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The Witness

Volume 76 • Number 12 • December 1993

Keeping watch in the night

Animal Rights

THE LATE CANON EDWARD WEST (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York City), when approached by devout but somewhat lost adult single New Yorkers with the question "How can I ever learn to love?", used to advise the adoption of an animal companion. He himself shared bed and board throughout his adult life with numerous deeply-loved canine friends.

Being blessed with cats Lily and Poppy and yellow labradors Maggie and Annie, I find myself often learning invaluable lessons from them (e.g., enthusiasm, forgiveness, patience and a natural sense of orderliness). While Adam's naming of the animals in the Garden of Eden might be construed as having power over them (as naming often did in ancient times), nonetheless it also shows his joyful interaction with them to the point that they were his companions second only to Eve herself.

It seems to me that the place of animals, and indeed of all the created order other than humans, should be crystal clear from the great story of the Garden of Eden: *human beings were the only ones driven from the Garden!* Any idea of a "fallen creation" is true only to degree creation has suffered from the effects of human sin. No wonder, as Paul puts it, "the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God."

Jesus teaches us how to become who God created us to be. The animals already are.

James C. McReynolds
The Teleios Foundation
Shrewsbury, N J

CONGRATULATIONS on all the 1992 awards and for an excellent October issue! I

happened to get my hands on it after accidentally letting my own subscription lapse some time back, and it made me realize how much I miss it

and want to get back on the bandwagon!

Is there any way I could purchase extra

copies of the October issue, since I would like one of my own and would like to purchase some for my animal-loving friends? Actually, after reading your list of awards, there are other back issues I would be interested in (such as the Dec. '92 issue, with the feature on prison and death by Marianne Arbogast, for obvious reasons; also for the clergy and sex abuse coverage). Is it possible to get a listing of back issues available and the way to purchase them?

By the way, I also appreciated Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann's honesty in sharing her feelings in "Resisting the Peaceable Kingdom?" !!

Karen Thompson
Macomb County Jail Ministry
Mt. Clemens, MI

[Back issues are available for \$2.50 apiece. We will publish a list of topics from former issues which are available for purchase in our January 1994 issue. Beginning then we will also make brief study guide questions available for each issue for those who wish to order multiple copies for classes.]

THANKS FOR THE SUBSCRIPTION reminder. I had decided to not renew my subscription until I saw the last issue about animals. What a resoundingly successful and surprisingly unusual issue! I feel that I must support you in your effort, so please find enclosed my renewal check. Thank you.

Josephine Merrill Kirkpatrick
Pasadena, CA

THE WITNESS ALWAYS MOVES ME. This time, it has touched me deeply, personally, in ways that have moved me to see facts that have answered very strong, powerful questions of my heart.

From childhood my beloved parents and myself asked about events that have shaped our destinies.

Five hundred years have elapsed since a "guest" arrived. He spoke of the gentleness, kindness he found. Five hundred years after, Mary Lee Simpson allowed us to see how beautiful, easy, and generous a good reaction could have been. While that guest proceeded to murder everyone (he wrote that he only

needed 30 persons to do the job!) Simpson proceeded to see the magnificence of the moment and the beauty of your graceful and happy hosts — playful, generous creatures of a most loving and generous God!

What an issue!

We had last night a very heavy rain. Our main pond is filled totally. The birds are having a good time. And after finishing Simpson's article, I am writing this letter by the stillness of our pond.

Pio Celestino
Refugio del Rio Grande
Harlingen, TX

THANK YOU for the most satisfactory magazine I know. It inspires; it challenges. It makes me laugh, cry and sing — sometimes all at the same time. I work as a volunteer receptionist at our church (All Saints, Atlanta) and I'm always so excited when a new *Witness* has arrived — and I hope the phone won't ring too much. Now I want one of my own, at home, to keep. I am also enclosing \$15 for a gift subscription.

One more request: Could I please have a copy of the October issue (in case my subscription doesn't get started that early)?

Sara Owen
Atlanta, GA

Classifieds

Classifieds will run in *The Witness* beginning in January, 1994.

A section of the classifieds will be titled "Cloud of Witnesses" and will provide space for photos or tributes on the anniversaries of the deaths, ordinations, acts of conscience, arrests, whatever.

The cost will be 75 cents a word or \$30 an inch whichever is less. Payment must accompany submissions. Deadline is the 15th of the month, two months prior to publication. For instance, an item received January 15th, will run in the March issue. If you wish to include a photograph we can run them at half-column width, if you prefer.

Letters

Schooling the spirit

TWO ARTICLES in your September issue caught my attention. I left teaching 25 years ago primarily because I felt that the classroom did not permit thinking beyond conventional answers. I figured that if I wasn't going to be permitted to do my job, "Why be bothered?"

The first article that really bothered me was Manning Marable's "End of a secular faith?" I would suggest that Dr. Marable take a clue from his children. Knowledge, by itself, does not translate into power. Indeed, knowledge without power translates into educated African Americans having to buy into whatever myths of White superiority the next generation invents to maintain whatever dishonesty is required to explain the status quo.

The second article, "Teaching peace," by Craig Smith presents the views of Coleman McCarthy who condenses the arguments and lessons of all of the apostles of non-violence down through history. I would suspect that the powers-that-be would wish Mr. McCarthy every success — would even fund him — if he would confine his lessons to minority students. After all, the philosophy of nonviolent struggle would at least keep a little fun in the game.

The flaw, in my opinion, in both Marable's and McCarthy's concepts is the same — whether stated or not — that the American and Christian is "nice." If they are not nice then those gentlemen's arguments fall apart.

As Dr. Marable's African Americans and Professor McCarthy's meek get meeker you can expect that whatever earth is left won't be worth inheriting.

John Kavanaugh
Detroit, MI

Witness Praise

NICE LETTER. Nice renewal policy. As a matter of fact, I have done radical surgery on the menu of my current subscriptions, and *The Witness* remains as nearly the sole survivor. You've beaten out *The Nation* and *Harvard Gazette* because you're the one "must read" still remaining for me. Thanks for doing a great job!

Powell Woodward
Cambridge, MA

Flower gardens outside Johannesburg

Dear Witness family:

It's Spring in Johannesburg now. That means it's slightly warmer than winter was — still lovely, in the 70's, not hot. Today we're having the first rain I've seen since I came back at the beginning of the month. Joe has found a nice little house for us in a suburb of Joburg. It is in the same area where Chris Hani's family lives, and a five-minute walk away from the cemetery where he is buried. This is my first time living in the suburbs since I left my folks in Sacramento to attend University in Berkeley. It's taking some getting used to, because everything I love — music, dance, libraries, art galleries, restaurants, universities, **FOLKS IN THE STREETS** — are so farrrr away! There are some positives to being somewhat removed from the intense pace of the city, however. It is very quiet here, and I've been able to set up my laptop and printer, organize a little work space, and begin a rather timid approach to reworking poems, snatches of things, in hopes of developing another small collection.

The other positive feature of the Elspark (name of our suburb) house is the beautiful garden that the former owners created. I am in peaceful awe every morning when I go out to turn on the sprinklers, thanking God for the calm and healing that come from nature so lovingly cultivated. The family before us built the house and landscaped the garden. Now that it's spring, every plant is breaking into color: green ground cover against the amber color of the local stone, bright yellow freesia and lilies, magenta hibiscus and geraniums, purple and gold irises, bright orange buttercups, tiny pink



Gloria House Manana

and lush red-orange blossoms on bushes whose names I don't know. The scent of the lavender planted just outside our bedroom window floats in at night. Hey, if this isn't paradise, I can't imagine what is (smile)! If I had outlined to the Great Spirit what I needed in order to feel strong and healthy, I couldn't have come up with this.

I brought lots of household wares back with me, and we've purchased a couple of beds. The house is beginning to feel lived-in and warm. All of this rather normal, peaceful existence goes on despite the surrounding social upheaval and the unceasing wars and violent assaults on innocents that you are reading about and seeing on TV news. Everybody is sensibly cautious when they are out and about, and very cautious at night, but they do not let fear paralyze them. There seems to be a resignation concerning the violence, and determination to make the best of things in spite of it.

Love,
Gloria House Manana

[Contributing editor Gloria House Manana was married last June to an activist in the African National Congress.]

THE WITNESS

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Cover: *Creator* by Dierdre Luzwick. Luzwick lives in Cambridge, Wis.

Back cover: Woodcut by Robert Hodgell. Hodgell lives in Bradenton, Fla.

Keeping watch in the night

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

Scripture for this month is loaded with admonitions to stay awake, to watch, to anticipate the return of the one who owns all we have. The references aren't easy — the one who comes is like a thief in the night. Or he's coming like an absentee landlord. Or the moon will turn red and the stars fall from the sky.

In my experience the texts are accompanied by low clouds, bare trees and chilling winds. The cold itself invites an urgency, a need to be alert and prepared. And always there is that longing for home, or candle light, or hot cider, or friends. A doorway spilling light out onto the snow.

Most Advents in the last decade, Bill and I have vigilled with friends (and eventually with our daughters) outside the gates of Williams International, which created the tiny engine that makes nuclear Cruise missiles possible. We pray and sing and keep silent, while the headlights of the employees on their way to work cut through the darkness.

Sometimes I feel awkward. Sometimes I worry about the kids' fingers and cheeks and wonder if we've made a mistake pulling them from bed so early. I wonder what those who work at Williams think. I wish we could talk over coffee, but the company has built a new road that makes it impossible to even hand out leaflets.

Sometimes there's a thin moon, bare branches stark against a dark sky. It's easy to consider the complexity of our lives — the myriad of consumer goods that link our lifestyles to those of the people who produce nuclear weapons.

Thirty miles away from this research

and development site is Detroit. I can picture our Advent wreath on the kitchen table and I know that outside a war rages.

Late last summer a second family on Clarkdale, where we've lived for six years, was firebombed. The mother who is raising her children alone and caring for three beautiful foster children, sobbed on the sidewalk. My daughter Lydia turned to us and said, "I saw the boys who did this. They were on the block." How will she sleep? How will the sleep be of the foster children who were taken from their mother because her home burned to the ground?

Soon thereafter a woman was murdered at our bank machine by a 14-year-old and a nine-year-old. Nightly we wake to gun fire, counting the rounds and drifting back to sleep trusting that if we stay horizontal we'll be okay, knowing there's no point in calling the police.

Recently, Bill and I decided to move. But just after we closed on a Detroit home on Larkins Street (where there is a greater critical mass of long-term friends, many with children the age of ours), Larkins experienced its first drive-by shooting. A car full of young men shot into the wrong home. When they came back to correct their error, they caught a teenage boy in the neck. Deb McEvoy, a friend of ours and a nurse, knelt beside him staunching the blood before he was taken to the hospital.

I find myself relieved that our Larkins' friends with whom we have vigilled against nuclearism for years are now holding neighborhood meetings to work through what it means to call for police protection when traditionally we'd prefer a personalist approach; what it means to feel afraid of and angry at the youth for whom we'd like to advocate; what it

means to find words in our own mouths that sound so much like those of the people who relocated to the suburbs 30 years ago.

