth yet unthought insights. More obvious is the erotic pleasure of working with others. The usual understanding of sexuality as a private activity between two people hides the erotic dimensions of working collectively, tapping the social passions which connect individuals within a community.

Individualizing, privatizing and genitalizing the erotic removes it as the root source of energy from many areas of our lives. This obscures the ways our embodied energy grounds our work, loving and spirituality. Perhaps more than others, people living religious celibacy know that our enthusiasm for work, our involvement in ministry, especially over long periods, is sustained by physical as well as spiritual sources.

TW



Kissing by Alex Grey, oil on linen, 66 by 44 inches

Soul progress

by Blaise Tobia and
Virginia Maksymowicz

“Soul” is a word that makes people — especially religious people — uncomfortable. Christians have often equated the carnal with sin — an equation that can lead to a denial of the integration of body and soul.

Artist Alex Grey insists the body and spirit are one. Along with his wife and collaborator, Allyson, Grey has created a range of artworks that probe the interconnections between the material and spiritual worlds.

Grey’s two series of paintings, “The Sacred Mirrors” and “Progress of the Soul,” created during the 1980s, come powerfully close to a visualization of the mystery of human existence.

By paying equal attention to what is seen (bodily surfaces) and to what is neither seen nor known (a tremendous and beautiful network of forces and energy that envelops us), he tries to make visible the transcendent aspect of human existence.

Alex and Allyson Grey speak of “a mysterious web of energy” tying together all of creation with God. Through brilliantly colored, meticulously rendered, life-size images, “Progress of the Soul” traces the cycle of human life within this context. From this series’ first painting, *Praying*, through *Kissing*, *Copulating*, *Pregnancy*, *Nursing* and *New Family*, Grey documents his and Allyson’s love for each other — including its carnal aspect — and the conception, birth and nurturing of their daughter. Exquisite structures of flesh and energy intertwine in each image, in Grey’s attempt to illustrate human love and its role in affirming life and creating life anew.

TV

I’m not uncomfortable thinking that I have a relationship to God and God is part of me and all beings and things. I’m not uncomfortable with the word. It does make many people uncomfortable though, like the word “love.” They’re close in meaning.

— Alex Grey

art and society

Blaise Tobia and Virginia Maksymowicz,
Philadelphia artists, edit the Art & Society
Section of *The Witness*.



Copulation by Alex Grey, oil on linen, 75 by 96 inches

Lectionary omissions

Jean Campbell, OSH

Scripture, although heavily influenced by patriarchal and hierarchical structure, contains a significant account of women in relationship to salvation history and the understanding of God in both masculine and feminine images and metaphors. Yet, these images, part of the Christian tradition, are largely unknown.

My mother has been a member of the Episcopal Church for over 65 years, attending Sunday worship and faithfully reading scripture on a daily basis over much of her lifetime.

During a visit, she said to me: "I know you're not a heretic, but what is it you're doing with inclusive language — where do you find the feminine images of God that you talk about?"

I took her Bible and began to read passages from Isaiah 49 and 66. She said, "I've never heard these passages before."

Suddenly I began to put pieces together. Here is a woman who has been immersed in the lectionaries of the church most of her life who had never heard or been invited to reflect upon the fullness of scripture. It was then that I decided to explore the use of scripture in the lectionary of the Episcopal Church.

It is my conclusion that feminine im-

ages and stories of women in the Bible have been ignored, designated as optional or assigned as alternative scripture readings within the eucharistic lectionary of the Episcopal Church.

The passion gospel appointed for Palm Sunday, in all cases, provides for portions of the story to be deleted. While recognizing that this is the longest reading of the church year, the fact remains that those verses which recount the role of women in the salvific mission of Jesus



French woodcut, 1460-1480.

are considered optional by the church.

For the principle service of Easter in Year A, John 21:1-18 is appointed with verses 11-18 optional. The optional verses from John contain the encounter between Mary Magdalene and the risen Lord with her subsequent proclamation to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord."

In Year B, the Easter reading (Mk. 16:1-8) makes clear the fear of the women, but in Year C, Luke 24:1-20 omits v. 11, the one that recounts the disbelief of the disciples when the women proclaim that

the tomb is empty and that they have been given a message.

Some of the most prominent feminine passages in scripture fall on days which can be replaced with other propers. (If a feast day falls on a Sunday, "when desired," the Collect, Preface and one or more of the lessons appointed for the feast day may be used instead of the Sunday propers.)

The only passage in the gospels which provides a feminine metaphor for God is the story of the woman with the lost coin found in Luke 15:1-10, which is appointed for Proper 19C. Proper 19 falls on the Sunday closest to September 14, Holy Cross Day. Therefore, when Holy Cross Day falls on a Sunday, "when desired," the propers for Holy Cross Day can be substituted for those appointed.

Another explicit feminine metaphor for God, Is. 66:10-16, occurs in Proper 9 of Year C on the Sunday closest to July 6, hence on the Sunday closest to Independence Day, a day listed as a major feast. If the lessons are substituted, parishioners will not hear:

Behold, I will extend prosperity to her like a river and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall suck, you shall be carried upon her hip and dangled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

We do not know the stories of women contained in Scripture nor are we aware of the rich feminine metaphors for God in Hebrew Scripture because they have not been part of the story proclaimed within our Sunday eucharistic worship.

The 1991 General Convention requested that the Standing Liturgical Commission prepare a paper reviewing the BCP lectionary. The time has come for serious consideration of working on the lectionary so that what is proclaimed in the eucharist will begin to allow the fullness of the story to be retold.

