

The Witness

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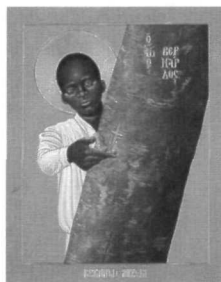
The media:
colonizing
minds



Africa

THE JUNE ISSUE RESONATED with all of us at Bridge Building Images. As you know many of the individuals chosen for icons by Robert Lentz have their native or theological roots in Africa. Your article on Bernard Mizeki (the *Witness* profile) gave us new insight into the newest icon painted by Robert and commissioned by the brothers of St. John the Evangelist. Reproductions of him in several formats will be available soon. The cross etched in the bark of the tree as Mizeki is depicted by Robert Lentz references that evangelical habit which Mizeki had which displeased some Africans who saw it as nothing but defacement.

Ken Horseman
Burlington, VT



Bernard Mizeki
by Robert Lentz

Body wisdom

I WAS RE-READING LETTERS TO THE editor in Body Wisdom issue [5/95]. Ken Bieber's response to Alex Seabrook's challenge regarding Bishop Spong's beliefs made me realize why the traditional church feels so alien to me. Where does Vicar Bieber think the catechism — and indeed the creed before that — came from? Weren't these beliefs and their interpretations written by men (no doubt white, Anglo-Saxon) influenced by the traditions and beliefs of their particular culture at a particular time in history? The living God that I believe in is rejoicing that other people (women and men of many colors and traditions) are also interpreting the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Word of God in ways relevant to their particular culture at this particular time in the 1990s. Alleluia!

Carol Houillard Wolf
Portland, OR

I AM SO GLAD YOU RAN YOUR AD in *The Living Church*. I thought you had ceased to exist.

J.R. Tinsley
Shreveport, LA

Sabbatical wanderings

by Dick Gillett

Ed. note: Dick Gillett, a former staff member of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company, sent notes from his recent sabbatical.

THREE MONTHS is not an exceptionally long time to withdraw from the constant pressures and demands of parish life (in my case an urban Hispanic ministry in California). But it was a wonderfully renewing time; a time to travel, to observe, to study; a time to allow the Divine Spirit to begin to pull my life together, and to endeavor to knit it more closely to the loving purposes of God for all humankind.

I have a lifelong love of trains, so it only seemed natural that I take the train across the country, all the way to Boston, after which I spent a month in England. Through the Southwest and across Texas the train moved, through America's back yards (for that is where the train takes you in America), past heaped up auto junk yards (jarring testimony to our culture of waste), along the streets of the small towns, glimpsing a poorer America with neglected children playing along the tracks; past lots of abandoned factories and warehouses. Is this the America that according to the new "Newtonian" vision in Congress, will come "on line" with their CD Rom's and prosper in the new Age of Cyberspace?

But the country is beautiful, and I'm captivated by the change of the terrain from desert to grassland as you move east, until by Houston and New Orleans you're awash in green (will the train tracks sink into the swamps and bayous?). And it is raining, and now the rivulets of water are running off the wet red clay of Alabama. On to one of our seminaries in the South, where I had a two-week fellowship. Worship is very well carried off, student morale seems high and the faculty excellent. But I get the impression that the students here are being prepared for a ministry in which the assumption here in the South seems to be that churchgoing and church loyalty are still community norms—hence no new radical direction is required. And I wonder whether they are truly reading the signs of the times, whether

Letters

Classifieds

Disability resources

The Office on Ministry with Persons Who are Handicapped of the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota has become the nexus point for contacting The Presiding Bishop's Task Force on Accessibility (now called The Episcopal Disability Network) and for obtaining resources and assistance about disability concerns. This office is located at 3225 East Minnehaha Parkway, Minneapolis, MN 55417; (phone) 612-721-1103 or 1-800-440-1103; (fax) 612-722-7424.

The office maintains lending libraries of taped books, multi-media resources, and books and periodicals on disability concerns. All materials may be borrowed on a free-loan basis. The "Book of Prayer" is also available on tape, for purchase at \$25.