Intellectually we all understand that Detroit is the poorest city in the nation, still reeling from a generation of damage done during the Reagan era. We know the problems are systemic and that some white collar folks are getting rich off the despair, the guns and the drugs.

Peggy Gavan, a close friend who is also a mother on Clarkdale, smiles across the room as our community names the incongruities, the fears during a shared homily at the Catholic Worker House.

It's a small consolation, but one that promises a lot — any vestiges of classic liberalism in our community are crumbling. We will not be able to posture, like benevolent aristocrats, on social issues that do not affect us directly. We will not be God's gift to the underprivileged.

The time I found it easiest to read the Bible, I was in jail (Advent, 1983) for trespass at Williams International. I knew myself to be lonely, without property or much privilege. For the first time, scripture's words of assurance to the least spoke to me. My sense of myself as the rich young ruler slipped away. I was alone in the dark. I needed God more than I feared God's demands.

I'm alone in the dark now. It will be easy to pray for ransom. We'll pray for friends we've left on Clarkdale, for our community, for the childhood of our daughters, for the youth of Detroit. The moon has turned red and we are awake. There's got to be a way that God can make out of no way.

W

editor's note

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

Hope, in the eyes of our contributing editors

We asked the contributing editors of The Witness to tell us which writers, artists or musicians strengthen their spirits and hope. This should allow readers to know them better and might provide last minute ideas for Christmas gifts.

Barbara Harris

I've been reading Delores S. Williams, a theologian at Union. Her new book is *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N.Y., 1993). And also, Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Beacon Press, 1993).

Carter Heyward

I'm currently drawing inspiration from: my own students; Rigoberta Menchu, *I, Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Woman in Guatemala* (London: Verso, 1984); Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*.

Gloria House Manana

Tim Blunk and Raymond Levasseur, eds. *Hauling Up the Morning (Izando la Manana)* (Trenton: The Red Sea Press). Art work, poems and other writings by political prisoners, including Assata Shakur (exiled former Black Panther). Introduction by Attorney William Kuntsler, long an advocate for civil rights workers, revolutionaries.

Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1989). Brilliant, uncompromising essays on the various forms of oppression suffered by Arab women, written by an Arab woman doctor who has been persecuted in Egypt for

her political work and her writings. *Woman Doctor*, a novel by the same author, is also excellent.

Karl Evanzz, *The Judas Factor: The Plot to Kill Malcolm X* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1992). Absolutely required reading for anyone who wants to understand definitively the role of the CIA in destroying and destabilizing liberation movements around the world, including inside the United States. Based on exhaustive research, the book indicates the potential and desire for unity among Third World movements and their leaders, and relates in detail how the U.S. government has intervened through assassination and other tactics to impede development of this unity.

Rosemari Mealy, ed., *Fidel and Malcolm: Memories of a Meeting* (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 1993). Long a leader in Cuban solidarity work, Mealy seeks to show the positive relationship that has existed historically between African-Americans and Cubans. The book features recollections of Castro's visit to Harlem by individuals who were politically active at the time. It also includes Amiri Baraka's article, "*Cuba Libré*," which documents his visit in the 1960s to the newly independent Cuba.

Wa Thong'o Ngugi, *Moving the Center: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann Educational Books, 1993). Famous Kenyan playwright, novelist and political theorist, formerly imprisoned for his political writings, has written an accessible, easy-to-read call for a break with Eurocentric ideological dominance in the arts and culture.

Andries Oliphant, ed., *Culture and*

Empowerment: Debates, Workshops, Art and Photography from the Zabalaza Festival (Johannesburg: COSAW Publishing (Pty) Ltd., 1993). A valuable introduction to current cultural development issues and evolving art forms in South Africa. Interviews with politically involved artists.

Erika Meyer

I'm consumed with learning Anglican tradition stuff for the GOE's. Reading Jeremy Taylor, one of the 17th-century Caroline Divines, I'm saying, "Wow, this is potent." There's a lot on practical spirituality, how to live a holy life. Another 17th-century piece — which Robert Sanderson preached at the request of the high sheriff of Nottingham to lawyers — denounces lawyers and judges for taking common lands away from the peasants.

Meyer commends:

The Study of Anglicanism by Stephen Sykes and John Booty (SPCK/Fortress Press, 1988).

Race Matters by Cornel West (Beacon Press, 1993).

Good News of Jesus: Reintroducing the Gospel by Bill Countryman (Cowley and Trinity Press International, 1993).

The Peaceable Kingdom, Stanley Hauerwas (Notre Dame Press, 1983).

The Emotional Incest Syndrome: What to Do When a Parent Rules Your Life, Patricia Love (Bantam, 1991).

Music: *The Dorkestra* (in which her brother plays).

Ched Myers

Politics: Daniel Kemmis, *Community and the Politics of Place* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1990). A formidable argument about economic and political "re-inhabitation" to place, in conversation with the tradition of Jeffersonian democracy.

continued on page 25

New poetry editor

Michael Lauchlan joins The Witness staff as the second in our rotation of poetry editors. Lauchlan, 39, is a poet who used to head a construction workers' cooperative and now teaches writing at Macomb County Community College. He is a father and husband in an extended-family household in Detroit. Lauchlan's interests include jazz, astronomy, photography and 'clarification of thought' at the Catholic Worker House. And the Business Goes to Pieces, a collection of Lauchlan's poetry, was published by Fallen Angel Press, Highland Park, Mich., in 1981.

Thomas Merton once noted with disdain that certain artists painted, sculpted, or wrote "about God" as though God needed their praise. Similarly, some work classified as "political" or committed" may be of no use to its readers. What we need — what we are starving for — is writing which springs from some particular geography, some time, some community.

Vital, essential writing, pushed to the limit of comprehensibility by the demands of form, vision and location, buffets writer and reader in the outrageous tradition of the prophets. The results may not sound religious. Indeed, they may seem explicitly secular and may have been uttered by professed atheists; but — like the words of the prophets — good poetry owes neither the king nor his language of rationalization. How seldom we encounter the world directly. More often we encounter the divisive "clothing" of language, preconception and stereotype. Poetry detonates our clichés and leaves us standing naked in a house without walls.

Over the next several issues, I look forward to selecting poems that prompt third and fourth readings.

— Michael Lauchlan

Liturgy on Trumbull

by Michael Lauchlan

In mid-baptism we rush from the house
to ask them to stop.
They had chased a man to the middle of this street
and were beating him.
Now he slumps near the curb while they name his crime.
I know Ronnie, the chubby guy with no shirt.
He lands one last kick on the thief's dazed face,
then backs off, cursing him loudly, demanding his "stuff."
"Go home for chrissake," his wife yells,
"or the cops'll take you." He leaves.

Ronnie's wife keeps a hand on the guy's shirtcollar
though he never even looks up,
just leans forward now and then to spit.

Someone lights a cigarette for the thief
while we talk about the city going to hell.
On someone's radio the Tigers are winning a ballgame.

My wife crosses the street holding a napkin.
For the life of me I can't think what she's carrying.
"Body of Christ," she says.



Arming Motown's children

by Camille Colatosti

“Carrying a gun makes people feel invincible,” a high school junior explains. Yet, with this instrument of invincibility:

- 16-year-old James Davis accidentally shot and killed himself;
- a 13-year old girl shot herself while playing with a gun in her apartment;
- a 15-year old high-school football player was killed in the cross fire between other teens near his school; and
- a seven-year old boy shot and killed his two-year old brother while playing with a shotgun in his home.

Each week in downtown Detroit, in front of the City-County Building, parents of slain children tell stories like these as members of Cease Fire! Coalition work to increase public awareness of gun violence.

Their message: people need to stop relying on guns for security, power and respect. As Clementine Barfield, Detroit anti-violence activist and founder of the organization Save Our Sons and Daughters, exclaims, “This love affair with guns has got to be stopped. People are dying and lately it seems more and more of them are children.”

In 1992, Detroit saw 595 murders, the majority of these by gun fire. So far in 1993, an average of five Detroit children have died from gun violence each week. Nationally, close to 12 U.S. children aged 19 and under died from gunfire each day. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, “Firearm homicide is the leading cause of death of African-American teenage boys and the second-

leading cause of death of high-school-age children in the United States.”

Is it any wonder, then, that many health experts refer to gun violence as a childhood disease that has reached epidemic proportions?

And, as bad as these numbers are for children, they represent only a portion of the yearly tally of gun destruction: In the



Eleanor Mill

United States, handguns are involved in an annual average of 9,200 murders, 12,100 rapes, 210,000 robberies and 407,600 assaults.

The Industry

Grossing nearly \$16 billion a year, the nation's 32 small ammunitions manufacturers are spread throughout the country. While the majority are located on the east coast — Connecticut, Massachusetts and New York — several manufacture in the central states: Marble Arms Corporation, for example finds its home in Michigan and the Rupp Forge Company and

Cadillac Gage Dextron are located in Ohio.

Together, these companies have supplied private citizens with nearly 200 million firearms. According to Handgun Control, Incorporated, there are 60 to 70 million handguns in households nationwide. This means that about one in every four homes contains a handgun.

Despite these figures, the 2.6-million-member National Rifle Association, the key player in the nation's gun lobby, is worried. Since 1980, gun sales have declined. To combat this trend, the indus-

try has several strategies: first, as the NRA magazine *American Rifleman* explains, “The industry needs to find new markets to survive.”

Gun manufacturers are now courting women. New gun models specifically designed for “ladies” include the Colt All American Model 2000 and Colt 380 Compact pistols — slimmer, shorter versions of traditional handguns. Producers' advertisements focus on the need for women to achieve safety by carrying a firearm:

- A recent Colt advertisement, for example, pictures a mother and child. The

Camille Colatosti is a Detroit-area freelance writer. Artist Eleanor Mill is syndicated from Hartford, Conn.

caption? "Self-protection is more than your right ... it's your responsibility."

- another NRA ad reads: "He's followed you for two weeks ... he'll rape you in two minutes"; and

- an ad in *Women & Guns* magazine features this headline: "2:00 a.m. is not time to wish you'd bought a Colt."

Yet, for women, as for most victims of violence, a gun in the home is rarely used for self-defense. Instead, it leads to tragic domestic accidents and violence. A woman's gun is, in fact, often used against her. A Center for Disease Control and Prevention report reveals that, "When a gun was involved in domestic violence, death was 12 times more likely. Overwhelmingly, it was the woman who died."

In addition to reaching new markets, the industry has become increasingly bold in its efforts to avoid laws against banned assault weapons. According to the *Legal Action Report* of the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, when several state and local assault weapons laws banned the Colt AR-15, a semi-automatic version of the U.S. Army's M-16, Colt "introduced a virtually identical rifle under the name 'Colt Sporter.' " Due to aggressive marketing, this "Sporter" made Colt again the leading manufacturer of assault weapons, producing 38,013 in 1990.