Jean Campbell is an Episcopal priest in the Diocese of New York, a member of the Order of St. Helena and co-chair of the national church's Standing Liturgical Commission. A longer version of this piece is available in *Ruach*, Vol. 13:2, P.O. Box 348, Towaco, N.J. 07082. The graphic is courtesy of Visminas Co., Pittsburgh, Penn.

How long, Lord, how long?

In the Episcopal Church, the election of a bishop must be ratified by a majority of diocesan standing committees (bodies which assist the diocesan bishop in governing diocesan life) and a majority of diocesan bishops. Normally, such ratifications are routine—only one bishop-elect, James DeKoven in 1875, has ever failed to achieve the necessary consents to proceed to consecration. Reportedly, DeKoven was rejected because of his devotion to Anglo-Catholic beliefs.

More recently, the election of Barbara Harris as suffragan bishop of Massachusetts was narrowly upheld because many standing committees questioned women's place in the episcopacy in general, and Harris' qualifications for the position (she hadn't attended a three-year seminary) in particular. Jane Dixon's election as suffragan bishop of Washington also elicited widespread dissent, but primarily because of her stand on ordaining qualified homosexual persons.

Last October, the election of Jack Iker as bishop coadjutor of Fort Worth proved to be an intriguing turn of affairs. A member of the Episcopal Synod of America, Iker endorses that organization's anti-women's ordination and anti-homosexual stands. For many weeks, standing-committee ratification of his election seemed less than assured although he finally got the needed votes in January. The bishops soon followed suit. (Strangely, both Harris and Dixon received invitations to the Iker consecration, even though Iker told The Witness that he and other clergy in Fort Worth would not welcome their participation in the service. "To share in a consecration at this point is not possible for me," Iker said. Both Harris and Dixon decided not to force the issue and stayed at home.) The following commensality by Marge Christie, who serves on the board of the Episcopal Women's Caucus and the Committee on the Status of Women, is one view of the issues surrounding this latest ratification debate:

The uproar over whether or not to

consent to the election of Jack Iker as the bishop coadjutor of the Diocese of Fort Worth felt to me, the member of a diocesan standing committee, a little like "a shot heard 'round the world."

Bishops wrote us [standing committee members], Fort Worth people wrote us, theologians wrote us. Arguments for ratification were countered by arguments against. All those words, not to mention the cost of xeroxing and mailing them, revealed just how much Episcopalians cared — not only about upholding Iker's and his supporters' opposition to women's ordination, but also about the people in Fort Worth who want and need the ministry of ordained women.

Article II, Section 2, of the Episcopal Church's constitution states that, "No one shall be ordained and consecrated Bishop without the consent of a majority of the Standing Committees of all the Dioceses." What do those words mean? Certainly more than that a diocese has the right to choose its own leadership, an interpretation heard far too many times. Aren't standing committees asked for their consent because a person is elected a bishop for the whole church and not just for a diocese? Our problem, I think, is that we want to be nice about these matters — but being nice isn't always on the side of justice.

What have the church's standing committees done in giving their approval to the Iker election?

I believe they have insured that an apparent misogynist will preside over the Diocese of Fort Worth for perhaps as many as 30 years, a thought I find appalling. Equally objectionable is the idea that this man will have seat, voice and vote in the House of Bishops for the same length of time. That body will be held hostage to Jack Iker's limited vision, his exclusive mind-set and his inability to see that when the church began to baptize women, it gave them a right to full participation in all of its rites.

Because he was ordained to the priesthood before the canons were changed to include women as priests and bishops in 1976, Jack Iker may in the

eyes of some people have the right to refuse to ordain them to these orders himself. But at his ordination a new bishop promises to "conform to the doctrine, discipline and worship" of the church. Where does one find doctrine and discipline, if not in the church's constitution and canons?

Perhaps it is time to revisit the history-making canonical change our General Convention made in 1976: "The provisions of the Canons ... for the ordination to the three Orders, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, *shall* be equally applicable to men and women." To those who say "shall" is not a directive word, I suggest a rereading of the rest of Title III — the word *shall* is used over and over again and *it is always directive!* Only when the word *may* appears, is the direction clearly a suggestion and not a requirement.

Members of the Episcopal Synod of America, including Jack Iker and Clarence Pope [the current bishop of Fort Worth], frequently cite the "conscience clause" passed by the church's bishops when they gathered for an interim meeting in Port St. Lucie, Fla. in 1977 as a justification for their refusal to accept women's ordination. I would remind them that a resolution of an interim meeting of the House of Bishops is only that — this resolution was never passed by General Convention, the body which has decision-making powers in our democratic Episcopal Church.

When the bishops passed that Port St. Lucie resolution, they noted the "need for the precious gift of patience" as clergy and laity learned to live into what was then a dramatic change in church polity. But that was 15 years ago! Ninety-six percent of the dioceses now support women's ordination. How long, Lord, must patience be exercised?



Tin of Tube Rose

by Sandra Redding

I remember Mama sitting with that can of snuff clutched in her hand, just dipping and rocking, not a care in the world. Mosquitoes and flies would buzz right up in her face but, as long as she had a pinch of snuff in her mouth, she wouldn't even give them a swat. She'd just sit there, that glazed look in her eyes. Once, I asked, "Mama, what in tarnation goes on in your mind when you're dipping?"

After spitting in that Kentucky Fried Chicken bucket she always kept close by, she answered. "Can't explain it, Lizzie. Maybe you ought to try it and find out for yourself."

Now I wasn't uppity but I had no intention of trying snuff, but all that was before Ed died. A death can change a body's mind about a lot of things.

Ed was my husband. We'd been married going on forty years. The night he died, we were sitting in front of the TV arguing about those girls on "Charlie's Angels." Ed said, "That blond's a real charmer, ain't she Lizzie?"