Remembering Dorothy Garner

Friends of Dorothy Garner give thanks for her life [TW 10/91]. She died in Detroit this spring. Outraged when a friend's life was threatened because she had yelled "Thank you Jesus!" when drug dealers on her block were arrested, Garner organized. She led a small crowd through her neighborhood, beating drums and passing out leaflets, reclaiming the streets. Whenever Garner was discouraged, she said she'd go to the nursery to watch plants grow!

Classifieds

Witness classifieds cost 75 cents a word or \$30 an inch, whichever is less. Payments must accompany submissions. Deadline is the 15th of the month, two months prior to publication. For instance, items received January 15 will run in March. When ads mark anniversaries of deaths, ordinations, or acts of conscience, photos — even at half column-width — can be included.

"church" is being presented as a haven from the entropic forces now flinging apart the American social fabric.

A night train from Atlanta takes me into Washington, D.C., and a pilgrimage to the Jewish Holocaust Museum. The visit was almost unbearable. Its most moving aspects were not the appalling and mind-boggling tableaux of the specific horrors inflicted upon the Jews from 1933 to 1945. They were the photographs of children and the reprinted or recorded words of survivors. One photo that got to me was of a little child clutching her doll amidst the chaos and confusion of disembarking from the cattle cars. This child of God, minutes away from extermination ... How? How? How? The notion of a master race: Have we, even after the Holocaust, really exorcised this demon from the world? Oklahoma City's aftermath suggests not.

And what to do? One opportunity to translate into action the lessons learned from the Holocaust is not difficult to find, in California especially: to protest the immigrant-bashing so fashionable after the passage of Prop. 187, and now a chief campaign plank for the governor of our state as he runs for president.

Thence to England, Anne having joined me for nine days of the 30-day visit. Ahead, fun and sightseeing in London, a visit to Cambridge, visits to different churches on Sundays; and study at St. Deiniol's residential library in Wales. And my sabbatical questions themselves: How is the Christian Gospel to be presented in all its redeeming power amidst a world sliding into chaos and extremism? Specifically, how do we address the increasingly global economic forces that are now decisively shaping not only our economic but our cultural life at every level? And what has the church during the last several centuries had to say to these questions?

But first to church on Sunday in London: St. James, Picadilly, is a church where everyone is made to feel included. All are invited to stand around the altar for prayers and receiving the bread and wine. There was no choir; instead we were given a 10-minute rehearsal before service by a cantor, who miraculously made us 300 persons present the choir — roughly half of whom were visitors! The church is deeply involved in support of environmental causes, women priests, gays and

lesbians, and a just, multicultural society.

Another church trying to be the Church was Coventry Cathedral. It had a thoroughly progressive liturgy and women clergy with laity at every level in the service including a Lutheran woman preacher from Dresden, Germany. Reconciliation between nations has been that rebuilt-Cathedral's ministry since its destruction by German bombs in World War II. But it may need to reach out more to its own multicultural city.

In contrast, the principal Sunday eucharist at another cathedral was positively depressing, with 150 persons (including about three children) solemnly and stiffly following the 1662 prayer book, the priest celebrating back to the people, with no laity reading any scripture or prayers. The sermon, delivered in impeccable Oxford/Cambridge accent, sailed above the people into the stratosphere. Meanwhile, an old priest in the congregation looked fearful and depressed, a woman wept silently, and a boy perhaps 10 years old sat obediently. Sadly, I found this church more the rule than the exception in the Church of England. Still, I did not get to visit some of the very active and involved parishes in east London and Liverpool which are grappling seriously with racism, unemployment and poverty.

At St. Deiniol's residential library, near the medieval city of Chester, I settled in to read church history. I hoped to discover what happened to the medieval synthesis, in which the Church understood the Gospel to apply to all of life, including wealth, poverty, economic justice and the use of money.