Other assault weapons include Springfield Armory's new "sporterized" SART-4800, the Intratec TEC-9 and TEC-22, the Auto Ordnance Thompson Assault Rifles, and the Cobray MAC-10 and Mac II. Despite the "sporter" in several product names, manufacturers do not even pretend that these weapons can be used for hunting. The Cobray MAC-11, for example, is advertised as "the gun that made the '80s roar."

According to journalist Erik Larson, who is currently writing a book on the handgun industry, "The Cobray became the favorite of drug gangs nationwide in the 1980s." Citing a study of all guns

K M A R T & G U N S



Kmart is one of the leading retailers selling ammunition to Detroit youth, according to anti-handgun activists in the area.

Members of SOSAD (Save Our Sons and Daughters) were asked to prove that underage youth could buy bullets, so they sent a 15-year-old and a 16-year-old with a reporter to a suburban Kmart where a clerk sold them the ammunition.

Kmart has been sued repeatedly by people who claim the chain acted recklessly in the sale of fire arms. One woman, shot by her boyfriend who had purchased a gun at Kmart even though he was so drunk that he couldn't fill out the forms, was recently awarded \$12.5 million.

According to *Business Week*, discount stores account for \$81 million of

the \$488 million of annual rifle sales, and \$77 million of the \$433 million annual sales of shotguns. Wal-Mart leads all other retailers of handguns. Kmart sells handguns through its subsidiary, Sports Authority.

Representatives of Target say the chain discontinued its hunting rifle sales in the late 1970s because they were inconsistent with a family ambience, but Kmart and Wal-Mart are said to use gun sales as a way to lure male shoppers into their stores, according to the *Business Week*.

The Cease Fire! Coalition of Detroit sent a certified letter to Joseph Antonini, president of the Kmart Corporation, requesting clarification of Kmart's policy on the training of employees who sell guns last January. They received no response.

confiscated in Detroit from January 1989 through April 1990, Larson reports that “the Cobray was first among assault weapons and fifth among all models.”

Handgun Control Incorporated notes other shocking examples of industry and NRA conduct. Both defended the sale of “armor-piercing bullets” -- ammunition that can penetrate bullet-proof vests. In addition, both defended the production and sale of plastic, undetectable handguns — weapons for which there can be no purpose but violent crime.

Least restrictive country in the world

Many believe that the only real solution to gun violence in this country involves regulating the production and distribution of weapons. Cheryl Brollins, a spokesperson for the Washington, D.C.-based Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, says that the United States can learn a lesson from other developed countries. “When it comes to handgun laws,” she explains, “we are the least restrictive country in the world.”

While over 10,000 people were killed by handguns in the United States in 1990, just 22 were killed in Great Britain, 13 in Sweden, 91 in Switzerland, 87 in Japan, 10 in Australia and 68 in Canada.

The reason for the gap? Other nations control handgun distribution. Great Britain, for example, requires a valid certificate for the purchase of a handgun. Few individuals who are not members of licensed gun clubs with gun storage at the club may own handguns. Sweden requires a license to purchase or possess a handgun and licenses are extremely difficult to obtain. Switzerland and Australia likewise require a background check, a permit to

purchase a handgun and handgun registration. And in Japan, private handgun ownership is prohibited except by antique gun collectors and members of licensed shooting teams.

By contrast, says Brollins, U.S. federal law simply requires that one fill out a two-page questionnaire—Form 4473.



Eleanor Mill

This asks the would-be purchaser if he or she is a drug addict, a convicted felon, mentally ill or an illegal alien. It also asks if he or she has renounced U.S. citizenship or has been dishonorably discharged from the armed forces.

The form then remains in the store, unchecked, for later reference. It's looked at only when the gun is used in a crime

and traced to the dealership. No centralized records of gun sales and registration are kept by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, or any other police or government agency, unless specified by individual state, county or local law.

California and Connecticut offer the most comprehensive state gun laws. In California, consumers must wait 15 days to purchase any firearm. In Connecticut, purchasers must wait 14 days. During that time, authorities conduct a background check, stopping consumers who have felony records, who have been convicted of sex crimes, who are under restraining orders for domestic violence and who are underage. California even requires handgun buyers to take a safety course or pass a safety exam.

But it's easy for criminals to cross state lines to make their purchases. In fact, an ATF study of handguns used in crime found that “the percentage of out-of-state [handgun] purchases is directly proportional to the strength of local firearm regulations.”

To regularize gun legislation, activists favor national laws. In particular, they look towards the Brady Bill which is now slated for congressional consideration. Named after Press Secretary James Brady, who was injured in John Hinckley's attempt to assassinate President Ronald Reagan, the bill would require a national waiting

period of five business days for handgun purchases. It would also require local law enforcement officials to conduct background checks on handgun consumers.

Surveys consistently show that most citizens and even gun owners favor the kinds of restrictions outlined in the Brady Bill. A March 1993 *USA Today* poll, for example, revealed that 88 percent of gun

owners support the Brady Bill; 60 percent favor a total ban on the possession of assault weapons; and 60 percent favor limiting individuals to purchasing one gun a month.

More gun dealers than gas stations

Still, activists agree that the Brady Bill is one very small piece of what's needed. Josh Sugarmann, of the Washington, D.C.-based Violence Policy Center, explains. "As important a political issue as the bill is, it will do little to really stop gun violence. Most criminals don't buy their guns in stores."

Many criminals do, however, buy their guns from one of the more than 280,000 licensed gun dealers in the United States. According to the Violence Policy Center study, *More Dealers than Gas Stations*, virtually any U.S. citizen who pays a \$10 yearly fee to the ATF can become a federally licensed gun dealer. Less than 20 percent of these dealers actually conduct business from a store. Most sell guns out of their homes and cars, in alleys and in bars. Of the 16,000 gun dealers in Michigan, for example, only about 3,000 operate storefronts.

Dealers, Sugarmann explains, can "ship and receive firearms and ammunition in interstate commerce via common carrier and purchase weapons at wholesale prices. Most activity can be conducted free of local and state regulations that apply to individual 'over-the-counter' purchase, such as waiting periods or background checks."

Because of the cursory nature of the application process, those with felony records can avoid detection merely by

having relatives, girlfriends or even pets register for them.

To prepare himself for his research and forthcoming book on the gun industry, journalist Erik Larson applied for a gun license on May 15, 1992. Five weeks

later, his license arrived. He realized then that an applicant does not need to demonstrate any knowledge of firearms.

As he explains in the January 1993 *Atlantic*, "It is much harder to get a license to operate a powerboat on Chesapeake Bay, to become a substitute

teacher in New Jersey, or to get a California driver's license. ... No one called to verify my application. No one interviewed me to see if in fact I planned to sell weapons."

There remain only 400 ATF inspectors responsible for policing the entire country's gun sales. Meanwhile, there are over 200 million firearms in the possession of private U.S. citizens, and the \$16 billion-a-year gun industry continues to produce a new handgun every 20 seconds.

Is it surprising, then, that almost anyone, regardless of age or criminal record, can purchase the kind of gun he or she wants? "Teens tell me that they can get any gun within 24 hours," explains Detroit Cease Fire! activist and Roman Catholic priest Tom Lumpkin. Guns can be purchased on the street, or at numerous weekend gun shows.

Gun culture

For Lumpkin, the accessibility of guns remains one of the main reasons why people don't feel free. "How free can we be when we're terrified?" he asks. "To-

day teenagers are more and more fearful of other teenagers even around and in school. Most people do not feel free to walk the streets at night.

"This situation is not normal. It is not to be accepted as just the way it is. One important step towards solving the gun crisis involves changing public opinion about firearms. We have to change the image of a gun to a negative one. People did this with smoking. Even smokers see this. It's the combination of all the efforts that will bring about this change: legal challenges and educational campaigns, along with community vigils."

Faith and resistance

At least four faith communities which have traditionally challenged U.S. militarism and nuclear weapons are turning their attention to handgun violence.


Folks at Dorothy Day Catholic Worker Community, in Washington, D.C., and at Jonah House, in Baltimore, plan civil disobedience actions on the Feast of Holy Innocents, December 28, at an NRA office, the Pentagon and a gun shop.

In Louisville, Ky, the Fellowship of Reconciliation has launched a project opposing handgun violence and working to create economic opportunities.

In Michigan, activists including Clementine Barfield and Tom Lumpkin are organizing Michigan's ninth Faith and Resistance Retreat for May 20-22.

In the past, retreats have included anti-nuclear speakers from Greenham Common, England or from plowshare actions. After a day of Bible study, conversation and discernment, retreatants prepare to participate in or to support a civil disobedience action.

To mark Pentecost, 1994, participants can act at Williams International in Walled Lake, Mich. or at a local site where handguns or ammunition are available.

Handgun murder, they say, "is the shadow, the hometown consequence, of resorting to military violence." 

"Today teenagers are more and more fearful of other teenagers. Most people do not feel free to walk the streets at night. This situation is not normal. It is not to be accepted as just the way it is."

— Tom Lumpkin

Holding to the light: Detroitters resist violence

by Eddie B. Allen, Jr.

"It seems like everybody got a gun just to be carrying one."

— Odell Spears, 17-year-old
Detroit resident

I still can't get over how completely fooled I was by the festive appearance of the small, orange envelope with the gold seal.

I was certain it had to be a banquet invitation, or some other announcement of a special event which I would gladly attend. Such were the perks of being a media representative!

But my excitement quickly turned to overwhelming depression, as I realized the envelope contained a thank-you note from the family of a teenager I had written about. The youth was the 37th person between the ages of 17 and 19 to be killed by gunfire on the streets of Detroit in 1993.

Since that morning, I have carried the envelope around like a badge in my pocket. I have carried the image of the young man's face like a picture, framed on the wall of my mind. But before I even met his family members — who smiled as they told me about his favorite food, his hobbies, his nickname — I carried with me the realization that black males are the most feared, and, therefore, the most vulnerable members of society.

I take pride in the fact that the American establishment fears me. It cannot



Denise Melonson (left) lights a candle for Deborah Cosby, at a candlelight vigil for Melonson's son, Douglas, who was killed in February, 1993 while breaking up a fight at his sister's sweet 16 party. Cosby is the mother of Rachel Tackett, a 16-year-old from Lincoln Park, Mich. who was also killed in February, 1993.

Jim West

justifiably lock me away or kill me for having a mind and using my mind to critique it.

But what about black males who do not learn to use their minds? What about those who are culturally malnourished, conveniently undersocialized and consequently ignored like throw-aways?

The American power structure has displayed means, motive and opportunity for crippling the capability of the black male at an early stage. By failing to expose him to historical figures or experi-

crippled him in the first place.

While I understand all this, I am aware that understanding will never be enough. I know changes must be made in the lives of black men, if we wish to survive.

Yet, I truly wonder if the plague of guns and violence against us will ever be lifted from cities like the one I was born in. With no answer in sight, and feeling very much like a vulnerable civilian in the urban war, I consult other members of Detroit's decreasing moving target population.

Eddie B. Allen, Jr. is a columnist for *The Southend*, Wayne State University's newspaper. **Jim West** works for *Labor Notes* in Detroit.

"It seems like everybody got a gun just to be carrying one," says Odell Spears, a 17-year-old at Detroit's Western High School.