Well, I didn't agree with him, so I told him what I thought. Before you could say peaturkey, an empty can of Budweiser came rolling right over to my foot. At first, I thought Ed had thrown the fool thing at me for saying the blond he liked was skinny and conceited, but when I looked over at the recliner, he was slumped down just like all the air had been let out.

Doc Hollins said it was Ed's heart. "He couldn't have picked an easier way to go," Doc told me. Ed didn't feel much

pain and it was over real quick.

That night, I got in touch with the children, all eight of them scattered over six states. "A family's no count," Ed used to say, "unless they stick together when the going gets rough." Well, I reckon we showed our worth cause every last one of them kids—even Eva Jane who lives way out in Oregon—managed to get there to see their daddy be put away.

The viewing was two days later at Thompson's Mortuary. By the time we got there, the place was already full of folks. Many of them I'd never seen before. Vergil Peters—he runs the flower shop down at the end of Main Street—must have had a special going on pink carnations cause they were stuck in every sort of wreath and basket. Why they smelled so sickly sweet they could have suffocated King Kong. It's always seemed to me that death deserved a healthier smell than them hothouse flowers, but Ed was dead and people had shown their respect by sending pink carnations and there wasn't one earthly thing I could do about it.

If the flowers weren't bad enough, people were staring at me. Now I'm not used to being stared at. I knew they were waiting to see me cry, but I'm not much of a crier. Fact is, the only time I ever shed

more than a tear or two was when Rhett Butler told Scarlett O'Hara, "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn" in *Gone With the Wind*, which I managed to see all six times they showed it at the Rand Theater. Still, everybody expected it so

to oblige them, I touched a Kleenex to my eyes, pretending. Then I bent over the casket and took one last look at Ed.

They'd put paint on his face. I could tell. And they'd dressed him in a dark blue suit that wasn't at all becoming. Why I couldn't even remember the last time I'd seen Ed Chalmers in a suit. Oh, he had a plaid sports coat that he'd wear to Moose Lodge dances, but he'd have never worn anything as drab as that outfit they were putting him away in. I pinched one of the carnations from a wreath that had a plastic telephone fastened to it, the purple banner across the front proclaiming, "Hello, Jesus." Though I tucked the flower in Ed's buttonhole, it still didn't do much to brighten him up. I wanted the Ed I remembered, the Ed I'd bedded down with for most of my life. "Ed," I whispered so nobody else would hear, "why'd you up and die? I was just hitting my prime."

Now some folks might argue that 58 is past prime for a woman, but I was 44 before I had my last baby. To tell the truth, I was beginning to suspect there wasn't anything more to life than a dirty diaper. When most women I knew were going out to get jobs at the K-Mart and Winn-Dixie, I still had runny-nosed

I knew then that I would never be able to confess to a preacher what I had imagined. It was just too sinful. So, right there in that house of God I lied.

younguns pulling at my skirt tail. But don't think that ever stopped Ed Chalmers. He married me with one thing on his mind and for all I know, he died thinking about it as well.

Right after the fifth one was born, I had a serious talk with Doc Hollins. "Doc," I said, "how about writing me a prescription for salt-peter so I can put some in Ed's coffee?"

Doc almost laughed his grey mustache off. "That's a good one," he said.

Reprinted from *When I Am An Old Woman I Shall Wear Purple*, edited by Sandra Martz, Papier-Maché Press, Watsonville, Calif., 1987. Artist Lucinda Luvaas lives in San Marco, Calif.

"What do you mean, that's a good one?"

For just a second, he looked puzzled. "You do know, Lizzie," he finally said to me, "that there's no such thing as salt-peter."

Well, I didn't know. I'd heard about it all my life and I couldn't figure out why folks would talk so much about something that didn't exist. I wanted to ask Doc Hollins about something to prevent babies but I didn't. I was afraid he would start laughing again.

After the sixth baby, Mama started complaining. "Lordy, Lizzie," she said, trying to talk around the snuff in her mouth, "looks like you could keep your legs together."

I tried but Ed pried them apart before that youngun was six weeks old. "Ain't no use yelling," he told me. "The sheriff won't arrest a man for raping his own wife."

Now I don't want you to think I had anything against sex. Fact is, I probably liked it just as much as that blond on "Charlie's Angels," but I was tired—of having babies, tired of eating pinto beans.

I've heard it said that every dog has its day and I reckon that's true. Mine came after I went through the change. That unopened box of Kotex sitting on the bathroom shelf became my flag of freedom. Some women complain that a hot flash is embarrassing but, far as I'm concerned, it's not half as embarrassing as walking around all your life with a belly full of baby.

After that change, the children started growing up, one by one, and fending for themselves. For the first time in years, I had money for lipstick and dangling earrings. Why, I even bought myself a pair of fake eyelashes. Ed liked it. He liked it just fine. We joined the Moose Lodge

and started going to dances on Friday nights. Saturday nights were extra special. While I bathed, Ed would look at pictures in his Penthouse magazine. Then we'd light the red heart-shaped candle



Tarzan meets Jane

Lucinda Luvaas

that Sybil Ann, our eldest, gave us for Christmas.

Those were the good years and there could have been more of them if Ed hadn't up and died. Being a widow ain't easy, I'll tell you that. I missed Ed. I missed him terrible. Much as I'd criticized him, calling him a sex pervert back when he kept getting me pregnant, there was nothing that I wouldn't have done to have him back in that oak bed with me. Oh, I smiled and acted respectable in public but inside, I just churned for a man.