Why did the churches of post-medieval Europe abandon that holistic vision and begin to accept emerging economic theories? Did they have a theological rationale for doing so? Or did theology and church life begin to so spiritualize the Christian Gospel as to practically exclude economic life from their purview? And to what extent are these questions relevant to our late 20th century failure as churches to formulate an effective theological and social critique of the increasing dominance of global market forces as primary shapers of social and cultural life?

For in our time we have lost even the recognition that the church *should* be concerned with large economic and social structures. These structures are now largely setting

the values, right down to family level, for global society: covet, consume, compete and co-opt. These are our real operating "family values"! We perceive but dimly, how thoroughly we have all been corrupted in this process.

And lest these observations be interpreted as merely the rantings of a dyspeptic Left-winger, let me quote from a new book titled *Arrogant Capital*, by Kevin Phillips, a moderate Republican and columnist. In a chapter titled "The Financialization of America," Phillips writes, "Since the early 1970s, the clout of the financial sector has exploded ... into today's trillion dollar megaforce. ... The consequence two decades later is a massive, revolutionized and largely unregulated financial sector armed with the latest high-tech weaponry and pursuing profits on any battlefield ... shooting the economic wounded and outgunning 'the real economy,' in its transactions by huge ratios."

At the end of my sabbatical, I wanted to understand much better the history of the Church, and the vast complexities of the economic, social and cultural forces that are now so definitively shaping our individual and community lives.

I believe the need is overwhelming to get back to an authentic Incarnation-based ministry. *First*, to reassert the prophetic voice of the gospel at all levels, but especially at parish level, that is prepared to take the heat when the truth is proclaimed. *Second*, to work to transform our churches into much tighter and more disciplined communities who are seriously committed to modeling an alternate behavior and values. (I am aware of the magnitude of these challenges.) *Third*, to explore the creation of new movements and organizations within the larger Church, for prophetic advocacy and concrete witness, in a way perhaps analogous to the creation of the radical mendicant orders (e.g. the Franciscans and the Dominicans) in the Middle Ages. These responded effectively to the Churches' widespread neglect of poverty as an issue.

It will take concerted strategies and the careful building of a thinking, activist constituency within the church to begin to realize these objectives. But there is good church history on our side. And most of all there is the Gospel imperative!

THE WITNESS

Since 1917

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16 Resisting Babel: preserving sanity and conscience by William Stringfellow

The ways that the powers use words to confuse and debilitate our humanity are explored by William Stringfellow, an Episcopal lawyer/theologian who died 10 years ago to whom the icon on the back cover is devoted.

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Cover: *The New York Times* burns in front of the Times building as ACTUP demands more responsible AIDS coverage in 1989. T.L. Litt, Impact Visuals.

Back cover: *William Stringfellow: Keeper of the Word* by William Hart McNichols of Albuquerque, N.M. Original in full color. See story on page 6.

'What can I say? We like murders.'

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

Fresh out of Columbia's Journalism School in 1980, I went to work for the Associated Press. I was asked to report on Detroit's Arab community, which is the largest outside the middle east.

When I brought back my story, which described mosques and markets, but also the fear of neighborhood people who said they were harassed by the F.B.I. I was told, "Jeanie, just go out and find Abdul Schmuck. Find out what kind of car he drives and how many relatives he has on welfare."

That summer, the Republican Convention came to Detroit amidst headlines that Motown women were being murdered. I was asked to cover women's reactions. When I filed a story questioning the statistics since there didn't appear to be an unusual wave of murders and outlining women's self-defense efforts, the New York desk responded, "What can I say? We like murders. Find some women who are afraid."

AP let me go. The year that followed, during which I had to examine whether there were outlets for what I understood to be good journalism, was excruciating. I hadn't anticipated the degree of blatant chauvinism in the media. But what I also learned at AP is that you *can*, by talking to people and then doing homework with public records, get to the bottom of many stories. You *can* reach a conclusion about whose interests are being served and how. You may not be able to get it published, but it is usually not true that the world is too complicated, poverty too

insoluble, competing interests too intense for there to be a justice critique.