"You can get a gun anywhere," he says. "You can go on the corner of any big street, stand on the corner and ask for one and you'll find it." In his southwest side community, which has become prime territory for the Detroit Police Gang Squad, he says 22-caliber pistols are particularly accessible.

Errol Henderson, a member of Save Our Sons and Daughters (SOSAD), counsels the friends and family members of youths killed by violence, and performs community outreach in efforts to start what SOSAD members call "a peace movement." [See profile on page 26.]

"We get these reports of gunshot victims every month, but the numbers don't seem to be decreasing," says Henderson, 31. "This whole subculture of violence in movies and in television is being instilled in our children."

SOSAD was founded in Detroit in 1987 by Clementine Barfield, after her son was killed by gunfire. Today, the support group and conflict resolution organization has chapters all around the country.

SOSAD has also attended the recent National Urban Peace and Justice Summits which have been held since May. Henderson says SOSAD will be organizing the next Summit in Detroit.

The conferences deal with issues such as gang warfare and random street violence. Youths, who see older gang members calling truces and declaring peace, are often inspired to declare peace with their peers, Henderson says.

"It is the young people's observation of who will take risks and do what they can to secure their own" that provides a model to follow, he says. Unfortunately, he adds, community members who display such attitudes are most often drug

dealers or violent offenders.

Henderson says many youths carry weapons because they feel their security is actually threatened.

"They're associating their manhood and womanhood with carrying a firearm, and part of it is fashionable, but part of it is due to living in a war zone."

Misunderstanding what young men and women experience in their daily lives is what makes many conflict-resolution groups useless, he adds. Grassroots involve-

ment, such as attending funerals, building memorials for victims of violence and recruiting support from neighborhoods, he says, is needed from organizations if they are to be effective.

"We [at SOSAD] don't have to drive past Northwestern High School and ask people what those eights [or gang signs] spray-painted around the building mean," Henderson adds. "We already know."

Approximately 12,352 homicides were committed in Detroit from 1972 to 1992, according to official city figures. Henderson says the large number and time-span indicates that Detroit is in a grieving process.

"What youth is going to listen to you talking, when they're mourning the death of their friend?"

Spears tells me he has to talk to his 32-year-old brother to hear about a time when gun violence was only a remote fear.

"He told me back in the '70s, if you had a fight, nobody would be thinking about a gun," Spear says. "You'd have a fistfight, and if you lost, you just lost ... But now, you might get shot."

Ed Gray, a 29-year-old motivational speaker and writer, is initiator of Project Exposure, a mentor program based at

Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church. He teaches Project Exposure's 35 black male participants to resist genocide.

Gray views the vindictive attitude of many black males as one of the most destructive elements of the crisis.

"When a kid is out in a malevolent society, he has so many things he can say

yes to. Programs like Project Exposure allow them to say yes to God and themselves."

Gray agrees with Chicago educator Jawanza Kunjufu's analysis of the ill

The American power structure has displayed means, motive and opportunity for crippling the capability of the black male at an early stage.

effects of a lack of intellectual stimulation as put forth in his books *Countering the Conspiracy To Kill Young Black Boys, Volumes I-III*.

"When a student is not clear on why he comes to school, he's going to do what entertains him," Gray says, adding that this may mean being a clown or being tough.

Henderson says that political support must accompany education and self-determination, if a peace movement is to be created in Detroit. He believes political influence should come from the city's new mayor-elect, former Michigan Supreme Court Justice Dennis Archer.

"We need articulation of the importance of community-based organizations," Henderson says. "There is importance in imagery and symbolic positions."

If public recognition of those involved with Detroit's peace movement is any indication, Archer may offer the leadership Henderson hopes for.

Just hours after I spoke with Henderson, Detroit's newly elected mayor stood at a podium preparing to deliver his victory speech. He gazed out into a sea of faces with cameras flashing and tapes rolling, and, Archer said: "I see Errol Henderson from SOSAD."

TW



Take and Eat

Lavrans Nielsen

Eucharist as resistance

by Holly Bridges Elliott

The worn kneelers creak and heads bow; from a back row a baby lets out a sustained squeal, and on the street outside a motorcycle blasts by. Parishioners gathered in St. Paul, Minnesota, are celebrating the eucharist. It appears to be your average act of sincere Christian worship at a 90-year-old stone church with impressive stained glass.

But according to Bill Teska, priest-in-charge at St. Paul's on the Hill, the gathered faithful are part of a subversive, political drama. Those celebrating the eucharist are in fact affecting the transfiguration of the world. They are, he says, engaged in an act of political defiance.

"We have tended to reduce the eucharist to an individual transaction, to a retreat for our own self-empowerment," says Teska, "or we make it simply a way of expressing our good feelings about each other." Although these are legitimate aspects of it, the eucharist is more, he insists.

"The Church is here not only for personal transformation but to offer transformation to the world and to be God's agents for redemption." The eucharist, he says, is like time travel: it

"The eucharist is an act of political defiance against the rulers and powers who do not seek God's alternative for the future," says Bill Teska.

opens the window for eternity to break into time, and we are channels of this mystical in-breaking, not receptacles. As channels of this transfiguring grace, we are unavoidably thrust into the "political" realm, says Teska, a long-time peace activist who came to St. Paul's after working for two years with the Christic Institute in Washington, D.C., a public interest group perhaps best known for its investigations into U.S. government connections to drug trafficking.

"The eucharist is an act of political defiance against the rulers and powers who do not seek God's alternative for the future," says Teska. These power politics are being played out in the cosmic realm, as the apostle Paul declares in Eph. 6:12: "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against rulers and authorities and the cosmic powers" (Eph. 6:12). But they have an effect in concrete, earthly reality.

After all, when we celebrate the eucharist, we celebrate the resurrection. And Jesus' tomb was sealed with the seal of Caesar. "The resurrection was a defiance of imperial power."

In its place is a new kingdom, which we participate in proleptically through the eucharistic feast. Teska is comfortable with the word *kingdom* despite its having fallen out of favor because of its patriarchal, hierarchical overtones.

"I like the kingdom symbol because

Holly Bridges Elliott is a freelance writer and editor who lives in St. Paul, Minnesota. She holds an M.A. in theology and is active in several peace and justice organizations. Artist **Lavrans Nielsen** was a Trappist monk at Gethsemani, Ky.

this kingdom is a new reality. Jesus was a threat from the beginning because his was another kind of kingdom, characterized by *shalom*, which includes justice not just tranquility, and by the absence of domination." The passing of the peace during the liturgy, therefore, takes on profound implications. It is not "a foretaste of the glory of the coffee hour to come," jokes Teska.

Neither does Teska avoid the symbolism of warfare. "The redemption of the world is an ongoing process. It is a war between the powers," he says. "Governments are somewhere in between. They are human structures that have a tendency to evil. But our war is not a war of the Crusades. It is a spiritual war, waged with love, self-sacrifice, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving."

The sacramental life offers us a chance to weaken the bonds that hold us captive, he believes.

"As we become more and more rooted in the transfiguring grace of the sacraments, we become less and less spiritually vulnerable to the sanctions of the Prince of this world. We are not pulled into the whirlpool of death. We care less and less about what those powers can do." Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador was an example of such a transformation, offers Teska. Romero's life was a dramatic odyssey from the safety of silence and conformity to the risk of defiance and courage.

During the eucharistic liturgy, "we are involved in something much more powerful than we think, and we may not even know what we're doing. But since this is God's act, it doesn't matter if we

have a felt consciousness of what we're doing," Teska states.

Some parishioners at St. Paul's on the Hill do feel part of something cosmic and extraordinary during the eucharist.

Steve Reindl, a former member of the vestry, likens what goes on during the eucharist to intercessory prayer. "We believe that intercessory prayer makes a difference and affects change,

although we don't know precisely how," he says. "Yet there is an intercessory spirituality, too, that brings about transformation. For a long time I've perceived the eucharist as a constructive, transforming act, but I hadn't experienced it to this extent before Bill Teska's celebration of the sacrament."

How does this priest convey the power and relevance of the eucharist? One way is through his gestures during the eucharistic canon. Teska's solemn, deliberate moves look surprisingly like the gestures of an Orthodox priest—no movement is gratuitous, each movement brims with

symbolism. "He celebrates the eucharist with such awe and reverence that you can't help but know that we're part of something vast and mysterious here," remarks Julia Bergstrom, a member of St. Paul's for eight years.

Teska makes good use of the Anglo-Catholic tradition of dedicating the mass. He takes the opportunity — just after the sermon and announcements — to give a "little lecture

on current events," as he calls it; "what we parishioners fondly call his second sermon," says Lee Stagg.

After former Vice President Dan Quayle's pronouncements on "traditional family values," for instance, Teska decried the exploitation of the family for political grandstanding as "unseemly" and dedicated the mass to families, proclaim-

ing that "wherever there is love, a family is holy; love sanctifies a family, no matter how the family is configured." During the L.A. riots he denounced people's sanctimonious speck-of-dust condemnations of "those people" and the refusal to acknowledge the "log" in our own eye—our easy acceptance of militarism, weapons proliferation, and international violence.

"His sermons and newsletter writings and the dedications give me something else to take with me to the communion table," says Stagg.

Teska likes to quote Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann: "The sacraments are for the life of the world." And St. Paul's on the Hill proclaims the eucharist's importance by offering it nine times a week from September to June. Teska said he relies on adult education and retreats as additional ways to explore the eucharist's wealth of meaning.

"When we celebrate the eucharist here at St. Paul's," says Marcia Hunter, a member since 1985, "it is never performance. It is worship."

The passing of the peace during the liturgy, therefore, takes on profound implications. It is not "a foretaste of the glory of the coffee hour to come."

"The redemption of the world is an ongoing process. It is a war between the powers. But our war is a spiritual war, waged with love, self-sacrifice, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving."



On being out there

by Julie A. Wortman

William Swing, Episcopal bishop of California and gay-rights supporter, recently wrote the clergy in his diocese that, for the moment, "We've gone about as far as we can go" in dealing the key issues of gay and lesbian Episcopalians.

Swing estimated that "100 percent of the bishops who discover that there are homosexual clergy in their dioceses will not take action to depose homosexual clergy." But he added 95 percent will not ordain them knowingly.

Ninety-eight percent of the bishops, he said, will be unlikely to allow same-sex marriages or blessings, in the next decade or two.

Nowhere did Swing make reference to a letter the bishops had received shortly before arriving in Panama from the retired bishop of Utah, Otis Charles. In it Charles disclosed that he is a gay man, the first Episcopal Church bishop ever to say so publicly.

Perhaps no one in Panama thought the self-revelations of a 67-year-old retiree of much significance to the ongoing life and politics of the church.

Strange that in an institution devoted to celebrating the Gospel, the power of truth-telling should be so underestimated.

"I ... believe God has drawn me to speak the truth of my experience," Charles told the bishops. "And I believe that as gay men and lesbians speak openly, telling the stories of their lives, the community of faith is strengthened."