For a while, I didn't think about other men—only Ed. I remembered how he'd smelled of Aqua Velva and how black hairs, as well as a few grey ones, sprouted curly over his chest. But before long, I started noticing other men. Young men.

Old men. It didn't matter none. I'm ashamed to admit it, but I lusted after all of them. Once I bought six rolls of paper towels just because they were wrapped up in the picture of a handsome mustached fellow. By then, I knew things had gone too far. "Lizzie, old girl," I told myself, "you better do something before you make a fool of yourself."

Before I even had a chance to figure out what I ought to do, I got a telephone call from Flora Mae Simmons. "You better get yourself to the revival meeting going on down at Shiloh Baptist Church." That's what Flora Mae said. I'll tell you, it gave me a real spooky feeling getting the call. It was just as if she knew all those wild thoughts were flying through my head. Now, I'm a believer. Always have been. But with them kids to tend to, I'd gotten out of the church-going habit. After Flora Mae's call, I decided it was high time I got started back.

That night in the dimly lit church, I did my best to concentrate on what the preacher was saying as he stood there proclaiming the word of God with flashing white teeth, his voice all full of passion. When he shouted about sin and damnation, his pink, wet tongue flicked in and out of his mouth. I started wondering what he'd look like with his clothes off. I couldn't help myself. Wicked thoughts just flooded in.

My imagination didn't stop with the preacher either. When we stood to sing "Blest Be the Tie That Binds," my addled brain dropped robes from every man in the choir, all the way from the chubby, bald one on the end to the red-headed tenor with a jiggling Adam's apple. But most shameful of all was what happened next. Looking for something to calm my wildness, I turned my eyes upward to the

stained-glass window at the front of the church. There, all brightly-colored and thin as a sparrow, was Jesus stretched out on a cross. When I first looked, a piece of cloth covered his privates, but then my dirty mind started working again. Oh, sweet Jesus, he was nailed there just naked as a jay bird. Lord, help my filthy soul, I said to myself. I had to do something, so when Preacher called for sinners to come forward, I was the first one in the aisle.

"Bless you, Sister Lizzie," Preacher said. I saw beads of sweat on his upper lip. I remember how Ed used to sweat like that when.... "Preacher," I shouted out, "I've got sins to confess."

Preacher bent close and whispered, "God loves you, Sister Lizzie. Unburden your heart."

"When I was sitting back in the pew," I said, "I couldn't even listen to your sermon cause I kept imagining what you'd

look like with your clothes off." Preacher's face turned red as a valentine. I kept talking. "Even worse," I said, trying to find suitable words.

"Yes, Sister Lizzie," he urged, his eyes filled with compassion. I glanced back at the stained-glass window, the one with Jesus on it. Thank the Lord it was covered with the cloth once again. I knew then that I would never be able to confess to a preacher what I had imagined. It was just too sinful. So, right there in that house of God I lied. It just tumbled out naturally, almost as if it were meant to be said.

"Preacher," I said, "I've been tempted to dip snuff."

Preacher looked puzzled. He stammered. Then he told me that he guessed there were worse sins. Finally, clearing his throat, he had the congregation bow for final prayer.

It was strange that at a time like that —

the most shameful moment in all my life — I would think of snuff. Even after I got home that night I couldn't get it off my mind. I remembered how Mama had sat dipping, that contented cow look in her eyes. Fact is, I recollected, she didn't even start the habit until after Daddy had his accident down at the sawmill. I wondered.

The very next day, while shopping at the Winn-Dixie, I picked me up a tin of Tube Rose. Soon as I got home, I stuck a pinch in my mouth just the way Mama used to do. It didn't taste half as bad as I'd feared. The bitterness cleared my sinuses and kept my mind off other things.

Now I ain't claiming that Tube Rose can replace Ed. No snuff can do that. Plenty times, I sit here rocking, remembering how smooth Ed's skin felt against mine.

No sir, there ain't no substitute for a man. But snuff — well, it's a comfort.

Travelling mission

In 1978 the General Assembly meeting of the Presbyterian Church USA shut the door on lesbian/gay people's opportunity for leadership through ordination.

Four years later, I was encouraged to meet with the nominating committee of the Downtown United Presbyterian Church (DUPC) in Rochester, N.Y.

My churchphobia was quite high, having witnessed the way judging-and-rejecting faith communities have damaged the spirits and lives of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people, all in the name of God. Even so, Coni and I decided to travel to Rochester.

We were deeply touched by these people. They not only honored us as a couple but were truly interested in the our work with Spectrum Center, an outreach ministry with lesbian, gay and

bisexual people.

My churchphobia and their homophobia seemed to heal as we gathered over dinner and shared our lives and faith. Coni and I returned to California. We prayed and walked the beaches. Finally, word came that I had been chosen. Coni and I said yes.

But my denomination said no.

On November 4th we heard that the Presbyterian Church's Permanent Judicial Commission had denied my call as a co-pastor because I am an open lesbian.

Hundreds of people have contacted Coni and me with encouragement and support, and the DUPC has been deluged with letters urging them to move ahead in whatever way they can.

Committed now to DUPC, I've been commissioned by them to become a travelling Presbyterian lesbian evangelist. Our project, "That All May Freely Serve" (a phrase right out of our Presbyterian Book

of Order), is aimed at convincing the churches and presbyteries that it is time for our General Assembly to give presbyteries the right to ordain qualified candidates for ministry, whatever their sexual orientation.

I will visit 16 cities, from Portland, Me., to Durham, N.C. — finishing up on June 2 at the General Assembly in Orlando, Fla. If the change in ordination policy we advocate should pass, the Downtown Church will consider calling me again to become their co-pastor. If the measure fails I will continue my travelling mission until the 1994 General Assembly.