This issue of *The Witness* examines ways in which the media feed our frustration and confusion. William Stringfellow says they attack our "sanity and conscience" (p. 16).

A Detroit Summer participant with friends in gangs asked me, "Why does the media always focus on violence?"

I think those who own the media (and they are a *very* few corporations) understand, perhaps unconsciously, that people saturated in reports of violence become wary and anxious. People in this shattered frame of mind cannot form communities. They cannot organize. They cannot find a collective identity strong enough even to maintain that they do not need brand name products, much less provide an alternative vision.

We need to understand the mechanics of the media. We need to know what is being promoted and what omitted (p. 8). No other people in history have had such a high percentage of their vision and hearing, their very air waves, glutted with other people's packaged thoughts.

Part of the power of the media is the myth that we must consume them in order to be good citizens. We need to trust that there are more vital ways for the Word to travel — we can learn through forums at church or at the union hall; we can read alternative media; we can apply the gift of discernment to what we do pick up from radio and T.V.; we can deliberately leave ourselves open to the Holy Spirit in confidence that when Moses and Esther and Paul were needed to step up to injus-

tice, the Word was able to reach them despite cultural and imperial efforts to control their thoughts.

David McMichaels, a one-time consultant to the C.I.A. who underwent a conversion of sorts, says "power is the ability to define reality." He told the Sojourners community in Washington D.C. that the biggest threats to the Pentagon are small religious groups and alternative media. Both provide forums where reality can be examined and discussed. They also build people's sense that they can work together for change.

Part of the challenge is to find a way to prevent the billboards, the corporate logos on public school children's projects, the radio news reports broadcasted in stores from seeping into our unconscious. Holding a critical posture when reading or viewing corporate news, never forgetting that they have an agenda, is essential. We also need to find a sheltered place for our psyches, whether it is in the sanctuary, a quiet corner of our homes or at a friend's kitchen table, where our own thoughts can emerge — not in response to the

People in shattered frames of mind can't form communities.

media output, but in correspondence with our own hearts. (We'll do an issue sometime on

disciplines which contribute to a cleared mind and open heart — we welcome suggestions.)

We need to fight the colonizing our minds. And it can be the source of our joy that, in faith, we can love and serve God — preserving the freedom of sanity and conscience — despite the persistence of the idols that surround us.

TW

editor's note

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

Iconography as resistance

by William Hart McNichols

I never knew Bill Stringfellow, but I heard Dan Berrigan speak of him and read his writings. I came to understand him as someone constantly engaged with the Word.

When I did this icon, I got a call from a gay organization in Chicago. They wanted it immediately, because *they want Bill*. They identify Bill as a gay man.

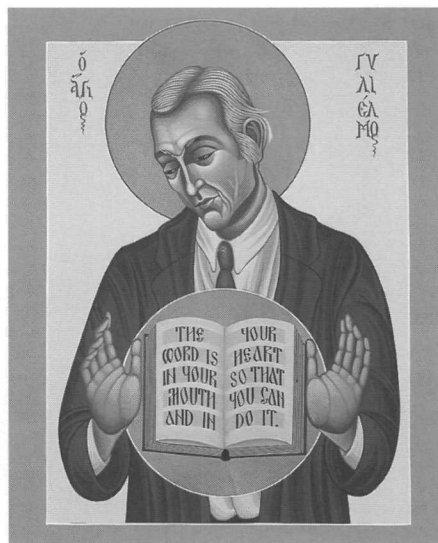
But when I unveiled the icon at a 10th anniversary celebration of Bill's life, I heard nothing about that. I wondered, are people ashamed of his being gay? Did he talk about being gay? Would he have lost *everything* had he said he was gay? Would people have said, "You have no right to talk about the Book?"

But the "Word of God" comes to people in many ways and forms. In the Scriptures, is the "Word of God" literally letters or a book? No. The "Word of God" is the experience of the presence of God. This attempt to control the form that the Word takes or who the Word comes to is the source of rage and iconoclasm.