While heterosexism encourages gay

and lesbian Christians to understand being honest about their sexuality in confessional terms, as the first necessary step in self-denying repentance, most people, like Charles, find that telling the truth to self, God and others is, instead, a liberating blow for self-acceptance and spiritual strength — and, therefore, a healing gift to the church.

"I think it is spiritual suicide if we can't be out," says Jane Spahr, a Presbyterian minister and a founding member of Christian Lesbians OUT Together (CLOUT). "Any system that encourages hiding is wrong. If I can't talk to you about being lesbian, about [my partner] Connie, I'm in trouble. When people cannot be fully honest they can't be fully present. It isn't healthy for them."

In November, 1992, the Permanent Judicial Commission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) declared invalid Spahr's call to be co-rector of the Downtown United Presbyterian Church of Rochester, N.Y., because she is a lesbian. Last June, the Presbyterians' General Assembly affirmed this decision.

Still, like Spahr, an increasing number of gay and lesbian Episcopalians, especially clergy, believe that only by their flatly risking rejection now will the church be moved.

"People ought to be out in the church — we'd solve the problem of homophobia and heterosexism a lot faster," says David Norgard, an Episcopal priest who directs the Diocese of Newark's Oasis, a ministry with and for gay and lesbian people.

"For the gay person who came out in the 1950s there was no possibility for personal or greater good. Now there is such an awareness that there is a very real



Keeping Watch

possibility that the person who is out will serve the greater good even if he or she can't get a job."

Happily, despite the odds, some openly gay and lesbian clergy have been managing to get parish positions. Cases in point are Barry Stopfel and Elizabeth Carl, whose homosexual identities became public knowledge because of controversy over their ordinations at the 1991 General Convention in Phoenix. Stopfel is now rector of St. George's Church in Maplewood, N.J., and Carl is on staff at Epiphany Church in Washington, D.C.

Integrity, the national advocacy organization for gay and lesbian Episcopalians founded by Louie Crew nearly 20 years ago has had a major role in encouraging gay and lesbian Episcopalians to be

Julie A. Wortman is managing editor of *The Witness*. Artist **Tana Moore** lives in Southfield, Mich.



Tana Moore

counted in the fight for equal access to ordination and celebration of their committed relationships. If not for the group's consistent pro-out politics, once considered extremist, Charles and many others might still be in the closet today.

Integrity's current mostly gay/lesbian membership numbers about 25,000, or one percent of Episcopal Church membership. An estimated 10 percent of Episcopalians are gay and lesbian.

"Until more of the lesbian/gay community becomes politicized we won't have the influence [to change church policies]," says Kim Byham, longtime Integrity activist and the group's current director of communications. "If we had 250,000 members it would happen."

In the light of such a promise — and

the stalemate Swing predicts — why do many gay and lesbian Christians balk at being more open?

Cowardice is a frequent charge, especially from outsiders. One straight social-activist priest, for example, recently claimed that closeted persons "have been collaborators in silence and thus colleagues in collusion" to perpetuate the church's heterosexism.

But even among gay and lesbian people who agree that the more who are out the better, being "in" or "out" of the closet is never the clear-cut choice that such politically correct advocates believe it to be.

"One is not either 'out' or 'not-out,'" said one gay priest who was out in the nomination process for bishop in Vermont and very nearly made the final slate. "There are infinite gradations. You are out to yourself, to one person, to the whole world. I don't know whether to describe myself as 'out' or 'not-out.' I'm out to a huge number of people and not out to a huge number of people I have no reason to let know I am gay."

For this man and many others, choosing how and when to be out is an evolving vocational and ethical discernment.

"For me to come fully out in my parish and diocese at this time," one lesbian rector who is out to her bishop and many others said, "I'd be putting the focus on me rather than on what I am trying to help my parish become right now. At this stage, I just come out to each person and in each situation as the occasion demands — depending on whether remaining silent about my sexuality would be a barrier to my participating effectively in a situation of intimate truth telling."

She and others also fear being branded "professional" gay people. "Being gay is not all of who I am," one man pointed out.

Calculating one's tolerance for living with the threat of physical danger is also part of the equation — as lesbian theologian Virginia Mollencott has pointed out, no one would ask a Jew living in Nazi Germany to publicly announce the fact.

According to Martin Hiraga, organizer for the Anti-Violence Project at the national Gay and Lesbian Task Force in Washington, D.C., violence against gay men and lesbians is on the increase nationwide, particularly in smaller communities like Cincinnati, Ohio, Lewiston, Maine, and across Oregon where "religious extremists" are "spouting their anti-gay rhetoric."

The times are threatening, but advocates like Norgard insist that makes it all

the more critical that people come out — for clergy he considers it a moral imperative.

"For me, the distinction is in being in or outside the church. If you are outside the church, it is not the same ethical question as for a person whose very profession is

But even among gay and lesbian people who agree that the more who are out the better, being "in" or "out" of the closet is never the clear-cut choice that some politically correct advocates believe it to be.

to tell the truth. The institution is not always a truth-telling institution, but I don't think that makes a difference."

A gay postulant who has been fully "out" in the ordination process and hopes to be ordained next summer agrees.

"I believe that silence equals death," he said. "The church's norms are that you should be silent and invisible. In a sense, the Episcopal Church pioneered the don't-ask-don't-tell policy. I find that despicable. Honesty is the genuine pre-condition of any fruitful ministry." **TW**

We asked a random handful of subscribers if the Bible has ever been particularly powerful to them.

**Carman St.
John Hunter
Brooklyn, N.Y.**

"About 45 years ago, in the People's Republic of China, just after the People's Army came in, I was teaching at St. Hilda's, a girls' school, together with Huang Hsien-Yuin [whom the rest of the world knows as Jane Huang, one of the first women ordained in China].

"We had a Bible study with some of the students. After liberation, the students who had become good Communists (we called them 'young pioneers' at the time) made fun of the Christian students, and would write their names down in their books and say they were going to report them.

Mandatory exercises began at 6 a.m., so we would meet for Bible study at 5 a.m. Those students were being told day after day that loving people, loving the poor, doing good works, etc., was what the Party would lead them to do and that Christianity would only infect their mind—yet these kids who would continue to come to Bible study would tell what the readings meant to them, there on the front line. It was a significant and moving time to realize how immediate the words of the Gospels and the words of St. Paul could be to these young people, who were going through the same sort of persecution the Bible was talking about.

"People were living on the edge of a fearful and unknown future, and the Bible



played an absolutely central role in their faith. When China went to Korea in December of 1950, Americans in China became [defined as] enemy agents and we had to leave. But in spite of it all, and though many dreadful mistakes were certainly made—the Cultural Revolution, for example—I still believe that China is better off now that it was before the liberation."

Louise Smith, Holt, Mich.

"I'm not one who believes in the literal, word-for-word meaning of the Bible, like some people. I believe that God gave us our own brains to apply reason to what we read—and besides, what some of those old-timers said was not necessarily the word of God!"

Smith, a nurse and a health educator, finds bigotry against homosexuals especially upsetting: "I don't think Jesus ever said we're to beat up on homosexuals. The main thing I think we're to hold to, the most important thing, is that we're to love God with all our heart, and love one another." Smith reads *Forward Movement* every night.

Acts where Gamaliel, a member of the Sanhedrin, is debating what I guess was then being called the 'Jesus Movement.' He says, 'If this movement is of human origin, it will fall to pieces, but if it's of God, you can never stop it—so don't touch it!' That really resolved the question for me. I don't believe genitals have anything to do with serving God.

"Then about 20 years ago I got zapped with the Holy Spirit during a retreat. I got into serious Bible study then. I just love talking with Southern Baptists now because I got so comfortable with the Bible.

"One of the sad things is that Jesus is seen as important only because he is found in the Bible," adds Palmer, a retired priest, "when it should be the other way around: the only reason Christians should read the Bible is because Jesus is there. To worship the Bible as some do is nothing less than idolatry."

Jane Robertson, Yuma, Ariz.

"I was quite devoted to the Bible about 15 years ago, when I first accepted Christ as my personal savior. I wish I were as zealous now! I just inhaled the Bible. I

The Word in our hearts: a survey of *Witness* readers

By Craig R. Smith

**Richard Palmer
Denver, Co.**

"I was struggling with the ordination of women. I was very much opposed to the idea originally—when I came across the passage in



couldn't get enough of it. This went on for years. For a long time I was very angry; I wanted to know why it had been kept from me. I wanted to know where it had been all my life. I was in my early 50s then.

Now the Bible is just a mainstay to me—it's an old shoe, an old friend, and I read it daily. I miss it if I don't read it

Craig R. Smith lives and writes in Silver Spring, Maryland. He is currently working on an inclusive-language translation of the Bible.

every day; the early morning is my time.” Robertson follows the daily lectionary readings and reads on her own.

Diane Tickell, Auke Bay, Al.

“There are certainly times when it hasn’t been particularly special to me.

But I recall a time when I was reading the *Letters to Young Churches*, the J.B. Phillips translation of the epistles. I was laid up with back surgery and it was the first time in my life when I was totally dependent on other people.

I had been dallying around with my Christian faith—I wasn’t a notorious sinner or anything—when I realized I had to make some changes. When you become a committed Christian instead of a nominal Episcopalian, your life changes. I became aware of the reality of Jesus. There are simply parts of the Bible that impinge on our life.

I had a child who had Down’s Syndrome—he’s in his 40s now—and it was the first time in my life when I experienced a genuine humility. I didn’t feel it was a horrible punishment; rather, I was aware of God’s love, even if I didn’t understand that love.” Tickell is a retired Episcopal priest.

Barbara Conyers, Washington, D.C.



“The times the Bible speaks especially powerfully to me are the times when I have wanted to read the same passage over again in Spanish,” said Conyers, who studied Spanish in college and later worshiped with a Spanish-speaking community.

“It’s like being beckoned to come and taste and see how good the Lord is. When I read the passage in Spanish, sometimes I experience a warming of the heart. I like to think it’s the same kind of heart warm-

ing which was experienced by those long ago who asked each other, ‘Didn’t our hearts burn within us when he talked with us on the road?’”

Bill Convey, Charlotte, N. C.

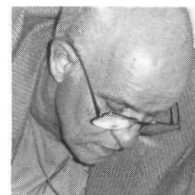


“I like the part of the New Testament which says, ‘Blessed are the peacemakers.’ The Old Testament has too much killing for me, though I like where it talks about beating swords into plowshares. I’m a peace person—I belong to the Episcopal Peace Fellowship. I do read the Bible, though not every day. Some of the Bible I just don’t understand, like the Book of Revelation—it’s right over my head—so I stick to passages along peace and justice lines.

David Fox, Tulsa, Ok.

“I just got back from a clergy conference with John Brackett on the theology of stewardship in both the Old and New Testaments, and it was very helpful and insightful. So you might say that right now is one of those times when the Bible is particularly meaningful for me.”

John Slee Seattle, Wash.



“The Bible means something special to me every day. It was special when my mother gave me my very first Bible; it was the key to eternal life. The great thing about the Bible is that it’s very adaptable if you want it to be.