Through the help of the Spirit, we will change this policy because it is wrong and contrary to what God ordains — a love that is built on inclusiveness, acceptance, and filled with justice.

— Jane Spahr

Angels in the night

IN THE TWO YEARS since she found out that she was dying, Louise Anderson has held many tea parties and watched many episodes of "Star Trek." She has also mined the depths of her soul and communed with angels in the middle of the night.

"This has been a tremendous period in my life," she says. Old age can be a blessing, she believes, "if we can take it as a time to take stock of ourselves."

"Then," she adds, "we have less to do on the other side...."

Though she still mines books for truths, these days she doesn't read as much as she used to, afraid it will interfere with what she refers to as input from her guardian angel. Thoughts often come to her in the middle of the night — answers to questions she has been puzzling over.

Though she is not afraid of dying, she admits to being afraid of "not coping nobly with it."

Janelle Conaway
Albuquerque Journal, 11/92

Presbyterian sex

MAINLINE PROTESTANTISM, outside the Evangelical movement, systematically repressed both sex and emotion as part of the Puritan bequest. That repression continues in current American liberalism, which is simply Protestantism in disguise. The Presbyterian report tries to paper over with words the raw elemental experiences and conflicts of our immorality. "Eros," says the report's glossary, is "a zest for life." Is this a soap commercial? Eros, like Dionysus, is a great a dangerous god. The report gives us vanilla sex, smothered with artificial butterscotch syrup. In its liberal zeal to understand, to accept, to heal, it reduces the grand tragicomedy of love and lust to a Hallmark card. Its unctuous normalizing of dissident sex is imperialistic and oppressive. The gay world is stripped of its outlaw adventures in toilets, alleyways

trucks and orgy rooms. There are no leathermen, hustlers or drag queens. Gay love is reduced to a nice, neat, middle-class couple living next door on Fathers Knows Best. In the Protestant managerial way, the report is based on the arrogant, condescending welfare-agency model of life: there are all those poor, troubled souls out there whom we privileged, superior, all-knowing people must "help." But no one — least of all liberal Presbyterians — can ever solve the problem of love.... Stormy nature, in our hearts and beyond the gates, is ready to consume us all.

Camille Paglia
The Joys of Presbyterian Sex in Sex, Art and American Culture, 1992

Placing blame

EVER SINCE ADAM, men have been blaming their problems on women. Women have been systematically accused of being temptresses, seducers, powerful contaminants. And if they were viewed as the weaker sex, they were nevertheless blamed whenever a scapegoat was needed.

But the cause of reclaiming female dignity and achieving greater economic justice for women will not be well-served by a switch in the dialectics of blame from women to men.

Feminists of all sorts are right to be outraged by the dehumanization, destruction and desecration caused by the modern corporate-industrial-warfare system. They are also right to indict men to their role in creating and maintaining this system, and right to insist on masculine guilt. They, however, are disastrously wrong in excusing women from responsibility for the destructive aspects of a cultural system that can only be created and perpetuated by consensual interaction of men and women (especially the men and women of the elite, powerful, ruling classes.)

Sam Keen
Fire in the Belly, Bantam, 1991.

U.S. wealth

IN 1983 THE WEALTHIEST ONE PERCENT of all Americans held 31.3 percent of the country's total wealth, according to Ralph Estes of American University. By 1989, the top one percent held 37.1 percent of all wealth. The top one percent actually owns and controls more wealth than the bottom 90 percent of all Americans. During the Reagan-Bush years top tax rates fell from 70 percent of taxable income in 1981 down to 28 percent of income in 1988.

Manning Marable
Along the Color Line, 4/92

Bread for the World

BREAD FOR THE WORLD is lobbying Congress to increase its foreign aid toward elimination of poverty and hunger in environmentally sound ways.

Through an offering of letters to government representatives, collected during liturgies, churches can contribute to their "Many Neighbors, One Earth" campaign. (Call David Fouse at 202-269-0200 for details about how churches can participate.)

An estimated 13 million to 18 million people in developing countries, most of them children, die from hunger and hunger-related causes each year.

Bread for the World
News release, 3/93

short takes

Holocaust memorial

A national holocaust memorial, privately funded and built on federal land, was scheduled to open in Washington, D.C. on April 22, Yom Hashoah, the day set aside to remember the holocaust.

Lift the ban?

by Julie A. Wortman

It wasn't until I heard Bill Clinton's campaign promise to lift the ban on homosexuals in the military, that I realized why straights get so bent out of shape when anyone takes steps to legitimize gay men and lesbian women.

A reporter was interviewing a retired Army officer who said, Well, sure, folks in the military know there are plenty of homosexuals in the armed forces, ban or no ban, and as long as they remained closeted that was just fine with him — most made good soldiers. But lifting the ban, he argued, would be bad for morale. Why? Because straight soldiers (he was referring specifically to G.I.'s of the male persuasion) would find it disconcerting. They would feel especially uncomfortable, he said, about sharing quarters or showering with men who were openly gay.

I thought, "Excuse me? Is he really saying heterosexual G.I.s don't mind knowing that many of their fellow soldiers are homosexual, they just don't want to know *which* of their fellow soldiers are homosexual?" And then the logic of this dawned on me:

Looking up from scrubbing himself, G.I. Straight glances across the steamy room. His eyes rest on the naked body of G.I. Gay, who is just lathering up.

"Uh-oh," Straight thinks to himself, "there's Gay. If I were him, I'd be all over me."

Much to Straight's surprise, Gay steadfastly minds his own business. As he tow-

els himself down, Straight wonders, "Why didn't he try anything? Doesn't he find me attractive? Does he think he's too good for me?"