One of Bill's friends spoke up, saying, "I'm his age and also gay. In those years he would have been destroyed. If you made a catalogue of the theological schools or colleges where he spoke, he never would have been accepted."

I understand that, but gay people today — we need gay saints. Maybe some day all gay people will be able to say who they are and be heard and accepted; the Word of God could come to a gay person as it came to Mary.

William Hart McNichols is a Jesuit priest who has studied iconography with Robert Lentz for five years. He lives in Albuquerque, N.M. Cards and plaques of this icon are available by calling 800-522-4266.



William Stringfellow: Keeper of the Word

People have always used icons to broaden the community of faith. People who didn't feel included in the Word or in the services — and these were mainly women — took icons home and set up their own altars. They began to speak to God and the saints and the Mother of God, because they couldn't speak in the church. This is another one of the causes of the iconoclastic controversy. Church leaders understood the subversive nature of icons. For over 100 years iconographers had their hands chopped off, their eyes put out and they were beaten to death.

When I went to do the icon of Bill, I realized this man was completely absorbed in contemplating the Word. The only way that I could represent him was to have the book inside of him as the child is inside of Mary. I decided to make him a mother of the Word.

Mother of God icons are shown with a circular *mandala* or a *mandorla*, which is an almond-shape, with the child inside. Mary is shown often in the *orans* position, the prayer position, with her hands raised. She's contemplating what's in her — the child, the Word made flesh. I've made Bill with his hands raised, contemplating the Word within him.

I chose Deuteronomy 30 to appear on the book where it says, "The Word is very near you. It's in your mouth; it's in your heart." The *New International Version* says, "so that you can obey" it, but the *Revised Standard Version* says, "so that you can do it." I chose the latter for Bill.

Some icons are burning or on fire — orange-looking. I chose to make Bill's coat aflame because the Word inside of him is burning. He can't keep it in. Some people found him very harsh and uncompromising. It seems that's the role of many prophets.

People have told me, "Bill would never want an icon made of him." But the icon is not a picture of a dead person; the icon is not an idol. The icon is literally a window, a relationship to that person that gives some kind of hope about being able to speak to God, and the "holy ones" or heavenly family of God.

The U.S. is very iconoclastic in terms of religious images. We're a people who make fun of statues and icons for contem-

*People who didn't feel included
— and these were mainly
women — took icons home
and set up their own altars.*

plation, but spend 15 hours a day watching television. People worship that. What you watch is what you become.

An icon will not allow you to have a quick relationship. You have to sit with it and know it. The East is big on *gazing*. You see the Mother of God gazing at the child and the child gazing back. Somehow when you gaze at this, you're asking to become more like this.

TW

The Burning of Paper Instead of Children

by Adrienne Rich

I was in danger of
verbalizing my moral
impulses out of existence.

— Daniel Berrigan, on trial in Baltimore.

1. My neighbor, a scientist and art-collector,
telephones me in a state of violent emotion. He
tells me that my son and his, aged eleven and
twelve, have on the last day of school burned a
mathematics textbook in the backyard. He has
forbidden my son to come to his house for a week,
and has forbidden his own son to leave the house
during that time. "The burning of a book," he says,
"arouses terrible sensations in me, memories of
Hitler; there are few things that upset me so much
as the idea of burning a book."

Back there: the library, walled
with green Britannicas
Looking again
in Dürer's *Complete Works*
for MELANCOLIA, the baffled woman

the crocodiles in Herodotus
the Book of the Dead
the *Trial of Jeanne d'Arc*, so blue
I think, it is her color

and they take the book away
because I dream of her too often

love and fear in a house
knowledge of the oppressor
I know it hurts to burn

2. To imagine a time of silence
or few words
a time of chemistry and music

the hollows above your buttocks
traced by my hand
or, *hair is like flesh*, you said

an age of long silence

relief

from this tongue this slab of limestone
or reinforced concrete
fanatics and traders
dumped on this coast wildgreen clayred
that breathed once
in signals of smoke
sweep of the wind

knowledge of the oppressor
this is the oppressor's language

yet I need it to talk to you

3. *People suffer highly in poverty and it takes
dignity and intelligence to overcome this suffering.
Some of the suffering are: a child did not have
dinner last night: a child steal because he did not
have money to buy it: to hear a mother say she
do not have money to buy food for her children
and to see a child without cloth it will make tears
in your eyes.*