I find I get a great deal of faith from others’ faith, both in the stories in the Bible and in those around me. The Bible has meant a lot to me and to the people I serve, who are Cambodians. I was asked

by the bishop at the age of 74 to take over a Cambodian parish, where very few people spoke English. The idea was so preposterous that I knew it had to be the Holy Spirit at work. Now, after four months, we are presenting three people for the priesthood, and in a few weeks 35 people will stand for baptism or confirmation. The Bible is central to all of that.

Barbara Mudge, Simi Valley, Cal.



“I remember a time when I threw the Bible on the floor and stomped on it, then picked it up and read the Magnificat. It was in 1981, when I was in my last year of seminary and my husband had just been diagnosed with cancer. It was a turning point in my life. I felt like the story of the Israelites wandering in the desert and complaining to God and Moses about their plight and whining about all the wonderful food they had back in Egypt. So I go back to the Magnificat to get myself out of it.

“During the [Los Angeles] riots I read the resurrection story over and over. Of course, we were in Simi Valley, where the Rodney King trial was held and where the jury acquitted the police officers. Everyone in Simi Valley was cast as white racists—we all were part of that jury that let the police go. We closed the church on Pentecost and went to South Central L.A. to worship there—we later entered into a covenant relationship with one of the churches there.

The Bishop’s Committee gave us a rather hard time about it—‘you could get shot at,’ they said. Of course we could get shot at. That’s precisely why we had to do it. We are a white, Anglo community; it has been quite a pilgrimage for us, and we’ve needed to be grounded in scripture so we can be as bold and radical as we are clearly called to be.”

TW

Light in darkness?

by Blaise Tobia and Virginia Maksymowicz

In 1967, at about the same time he was having his first retrospective exhibition at New York City's Jewish Museum, the painter Ad Reinhardt wrote, "I have been called a Protestant, puritan, Byzantinist, a mandarin, a godless mystic, a black monk, a Zen-Buddhist, an iconoclast, an Ahab. I suppose there's a reason for making a religious analogy. . . ."

Many art historians and critics see the life and work of Reinhardt as a profound contradiction. In the Record of the Art Museum of Princeton, Sam Hunter wrote that the painter "was by turns an ambivalently utopic and disillusioned social reformer, with a profound mistrust of any transcendentalist belief systems." Yet he studied Eastern mysticism and strove to create an art that conveyed his sense that "meaning lay somewhere beyond reason and beyond the mind."

He expressed scorn for popular culture and his artworld contemporaries, and once even incurred a libel suit by one of them for disparaging remarks that Reinhardt had published in a professional

journal. Nevertheless, he was bitterly disappointed when he was not included among his peers in a major exhibit of Abstract Expressionism at the Museum of Modern Art.

As opposed to the drip-splattered canvases of the "Action Painters" such as Jackson Pollock—whose works are more

Reinhardt created meditative, almost ritualistic, paintings that at first appear completely black, without any evidence of surface brushwork or texture. Upon prolonged and intense scrutiny, however, nearly invisible cross shapes begin to emerge; this intense visual concentration can put the viewer in an almost trancelike state.

notorious—Reinhardt created meditative, almost ritualistic, paintings that at first appear completely black, without any evidence of surface brushwork or texture. Upon prolonged and intense scrutiny, however, nearly invisible cross shapes begin to emerge; this intense visual concentration can put the viewer in an almost trancelike state.

Perhaps it is no wonder, then, that Reinhardt (who

dedicated the last 14 years of his life to making these square, black paintings) was led to correspond with his former Columbia University classmate, the Trappist monk Thomas Merton, another man struggling with innate contradictions and with his attraction to the contemplative life.

Merton found himself drawn to Reinhardt's paintings, and implied in one of his letters that the painter's images were more expressive of the search for

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





The Black Square Room. Reinhardt retrospective, 1966-1967.

The Jewish Museum, New York, Art Resource

the spiritual than his own words could ever be, aptly describing them as conveying “the general darkness which lies beyond the conclusions and in which the realities are grasped, which the words fail to signify as much as they pretend to.”

Reinhardt, who was usually loathe to lend his imagery to illustrative uses, readily supplied Merton with an image for the cover of a theological tract. He also complied with his friend’s request for a small painting for his monk’s cell. “It is a most recollected small painting,” Reinhardt wrote about it. “It thinks that only one thing is necessary and this is true, but this one thing is by no means apparent to one who will not take the trouble to look.” The monastery at

Gethsemani still holds and treasures this artwork.

The relationship between Reinhardt and Merton was an unusual one for modern times. Those involved in the secular artworld and those involved in the church usually see little in common with each other, unaware that their searches and struggles might be identical.

Ad Reinhardt tried to push his paintings out of the material world’s traditional artistic boundaries into a realm of meaning “beyond reason and beyond the mind.” Thomas Merton tried to push his encounters with extra-rational meaning out from his monk’s cell in Kentucky and into the material world via the published word. Neither was wholly successful, but

the theological and aesthetic dialogue they carried on enhanced their endeavors and provide the rest of us with a model for a kind of inquiry unbounded by conventional artistic and religious norms. **TW**

This article is dedicated to our good friend Kevin Munn, who died recently from cancer. Kevin was a Paulist priest, who much like Thomas Merton, struggled with the interface between faith and art. During the past 18 years he was one of our most important sources of dialogue with the vowed religious community. Perhaps the only priest ever to have studied avant-garde performance art with well-known professionals in the field, Kevin was in a unique position to understand the concerns of artists like ourselves. We will try to continue the dialogue without him, but we will feel his loss immensely. — B.T. & V.M.

College chaplaincies on the edge

by Jacqueline Schmitt

The wake-up call concerning the fragility of the Episcopal Church's ministry in colleges and universities came when the Diocese of Washington this year announced it could no longer support a full-time chaplain at Howard University.

A few years before, the diocese had reduced the University of Maryland's chaplaincy to part-time. The American University chaplaincy was long gone. Across the church, a similar trend emerged: the budget for the Columbia University chaplaincy in New York was annually whittled away, Ohio's Kenyon College replaced a full-time priest with part-time administrative staff, the national church staff position for ministries in higher education and with young adults remained unfilled for over a year, until national church finances improved.

Howard's Episcopal chaplaincy, begun over 30 years ago, was the first denominational ministry at the predominantly black school. Many international students attend Howard, especially from Africa and the Caribbean, parts of the world where the Anglican Church is strong and growing. To many Episcopalians, especially African Americans, not having a chaplain at Howard was unthinkable.

As always, tight finances are the complaint. But mission in higher education is more than pastoral care to young Episcopalians away from home. We in the church have traditionally seen chaplaincy as a mission to an entire institution: to provide for the pastoral and sacramental needs of faculty, staff and students, but also to confront the institution with the demands of the Gospel.

Ministry in higher education is where the church meets the world. Universities and colleges, for good and for ill, shape society, by the research they do, the faculty they hire and the students they educate. Is a college racist by virtue of its admission and hiring practices? Are

market forces distorting education itself by encouraging "cost-effective" departments like business, computer science and engineering and giving fewer resources to "loss leaders" such as philosophy, geography and women's studies?

The place where ministry in higher education happens makes it exciting. It also makes it risky in the eyes of some church leaders. The payoff in terms of the church is not always immediately apparent. A campus mission is not likely to produce pledging units, but it is likely to produce the creative and committed lay and ordained leadership the church needs to meet the challenges of the day. It is likely to influence non-church people, by offering a standard of justice, mercy and inclusivity to counter the prevailing culture of competitiveness and greed.

To their credit, the Diocese of Washington and many other dioceses know that. Resolutions to restore the Howard and Maryland chaplaincies, including one brought forward by the Union of Black Episcopalians, will come before Washington's diocesan convention in January.

One approach to solving the financial problem used successfully at Cornell and Brown is to build an endowment to support the chaplaincies into the future. Other creative ministries, like those in the Diocese of Chicago, have been built up through grants and sustained by annual fund appeals.

New occasions teach new duties. A campus minister probably needs to be a development officer as well as a pastor and teacher. The times demand that the church rise to the occasion and learn new ways to support the mission so critically called for in our colleges and universities, so critically needed by both church and society.

—Jacqueline Schmitt, editor of *Plumblin*, the journal of the Episcopal Society for Ministry in Higher Education, chairs the Diocese of Central New York's College Work Commission. Subscribe to *Plumblin* for \$15 annually. Write: 1700 Park St., Syracuse, N.Y., 13208.

Keepin' the Baby Awake

The Miserable Offenders is the name of a new musical duo which has just released its first recording — a tape of Advent and Christmas hymns and carols "recorded in new and different ways." Titled *Keepin' the Baby Awake*, the cassette includes familiar pieces such as "Prepare the Way O Zion" and "O Little Town of Bethlehem," as well as medieval carols and new hymns, accompanied by guitar, tongue drums, Tibetan bowl and synthesizer. Close harmony and intricate arrangements distinguish the performances, which range from hauntingly meditative to the rhythmically joyful.

The Offenders are Ana Hernandez and Deborah Griffin Bly, singers and instrumentalists who may be best known to the Episcopal Church as booksellers at the Episcopal Church's New York headquarters and the Trinity Bookstore (of Trinity Church, Wall Street, fame), respectively. Ana and Deborah sing together in the professional choir at Trinity.

The tape is available for \$11 (includes postage and handling) by contacting Deborah Griffin Bly at 172 St. Paul's Ave., Staten Island, N.Y. 10301; 718-981-5887. Checks should be made payable to "The Miserable Offenders."

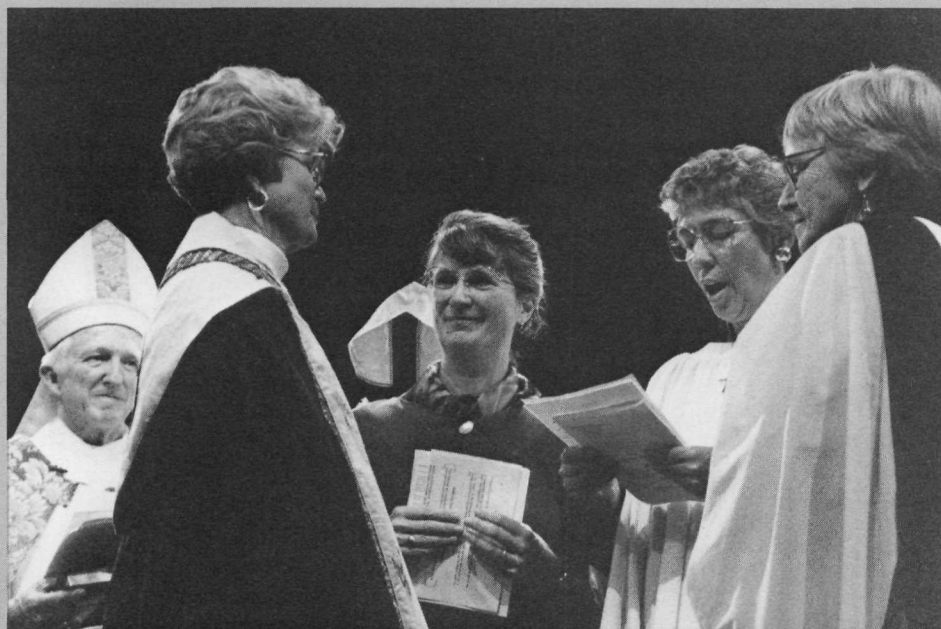
British Parliament approves women priests

Both houses of the British Parliament have given overwhelming approval to the legislation permitting the ordination of women priests that was passed by the Church of England's General Synod in November, 1992.