It's no good arguing that the ban on homosexuals in the military, or Colorado voters' stand against prohibiting discrimination, or the church's reluctance to approve qualified, openly homosexual persons for ordination are instances of self-righteous bigotry, pure and simple. The problem, we must not be afraid to acknowledge, is more complicated.

Think of the Straight Patriarchal Ego-centric Reactionary Male (SPERM, for short) you know best — you know, the sort of unenlightened guy who seems to rule the societal and organizational roost so much of the time. It must be very difficult for him and many others like him to accept that homosexual orientation is not a crime, not an illness, not a perversion and certainly not a basis for denying someone an opportunity to serve in the armed forces. Such claims fly in the face of everything SPERMs have been taught or know about operating sexually in this society.

We must recognize that to our culture's SPERMs, sex is about male conquest. Men are supposed to "win" or "conquer" the women they pursue — that, after all, is what "wearing the pants" in a relationship is supposed to mean. Men who are unashamed of being sexually attracted to other men are disturbing to SPERMs because, if SPERMs are to judge by themselves (and they'll find it difficult to do otherwise), they must believe that homosexual men consider *all* other men fair game. And that leads SPERMs to conclude that proudly gay men can be expected to behave towards *them* the way SPERMs expect *themselves* to behave towards *women*!

Sadly, SPERMs find little relief in the discovery that gay men and lesbian women would much rather have sex with

each other than with them. That's because this simple truth flies in the face of another sacred norm — namely, that SPERMs are the designated star players in the sexual (and most other) games our society plays.

This is why SPERMs consider a nonjudgmental approach to teaching children about homosexuality so subversive. You see, deep in their hearts SPERMs believe that if children discover the truth about homosexuality — that it is a sexual orientation which about ten percent of the population, most of them upstanding citizens, happen to have — people will choose to be gay or lesbian in droves.

Sound ridiculous? Why else would there be such a hue and cry whenever a public-school human sexuality course mentions homosexuality as anything other than a perversion?

No, as evangelical Christians (many of whom are self-affirming SPERMs) assure us, children have no sexuality of their own — they know only what they are taught. And if you don't teach children anything about sex, we are urged to believe, the otherwise immoral little urchins will just never have it. This is why you should never breathe a word about birth control or AIDS prevention in a child's presence.

Most comforting of all, of course, is the claim that despising homosexuality as a sin and therefore as something a person should hide or deny upon pain of death, or of losing one's home or job, is not about what mere *men* want (SPERMs, of course, *never* consider themselves "mere" except in public), but about what *God* (the Father —who else?) wants.

Claiming that God is on your side may be a little bit like whistling in the dark, but it sounds powerful. If that's what it takes for SPERMs to feel potent — whether on a military base or in church — who am I to object? This is not, remember, an issue of morals, but of morale. **TV**

Julie A. Wortman is an assistant editor of *The Witness*.

Insight and Anglocentrism

by Pamela W. Darling

Episcopal Women: Gender, Spirituality and Commitment in an American Mainline Denomination, edited by Catherine M. Prelinger. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992, 363pp.

“**W**hat does a patriarchal religious tradition mean to its ‘daughters?’” So begins this promising book, a Lilly-funded collaborative study project.

Readers will find provocative essays addressing women’s experience in the Episcopal Church from many directions.

Joan Gunderson documents women’s roles in the parish, arguing that increasing numbers of women in local leadership positions, including the ordained ministry, have created an asymmetrical church, with diocesan and national leadership dominated by men and parish life controlled by women.

Mary Donovan chronicles the near-demise of the Episcopal Church Women after women joined the House of Deputies in 1970, suggesting that to enter structures previously reserved to men, women must leave behind their own agendas, styles of operating, networks and priorities.

Joanna Gillespie coordinated an intriguing congregational study of three generations of women, producing a wealth of insights about parish life. Margaret Miles wrestles with why women remain in a male-dominated institution. Constance Buchanan zeroes in on complaints about where all the young male candidates for ministry have gone, show-

ing how an androcentric model identifies vitality with the presence of young men susceptible to formation by their elders. Because women and older men don’t fit that mold, many perceive that the church itself is losing vitality.

The good news is that we can learn many useful things by roaming through the chapter of *Episcopal Women*. The not-so-good news: it is *only* a collection of chapters, not a book. The wide range of method, vocabulary and conceptual framework make it hard to guess for whom it is intended. The collaboration never became a fruitful conversation.

My deepest disappointment is the way the project accepted and reinforced race and class stereotypes. Most of the storytelling is by and about privileged white women, perpetuating the myth which keeps working-class and minority members and congregations invisible within the Episcopal Church. It is easier to study upper-class white women because they are the ones about whom more records remain; but the fact that many prominent women were Episcopalians does not mean many Episcopalians are prominent.

Marjorie Farmer’s piece about African American women’s experience is too obviously a token. It begins with the sadly self-marginalizing comment that the rest of the book “is, quite appropriately, a generally Anglocentric account.” Anglocentrism is *not* appropriate. All history and analysis is necessarily incomplete and distorted if done only from a

white perspective, and it is naive (at best) to imagine this can be corrected by putting Bishop Barbara Harris’ picture on the book jacket and inserting one chapter of “different voices.” Contributors were clearly aware of this problem. The fact that they did not resolve it attests to the persistence of racist structures in society, academia and the church and may explain at least as much about the “decline” of mainline (white) Protestantism as does the constellation of gender issues addressed in *Episcopal Women*.

It is tempting to blame the defects on the cancer which took editor Prelinger’s life shortly before the project was completed.