(the fracture of order
the repair of speech
to overcome this suffering)

4. We lie under the sheet
after making love, speaking
of loneliness
relieved in a book
relived in a book
so on that page
the clot and fissure
of it appears
words of a man
in pain
a naked word
entering the clot
a hand grasping
through bars:

deliverance

What happens between us
has happened for centuries
we know it from literature

still it happens

sexual jealousy
outflung hand
beating bed

dryness of mouth
after panting
there are books that describe all this
and they are useless

You walk into the woods behind a house
there in that country
you find a temple
built eighteen hundred years ago
you enter without knowing
what it is you enter

so it is with us

no one knows what may happen
though the books tell everything

burn the texts said Artaud

5. I am composing on the typewriter late at night,
thinking of today. How well we all spoke. A
language is a map of our failures. Frederick
Douglass wrote an English purer than Milton's.
People suffer highly in poverty. There are methods
but we do not use them. Joan, who could not
read, spoke some peasant form of French. Some
of the suffering are: it is hard to tell the truth; this
is America; I cannot touch you now. In America
we have only the present tense. I am in danger.
You are in danger. The burning of a book arouses
no sensation in me. I know it hurts to burn. There
are flames of napalm in Catonsville, Maryland. I
know it hurts to burn. The typewriter is overheated,
my mouth is burning, I cannot touch you and this
is the oppressor's language.

1968

— from *Poems: Selected and New 1950-1974*,
by Adrienne Rich (©1975 W. W. Norton & Co.)

The media and thought control: an interview with Edward S. Herman

by Bruce Campbell

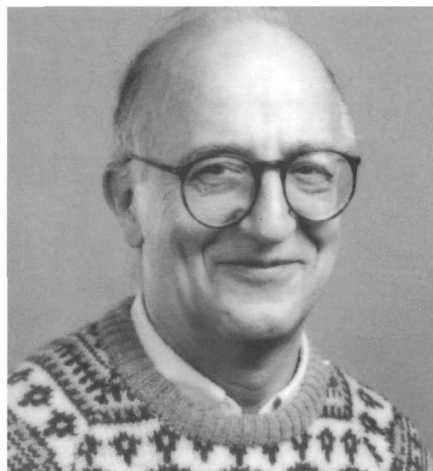
Edward S. Herman has been a skeptic of the media for many years. The Witness approached him in hopes that he would help us untangle the unrelenting messages of media outlets that assault us daily. Herman, who taught for over 30 years at the Wharton School, has successively shifted his focus from finance to the corporate system to the media, a path he has described as a "natural evolution." His collaborations with MIT professor and media critic Noam Chomsky include the book Manufacturing Consent. He has edited Lies of Our Times, a newsletter monitoring biased news reporting in the mainstream media, and he is a regular columnist for Z Magazine.

At his home outside Philadelphia, Herman spoke with Bruce Campbell about ways the mainstream media manage to blind us at the same time they claim to offer insight.

Bruce Campbell: If people are consuming mainstream media, what issues will they *not* see or hear about? What important items are off the agenda today?

Edward Herman: The military budget, for one thing. The Republicans and [President Bill] Clinton both agree that we must maintain the military budget, whose immense size was based heavily on an alleged Soviet threat that is now gone. There are real power interests that want to build the weapons.

Bruce Campbell is a writer living in New York City.



Edward S. Herman

Silencing the middle class

The Labor Department just reported that the average American income fell 2.3 percent in the last year. That's really a sensational fact. Remember, too, that the real wage-rates of ordinary citizens of the U. S. have been falling since 1973.