Observers say the first ordinations could begin as early as next March.

Thou shalt not abuse women

"When we believe in a God who values suffering as a sign of faithfulness we are perpetuating a theology of oppression — that is Christianity today," Carmen Guerrero, head of Hispanic ministries in



Anne S. Brown/Diocese of Vermont

Mary Adelia McLeod receives her cope and mitre from some of the women who put her name forward in nomination for diocesan bishop of Vermont during her consecration on Nov. 1, 1993. (Left to right: Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning, Bishop McLeod, Leslie Black, Alice Roberts (who designed the gift) and Jean Jersey.)

the Diocese of Los Angeles told participants in the sixth and final consultation on women and violence sponsored by the Episcopal Church's Committee on the Status of Women in New York last October.

"When we follow a theology of oppression we will not call the church into accountability," Guerrero added.

This consultation, and the others which have been held during the past year in Boston, San Antonio, Brazil and California's Bay Area, have been aimed at raising awareness of the size and extent of the violence women in church and society are experiencing.

"During the Vietnam War 58,000 soldiers, mostly men, died. But during the same time, 55,000 women were killed by the men who supposedly loved them," noted Robert Johnson, bishop of Western North Carolina.

Committee members reported that those testifying at the regional hearings complained of clergy sexual abuse, economic and environmental abuse that

disproportionately affects women, clergy and congregations who were unsympathetic when told stories of domestic violence. The New York group also heard from speakers who addressed rape, the increase of health problems specific to women, clergy spouse abuse and the "culture of violence" that pervades the Bible.

As part of its work, the committee is looking for ways the church can respond.

A video of the Bay Area consultation, complete with study guide, is now available for parish use from Episcopal Parish Services, c/o the Episcopal Church Center, 815 Second Ave., New York, N.Y. (800-334-7626).

NEAC installs Karpf

Ted Karpf was installed as executive director of the National Episcopal AIDS Coalition (NEAC) in Washington, D.C., last October 1. Karpf, who has served as Manager of Special Projects of the Center for Disease Control's National AIDS Clearinghouse, began AIDS ministry as a

parish priest at Dallas' church of St. Thomas the Apostle. He founded the Dallas AIDS Interfaith Network and was a founding member of NEAC.

Karpf's first major project for NEAC will be orchestrating the group's fourth National Episcopal AIDS Conference, to be held in Los Angeles in February.

GTS trustees to adopt revised housing policy

The board of trustees of New York's General Theological Seminary has decided to reconsider the seminary's present housing policy which prohibits domestic-partner households. A revision prepared by a special housing advisory committee will be considered for adoption in early January, 1994.

GTS has recently been involved in legal proceedings with the city's Human Rights Commission over a complaint filed this past June by a tenured faculty GTS member, Deirdre Good, alleging discrimination on the basis of marital status and sexual orientation. Good has been living in seminary housing with her domestic partner since last January.

Healing liturgy for sex-abuse survivors

The Church of the Ascension in Buffalo, N.Y., is using a special *Healing Liturgy* written by a survivor of childhood sexual abuse for a monthly healing service specifically for survivors. The liturgy avoids the unilateral and hierarchical power-based language and images which many survivors find emotionally disturbing. Copies can be obtained by writing Ascension at 16 Linwood Ave., Buffalo, N.Y. 14209.

Vital Signs

— Prepared by Julie A. Wortman

Creative nonviolence

"Women are using nonviolence to support their sisters who are being battered. In Peru, many men consider it a God-given right to beat their wives senseless. But now, when neighboring women hear the beatings beginning, they come to their windows or stand outside the house banging spoons on metal pots. The din seems to break the husband's concentration, and subjects him to public outrage.

"... A version of the same tactics showed up recently in a hospital in Saskatchewan. Whenever a doctor on staff there dumps on a nurse inappropriately, the nursing station sends out over the intercom a "Code Pink," and all nurses able to do so descend on the spot, surround the doctor holding hands, and stare him down. One doctor tried to break out by forcing his way between the two smallest nurses. But the circle just moved with him wherever he went. After using this tactic only three times, the situation corrected itself."

— **Jo Clare Hartsig and Walter Wink,**
Fellowship, 9-10/93

Mini-nuclear war?

"The U.S. Department of Energy is now funding research into precision low-yield nuclear warheads. These so-called mini-nukes would primarily be intended to threaten the bunkers and weapons of nuclear-armed third-world nations.

"This new generation of small nuclear weapons, officials say, would emit much less radiation, theoretically causing much less collateral damage to civilian targets."

— *Fellowship*, 9-10/93

shoot takes

Entitlements for the rich

"Only one of every eight dollars of federal entitlement outlays goes to those living in poverty. As much as 80 percent of total benefit dollars are in programs requiring no evidence of financial need.

"And the benefits are skewed towards the well-off. Neil Howe and Phillip Longman in a detailed analysis revealed some startling facts.

— In 1991 U.S. households with incomes over \$100,000 (the richest five percent) received an average of \$5,960 in federal cash and in-kind benefits, while those with incomes under \$10,000 received an average of \$5,560.

— From 1980-91 in inflation-adjusted dollars, the average federal benefit received by households with incomes under \$10,000 declined by 10 percent. Meanwhile, the benefits (mostly Social Security, Medicare, and federal pensions) to those with incomes over \$200,000 fully doubled.

— Medicare spent \$19 billion in 1991 subsidizing the health care of households earning \$50,000 or more (the richest third of all households)."

— **Amata Miller,** *Network Connection*, 9-10/93

Not inhumane?

"Michigan Humane Society officials said they will protest a proposed experiment that would inflate balloons inside 60 rats at Michigan State University until they squeal, then administer cyanide to measure whether the gas blunts pain.

"The State of California is offering an MSU professor about \$14,000 to do the experiment to fight a lawsuit ... The American Civil Liberties Union's lawsuit says California's use of cyanide in gas chamber executions is cruel and unusual. The state says the experiment will show cyanide is not inhumane."

— *Detroit Free Press*, 10/25/93

Latin American feminism

Organizers of the Fourth Meeting of Latin American Feminists, held Oct. 30-Nov. 5

in El Salvador, received anonymous death threats from right-wing groups who claim the women are linked to left-wing guerillas and U.S. lesbian and gay organizations. Owners of the private farm that was the site for the event were also threatened with destruction of their property.

— *National Catholic Reporter*
10/29/93

"We feminists began to talk about wanting power at a very difficult moment in history, at precisely that moment when the power slipped away from our closest allies, that is, leftist men ... At this moment in history, it seems that all societies have entered into a conservative stage, where deep [structural] changes don't appear possible. But it is better that we arrive late to the idea than not at all. ...

"If people were afraid of communism as a radical specter that would haunt the world, they should really be afraid now because the specter of feminism is the one that is really radical."

— **Dominican feminist Magali Piñeda,** quoted by Norma Stoltz Chinchilla in "Women's Movements in the Americas: Feminism's Second Wave," *NACLA: Report on the Americas*, 7-8/93

"Science always wins"

"[Recently] a profoundly complicated new issue of science and morality rose out of a medical laboratory — this time a George Washington University researcher's modest, almost inadvertent first step toward cloning genetically identical humans — and once again the ethical warning flags were flying.

"But if history is any gauge, the cloning debate will end the way so many others have. As Arthur Caplan, head of the Center for Bioethics at the University of Minnesota, said:

"Science always wins. ... Artificial hearts, test-tube babies, baboon heart transplants. ... I don't care what it is.' The only impact of the ethical debate 'is to slow or speed up the technological pace.'"

— **Gary Blonston,**
Detroit Free Press, 10/31/93

Contributing editors' best
continued from page 6

Literature: Will Campbell, *Providence* (Longstreet Press, 1992). Tells the history of the country from the perspective of one square mile of land in Mississippi.

Theology: Jim Corbett, *Goatwalking* (Viking, 1991). Jim, a Quaker, rancher and longtime Sanctuary conspirator, doesn't consider this theology, but I do. He argues that the best way to resist technocracy is to reconnect with undomesticated space and dependence upon the land, which he does through the "cimarron" tradition of heading out into the desert with only goat companions. On the way he reflects on Exodus, covenant, human rights, land trusts, prophetic faith, and of course goat husbandry.

Film: Michelle Pfeiffer, "Love Field," 1993. I think it's a parable about race relations in America today (not just in the early 1960s era it is set in), particularly the illusions of white privilege (paternalism, ignorance and racism). The plot-driving narrative of "going to the President's funeral" has lots of metaphorical power, and the fact that it has a kind-of interracial romantic subplot makes it entertaining as well.

Music: Mark O'Connor, "Heroes," 1993. O'Connor is well-known in bluegrass and acoustic music circles as a virtuoso on most stringed instruments. It is less known that he is a keen appreciator of the variety of American (and other) music styles, their roots and their intermingling. In this CD he pays tribute to about a dozen of the players that have most influenced him, from classical to Cajun to jazz to Texas swing, and then invites either that person or a current representative of that style to duet with him.

Butch Naters Gamarra

Actually what gives me hope is the

Bible — understanding the prophets better and especially (in the past few weeks) Isaiah, where he keeps talking about the diverse and multicultural vision that God has. God is always doing the right thing, it's just that we're often on the wrong side. What Jesus is doing gives me hope. I know that even if what I do and say is not popular, God is going to do God's will regardless of where the church is and that gives me hope because God knows the church is dysfunctional and a lot of the hopeful things are outside of the church.

Evil is going to be crushed, but we just need more people to be aware of it. A lot of what I read and see in the visual arts is just self-gratification and instant gratification. They don't get it.

Gamarra recommends:

Authors Garcia Marquez, Isabella Allende, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Cornel West, James Cone, Gustavo Gutierrez and Phil Barryman.

Dorothee Sölle

See *Under Love*, David Grossman (Tel Aviv: ha-Kibuts ha-me 'uhad.' Yerushalayim: Keter, 1986). He's an Is-

raeli novelist.

I am very much moved by the German poet Bertolt Brecht. Another person is Wendell Berry. I like him very much — very simple, very sharp and pointed.

As for music, Giora Feidman. He performs klezmer — it's in between jazz and folk. He's a born Argentine. The music comes from the Eastern European Yiddish culture.

Walter Wink

June and I once a year read T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* together aloud — always in late winter when the snow is still on the ground. We never plan it. It just happens.

Wink recommends:

The Kabir Book, 1977, Beacon Press, Boston. It's the greatest spiritual poetry book we've ever found. Kabir was a kind of eclectic in the 15th century. He was raised in India by Muslims, was initiated into Hindu asceticism and then into ecstatic Sufism. He also likes poetry by Rainer Marie Rilke, art by Rothko. "No contemporary musicians, just people like Mahler and so forth."