All history and analysis is incomplete if done only from a white perspective, and it is naive (at best) to imagine this can be corrected by putting Bishop Barbara Harris’ picture on the book jacket ...

Had she lived, had she not been so terribly ill, this might have become a real book. Another round of consultation and revisions might have strengthened connections between pieces, so that we could glimpse a developed whole instead of tantalizing flashes of insight against an often contradictory background.

book review

Yet it may be as much of a book as anyone could write, or read, just now. Maybe the full implications of race and changing gender patterns are still unspeakable, even unthinkable. Maybe it’s better just to send these fragments out to do their work, to commend the stories, hypotheses, questions, challenges, on their own terms, as contributions to our own reflections and to the on-going deliberations of the church. I hope you’ll read *Episcopal Women*.

TW

Pam Darling is a church historian from Philadelphia and a member of *The Witness* board.

William Countryman, an avid reader as a child in Oklahoma, has spent so many hours poring over the do's and don'ts in scripture that he has become something of an expert in biblical sexual ethics. This speciality, Countryman (now a professor at Church Divinity School of the Pacific) says was "a bit of an accident actually."

It may have been an accident, but his willingness to pore through Scripture, searching for coherence in the admonitions and proscriptions that most often confront us as isolated fragments wielded by preachers with an agenda, is consistent with that which he loved most as a child.

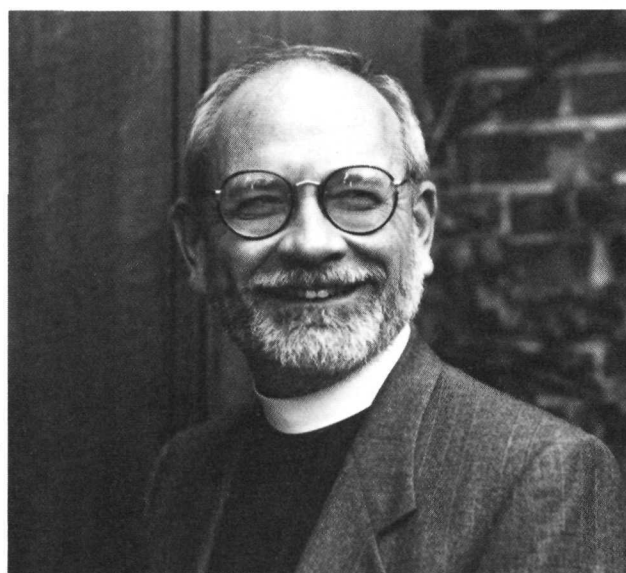
Countryman spent hours in the library reading everything, including obscure theological books — two of which affected his conversion from the Disciples of Christ to the Episcopal Church.

"It came about when I was 15, as a result of reading two books — a bookish person's way, I suppose. I went off to St. Paul's Cathedral — it was near the library — and decided that's where I belonged."

He carried with him a respect for Scripture which he says he learned from the Disciples of Christ.

"Scripture is definitely a way of coming in touch with God. That does not mean that Scripture gives us the final word — often it raises more questions than it does answers; the Christian community always winds up interpreting. But

"Scripture often raises more questions than it does answers; the Christian community always winds up interpreting."



L. William Countryman

In pursuit of biblical ethics

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

if it's good news, it has to be life-giving and have an element of surprise about it."

Countryman left the confines of a quiet home where he was the youngest of four, to start college at the age of 16.

"I loved the University of Chicago [where he majored in Greek and studied classics]. I loved that the important thing was learning and thinking. It didn't really matter whether you had the correct opinion, but whether you could defend it."

Asked if he liked seminary, Countryman said, "Well, no, actually I hated it. For a midwestern kid who had been in that free-thinking atmosphere in Chicago, General [Theological Seminary] seemed incredibly stuffy, rigid and narrow. I loved New York and I survived by visiting the Metropolitan Opera and the Natural History Museum."

After seminary, Countryman spent a total of six years in parish ministry.

"I learned how little I knew. I was not an ideal parish priest. I'm a bit of a loner

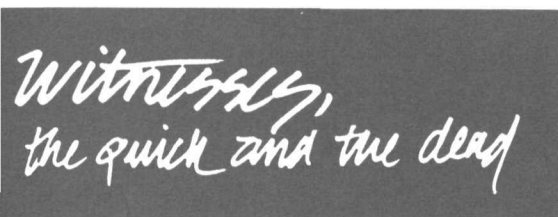
myself and I was not very well keyed into some of the pastoral expectations. I don't think people would have complained, but it was not my vocation.

"It *has* changed the questions I ask. I like the academic side of what I do, but I always carry with me some existential questions that I share with other people in the church."

Among those concerns he lists the authority of Scripture, ordination and sexual ethics.

Countryman's book *Dirt, Greed and Sex* (Fortress, 1988) resulted from an invitation to address sexual ethics for an Episcopal chaplains' group. He began researching the topic with the assumption that Christian sexual ethics were "isolated and unrelated pronouncements," but was surprised to discover in Scripture a clear coherence.

The coherence centered around two things, he says, an understanding of property rights and an adherence to the purity



Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is editor/publisher of *The Witness*.

code found in Leviticus.

"I had noticed that adultery seemed to be treated as equivalent to theft while preparing my dissertation. Years later I discovered this was to be taken seriously.

"For example, while most modern audiences would say adultery is wrong because it is a breach of faith or trust, in ancient Israel a man was free to have sexual relations outside of marriage and the woman was not. A woman was viewed as reproductive property and adultery was understood as theft of that reproductive property.

"A man's marriage was family business — not the individual's but the household's. The wife was treated as someone who was brought in to maintain the family line. Were she sent away and replaced with a more advantageous wife, the children would stay with the father. She would only become a secure part of the family when her husband died and her son became head of household."