Here we are in a prosperity period. The papers are reporting that the stock market is doing wonderfully well. Profits are up, but the income of the ordinary American is still falling. That should be front page news and should elicit all kinds of discussion.

Ordinary people are being taken advantage of in the development process that's now occurring in the world. We have a globalizing system in which busi-

ness is able to play off workers here against workers in the Philippines and in Indonesia. Capital can move around and is even subsidized to go abroad. Clinton and the Republicans are soliciting tax breaks for businesses going overseas. This is something that should be taken very seriously and we should be considering policies to alter the situation. But the people who own the media, benefit from the military budget, fund the Republican party, and love Gingrich's Contract with America are the ones that are thriving.

It's just ordinary Americans who are losing out, so that news was in section D, page 4, of *The New York Times*. Now if the GNP had fallen 2.3 and profits had fallen there would be screaming headlines and Greenspan would do something.

B.C.: There are those who say that the mass media is reaching for people who stand at polar extremes — the Leftist *du jour* and the Rightist *du jour* — to turn them loose on each other like pit bulls. *You* say that the individuals chosen for the debate don't even represent the Left and Right.

E.H.: There are no debates in the media involving the Left. If you listen to McNeil-

Soft programs and entertainment provide a favorable advertising environment. Even the news becomes entertainment. It becomes light, not challenging, not controversial.

Lehrer, which is one of the better shows, it's essentially government people debating with one another. Or it is the Right Wing versus various cautious and vaguely liberal centrists.

The Left in the U. S. is very small

and very disorganized. But the Left calls into question the assumptions of the system and will say when a policy is wrong at its root. That kind of critique surfaces with extreme rarity in the mainstream

media.

The genuine Left never had a voice during the Vietnam War and it has no voice in America now. Somebody like Noam Chomsky is almost totally marginalized. He has never had an opinion column in *The New York Times*. His marginalization is indicative of how the Left is treated in the U. S. Chomsky actually has much more access to British television or Canadian television review than he does in the U. S.

B.C.: Is it that the Left has no voice or is it being systematically excluded?

E.H.: Public access for the Left to mass media that can reach large audiences is practically zero. *The Reader's Digest* has 29 million circulation and *Time* about 5 million. The largest dissident publication in the U. S. has about 85-100 thousand — *The Nation* is in that vicinity; it reaches an insignificant number of people.

The development process of the media in the U.S. has been one of centralization and commercialization. What is crucial is who has money and power in the society.

The people who have money own the newspapers and the television networks. And the people who fund the media are advertisers — many are multinational corporations. They don't intervene directly very often, but they want what is called a "friendly program environment." That friendly environment would not involve putting on Chomsky or stirring up a lot of trouble. When Barbara Walters proposed having a program on abortion, it was canceled — she couldn't get advertisers.

And in the early 1970s, when environmental issues were hot, NBC put up a quality set of programs on the environment, but it couldn't get advertisers. The NBC program, which tried to be balanced, could hardly escape the fact that the paper, chemical, and power companies were serious polluters. So they couldn't get sponsorship. That takes its toll over time.

troversial.

Beyond the questions of who owns the media and who advertises in them, there are other deeper forces in the system that affect the media.

Controlling government

On the political level, with the rise of TV and the expense of running for office being fantastic, anybody who wants to survive has to be able to raise big money.

And they also have to worry that big money will attack them if they're not doing the right thing.

Thomas Ferguson, in *Golden Rule* (University of Chicago Press), points out that when the investors are unified, there's no competition between the parties and therefore there won't be any debate in the media. For example, all the major investors in the U. S. have been in favor of the military build-up of the 1970s up to the present. Therefore the parties never discussed the military build-up; it was just accepted. It was bi-partisan. The mainstream media did not debate the Reagan military build-up. It was spending hundreds of billions of dollars on weapons, many of which were idiocies like Star Wars, and huge redundancies, but it wasn't discussed. And Tom Gervasi, who wrote a superb book, *The Myth of Soviet Military Supremacy*, published in 1986 — right at the heart of the build-up by Reagan — did not

even get a book review in *The New York Times*.