Christmas gift idea!

We recommend the work of *Witness* artists. The following artists have cards, prints, books or calendars for sale.

Dierdre Luzwick may be reached at W9442 Golfside, Cambridge, Wis., 53523; (608) 423-4547. Her book, *Endangered Species*, was published by Harper San Francisco in 1992.

Betty LaDuke's work may be ordered from Multi-Cultural Images, 610 Long Way, Ashland, Or., 97520; (503) 482-4562. LaDuke has recently published a book entitled *Multicultural Celebrations*, Pomegranate Artbooks, San Francisco, 1993.

Helen David Brancato's cards and 1994 calendar can be ordered from Pax Christi USA, 348 East Tenth St., Erie, Pa., 16503-1110; (814) 453-4955.

Doris Klein's work is available from her studio at 4311 N. 100th St., Milwaukee, Wis., 53222-1393; (414) 461-7676.

Hue Bumgarner-Kirby and **Robert Lentz** offer their work through Bridge Building Images, P.O. Box 1048, Burlington, Vt., 05402; (802) 864-8346.

Cards featuring the work of Nicaraguan artists are available from the **Nicaraguan Cultural Alliance**, P.O. Box 5051, Hyattsville, Md., 20782; (301) 699-0042.

Patricia Lay Dorsey may be reached at 86 Kerby, Grosse Pointe, Mich., 48236; (313) 886-0967.

When street-fighting got too hot, Errol Henderson was sent home. "You gonna be my lawyer someday," the older boys would say. "You go home."

The youngest of nine children, Henderson, now 31, grew up in Detroit's Brewster Projects. Because he was asthmatic, he says he spent time reading — reading Kirkegaard and Hegel among others. (He says his third grade teacher, Miss Brown, gave him *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.) His friends knew he was smart, even though he was only scraping by at Cass Tech High School.

"I was stupid, Henderson says. "I wasn't acting on what I was reading. I was drinking all the time, getting high, finding things that didn't belong to us. I been shot at and I shot back."

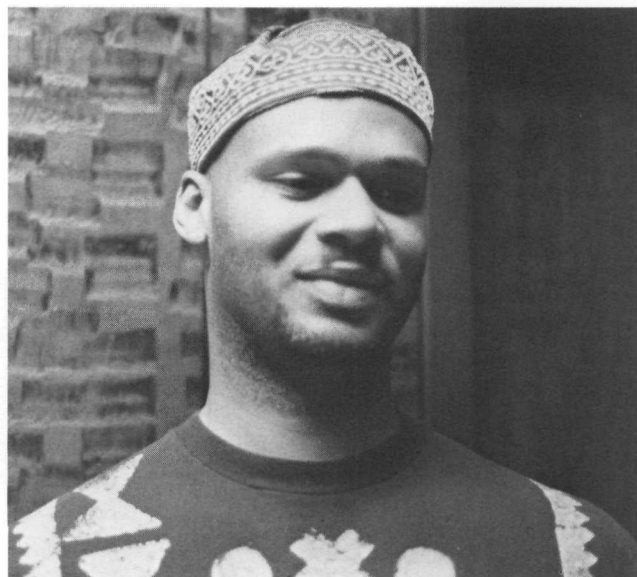
When he was 17, Henderson signed himself up for the Army, which he knew was a "white supremacist organization," but he says he didn't want "to be rollin' with my partners."

The Army sent him to Alabama — his mother's home state. For the first time, Henderson saw white people in poverty. He took note when a white soldier attempted suicide because he'd been dumped by his girlfriend.

"I saw white folks with nothing and I saw what I had of value. You close the door on me — I'm cool. I'm straight. I know who I am."

From Alabama, Henderson got sent to West Point where he believes he still holds the record for spending the most

"Robeson said the struggle is everywhere — there is no sheltered space. We keep telling youth that God must be at the center of this."



Errol Henderson

Working as an advocate

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

days on restriction.

By 1983, both Henderson's parents had died. He came home from the Army and found he still had support in the Brewsters, but saw it being destroyed by the city administration which had boarded over units, eliminated the local school and closed the maintenance office (from which tenants had been able to borrow grass seed and lawn mowers).

"My partners were dead. There was a total abject poverty in the projects. We used to eat apples off the neighbor's tree. It was family. We were all southerners."

Henderson enrolled in Wayne State University, which he helped shut down in 1983 while demanding an African American Studies Department. He graduated in three years and then commuted to the University of Michigan to get a PhD in African-centered world politics. Next semester he'll be teaching a peace and

conflict resolution class at Wayne State.

When Henderson describes the lives of urban youth, for whom he works through SOSAD (Save Our Sons and Daughters), his stories are filled with quotes from Paul Robeson, Fanny Lou Hamer, "Minister Malcolm," the Koran, Jeremiah.

The flow of ideas is easy and warm. It's history brought to the surface in a wash of confidence.

"Robeson said the struggle is everywhere — there is no sheltered space. We keep telling youth that God must be at the center of this and that that's manifested in your relationships.

"All of them got a spiritual corner. They all got a loving attachment, you just got to find it. Maybe not at home -- maybe at the PAL gym. We got to grab hold of that to see ourselves as part of a process that's historical.

*Witnesses,
the quick and the dead*

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

"In the African traditions there's no greater deed than one that's done for one who needs it. They always judge on how you treat the lesser of these.

"In Jeremiah 29:7, 'Seek ye the welfare of the city from which I have sent you into captivity.' We all in this together — even in the place in which we're in captivity."

The nature of the captivity youth face today is different than it was when Henderson was growing up, but the courage required is similar.

"My first memory of life was the '67 revolt — STRESS [a police squad known as Stop Robberies, Enjoy Safe Streets, which was responsible for many murders in the Black community] invading my house and police putting a gun in my face when I was reading a comic book.

"Kids today face discriminatory policies, lack of parenting skills, loss of employment. The reality in this city is not of their making. They are psychologically traumatized and forced to make life and death decisions at a young age — I can't say tender. This group of young people are gorged on violence — you can't have someone in law enforcement in the mov-

ies, you have a Terminator or a Predator.

"Youth have a role in whether they perpetuate the violence, but they are made in America."

Henderson is convinced the Motor City's teenagers don't want to live lives of destruction.

"At SOSAD, we don't pander to youth. We don't say 'You're the greatest.' We say 'You got the potential to be.' We keep coming back. We give them a sense of their own power. They want to be about peace. They seen their parents on crack. They don't like how they're living. All they need is some informed direction.

"We talk to them about history and culture. Your manhood or womanhood arises from your culture — if you don't have one they'll give you one. Or you'll get a Reebok culture or a Nike culture.

"The youth got this swagger — you got to see that for what it is and move beyond it. I try to share my experience."

Henderson complains that counseling urban youth has become a "growth industry." And that there are more and more people, often with no training, arriving to give advice.

"We got every kind of charlatan, It's

scandalous. They're just in it for the money. People come to the youth and say 'Don't you know we're killing each other?' 'You gotta wake up to the real world.' Be real. They're living in the real world. I wish I could wake up some of the speakers."

Henderson says his hope was kept alive by the Black Panther Party, the Republic of New Africa and church folks "who came to us where we were and told us we weren't niggers." His parents, he added, taught him to love the legacy of African-American people.

Asked what holds him to his work — in and out of Detroit public schools — listening to and preaching to the youth, Henderson asked "Could I live with myself if I didn't?

"I got a friend who just came out of the joint. He said, 'I been hearing about you.' I asked him how and he said his son goes to Spain Middle School where he and I went. He's one of the ones that sent me home to help me, now I'm helping his son."

Although he has stayed away from the court system, Henderson is — as his partners anticipated — an advocate. **TW**

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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.

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Stony the road we trod

by Bill Wylie-Kellermann

***Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*, Cain Hope Felder, ed. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1991, 260 pp.**

Several years ago Desmond Tutu began a sermon in Detroit with a joke: When the European missionaries arrived they had the Bible, the Africans had the land. Let us pray, said the missionaries and the people bowed their heads. When everyone opened their eyes, however, the Africans had the Bible and the missionaries had the land. But when the laughter died down, Bishop Tutu added: What they didn't realize was that we had received something of inestimable value.

An American equivalent of this joke might also be imagined. The very book employed to sanction and legitimate chattel slavery provided that community with life-giving resources for survival — indeed with the inspiration which may overturn the entire system of domination.

This collection of hermeneutical essays is written by the still-small circle of academically trained African-American biblical scholars. The substantial introduction by Cain Felder tells the difficulties and barriers and humiliations which those scholars have experienced. (The stony road passes on through academia.) The collaborative community behind the book is identified. Their conversations

and conflicts are acknowledged. This, however, is more than interesting background — it joins the main point. European interpretation, under the sway of the Enlightenment, is founded on the myth of objectivity. The social location of the scholar is presumed irrelevant (or, one might say, is taken for granted). African-American interpretation, however — like its liberation counterparts including feminist and womanist approaches, has begun with the concrete experience of the reader/interpreter/community. Historical criticism (to which these scholars remain

indebted) while illuminating the context which produced scripture, tends to lock the text in the past — an object of scrutiny. It is a method which preempts commitment and renders the reader passive.

On a level more raw, that was precisely the use to which the scriptures have been put against the African American community: to render slaves passive. The text — including its selection, translation, and interpretation — was controlled by missionary and master. It was in fact illegal to teach a slave to read and write. Going through these essays it dawns that God made a way where there was no way. That enforced illiteracy finally enabled a freedom, an actual biblical literacy, as

scripture (especially in narrative form) was committed to the community's oral memory unencumbered by official translation or interpretation (Renita Weems, p. 61). The black preacher and the communal work of imagination accessed its authority (Thomas Hoyt, p. 34, also David Shannon). Such was their experience.

A range of texts suggested themselves. Just as there is a de facto European "canon within the canon" so there emerged an African-American "canon" (William

Myers, p. 53) — one rooted especially in the creation of the human family, in the Exodus, in the unmerited sufferings and resurrection of Jesus. In this same regard, Renita Weems (p. 61) cites Howard Thurman on the experience of his grandmother, raised in slavery, who everafter refused to read the letters of Paul because of the abuse she had suffered from them.

Later in the volume Clarice Martin does a critical reading of those deuterio-Pauline "household codes" which prescribe the submission of women and slaves. They stand exposed. Other disputed texts treated include Hagar and Sarah, the curse of Ham, and the place of race and Black Africans in the scriptures generally.

Stony the Road is of course a fine book first for the African-American community. But then much more: it is a service to us all — to the entire community of faith. William Stringfellow wrote of our temptation to read the bible Americanly instead of reading America biblically. Felder and friends finally encourage the latter. For that we are in their debt. **TV**

Going through these essays it dawns that God made a way where there was no way. That enforced illiteracy finally enabled a freedom, an actual biblical literacy, as scripture (especially in narrative form) was committed to the community's oral memory unencumbered by official translation or interpretation.

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