A property lens on sexual ethics gives us a tradition that does not presume that sexuality is the possession of each individual, consequently rape is not an offense for which a woman deserves justice. It's an offense that requires compen-

sation to her father or husband.

Therefore there is no father-daughter incest taboo in Scripture. While we see incest as child abuse, scriptural references to incest revolve around a young male in the household having sex with his father's concubine or daughter.

"From our point of view," Countryman says, "there is a gaping hole in the moral code."

Countryman, who spent a year at Hebrew Union College, says the Levitical purity code gives us language: clean, unclean, abomination — terms that lie behind physical responses of disgust and loathing.

Asked to give an example of sexual ethics viewed through a purity code lens, Countryman responded, "Women were considered unclean in their menstrual period. This was a serious enough point of anxiety that rabbis were simply not supposed to deal with women in public, even their own wives, certainly not strange women whose state of cleanliness would not be known to them.

"Jesus not only talks with women, but when the woman with the hemorrhage touches him she has technically rendered him unclean. When he turns around, she

is extremely alarmed. (Such an act could result in a tongue-lashing or mob violence.) The extraordinary thing with Jesus is that the contagion works in the opposite direction. He renders her clean."

In working with scripture to inform modern ethics, Countryman says you must first understand that Jesus' teaching usually flew in the face of the predominant morality.

"Jesus threw a wrench into the machinery by forbidding divorce — if it's forbidden then the wife is no longer property but a member of the family."

The next step is to recognize that we live in a different context.

"Does our culture have to change to be more like the Mediterranean model or do we simply start with our culture — as Jesus did — and say, 'What do we have to do to have this make sense in Christian terms?'"

Asked to reflect on how his work has affected his own life, Countryman demurred.

"In a subject where the anxiety is as high as it is with sexuality, it's a good idea to let the work be what it is — an effort to think through issues that we are all dealing with." TW

Welcome to The Witness!

Each month we mail complimentary copies of *The Witness* to people we believe might subscribe. Knowing that people receive more literature than they can read, we keep our articles short and provocative. *The Witness* addresses different themes each month, and includes art, poetry, book reviews and profiles.

For 75 years *The Witness* has published articles addressing theological concerns as well as critiquing social issues from a faith perspective.

The magazine is owned by the Episcopal Church Publishing Company but is an independent journal with an ecumenical readership.

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MAY 1993

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Gynergy

by Alla Renee Bozarth

for Antonia Brico on my 30th birthday

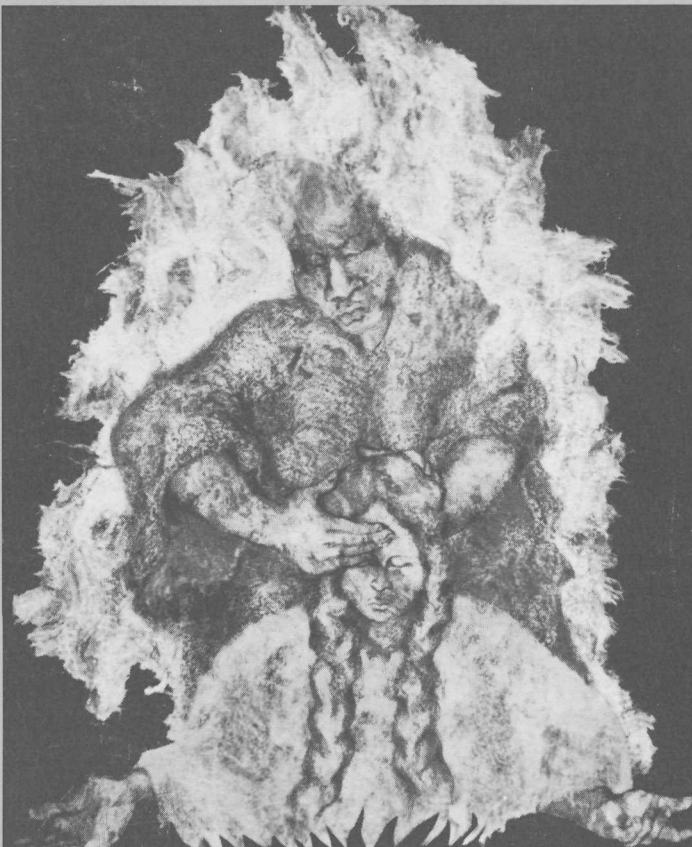
I have been asleep for ten years of my life
but today am waking, waking

aware of the seahorse
alone in his quiet lair
the male-mother who gives birth
laboriously in salt water

and aware of the male nanny grebe
who cares for the kids
while mother tests
her wings against the sun
for food to feed their young

aware also of the countless gifts
of female energy that would
surely explode the world
if they were known,
and go wasted as if to spare
the planet, but instead
the planet dies with them

aware of old
women's hands on young women's
shoulders who take to the fluid
process of science, paint, or poetry,
or pound out their magic music
on primitive drums, on strings,
through horns sending their lusty wail:
for life! for life!



Michelle Gibbs

Aware of these forces I wake
out of my middle years
to look into the infinite yes
of my sisters, daughters,
mothers, grand and godmothers,
caught in their endless
circle of their energy, created anew
in their nurture, begin to see
the vast deep roots of my woman nature
reaching around the world and held
in their circular fire
with great white waters
running under,

and wonder for wonder,
how I shall ever sleep again.

*Poet Alla Bozarth lives in Sandy,
Ore. Artist Michelle Gibbs lives in
Oaxaca, Mexico.*

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In defense of creation

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