When you try to explain these things, you have to look at this multi-levelled structure of power in the system, in which the media themselves are controlled by



Kirk Condules, Impact Visuals

Soft programs and entertainment provide a favorable advertising environment and therefore over time commercial television becomes an entertainment vehicle. Even the news becomes entertainment. It becomes light, not challenging, not con-

monied interests, but then you can see how the people who make opinion, who shape what the intellectual environment is like and who shape what the parties will debate are also monied interests.

Academic thought-control

The academic system and the development of “experts” is affected by money. There’s a new book, *Leasing the Ivory Tower* (South End Press) by Larry Soley: he discusses how academia has moved into the orbit of commerce. There are some 100 free enterprise chairs in American universities. There’s also a thing called the Law and Economics Program which was funded by the Olin Foundation to influence law schools (and the judiciary itself) to put their focus on fundamental economic principles as espoused by Milton Friedman and others.

Of course, they fund the universities in other ways, providing very large sums for research programs.

There are dozens and dozens of think tanks that are explicitly oriented to pushing free enterprise, like the American Enterprise Institute, the Hoover Institution, the Manhattan Institute, the Heritage Foundation. They have millions of dollars and they are policy oriented and their ideological position is that which is espoused by the business community. They give hundreds of fellowships to people who are subsidized to do research that says the right thing.

Money is going into the intellectual community and very profoundly shaping its thought and shaping who will be considered credible authorities. Then they become the experts, repeating what the corporate community wants said.

B.C.: One of the lines that publishers and TV producers promulgate is that “We produce what will sell.” Is it true that audiences are complicit in creating the media environment?

E.H.: The public does watch the pro-

grams that are offered, but it’s not given a lot of alternatives.

The promise of radio and TV

When both radio and TV began and public policy was being formed, it was agreed even by the media magnates that these new cultural instruments would allow for higher levels of education, children’s programming, and diversity all around. The magnates even made many promises of “public service” programming as a condition of setting free rights to the airwaves.

That all went slowly by the boards, because advertising revenue would be greater if you just had entertainment. It wasn’t discussed and it wasn’t debated and these magnates now get free use of the public airwaves in order to make money, having sold down the river these public service responsibilities. In fact, the reason they allowed PBS (CPB) to come into existence in 1967 was that they wanted to be able to slough off their public service responsibilities altogether, so they figured if we get the taxpayers to pay for a network that will be devoted to culture and public affairs, then we will be off the hook. But then it turned out that PBS was doing too much public service, so they are trying to push them back into the advertising sphere so that commerce will marginalize citizenship functions again.

B.C.: Over the next 10 years, given the trends that are evident in the centralization that you described earlier, what do you think will happen to what we have in the media as the general level of noise and babble?

E.H.: It’s going to blow up. It’s a very pessimistic scene. You have to face the

fact that capital has really won. There’s the death of the Soviet Union and all this global privatization process. Capital is stronger every day. Government power is being weakened and labor is still weakening. So the forces to contest are weakening and the media are still centralizing.

The forces of regression are flourishing and even enhancing their power. Ergo, we can’t expect any improvement in the next 10 years. The only thing that’s going to cause any improvement in the long run is if people are hurting enough to think and to resist. It’s a terrible thing to say, but there have to be a lot of people hurting. They have to be hurting so badly and reacting so negatively that the establishment is forced to respond.

In the Great Depression, capital was discredited. All its forecasts were shown to be false and people were hurting on a massive scale. Capital was discredited and therefore modest legislation could be enacted and new organizational developments could occur.

We’re going to need to have systemic challenges sufficient to call into question the rules.

The dominant idea now is that only free enterprise is something we can count on: “Government is bad; it can’t do anything. We must privatize. Let business do

it. Therefore we must create an environment favorable to business.”

That’s the crucial element of the basic agenda that nobody contests. The liberals are in full retreat. Witness Clinton ac-

cepting the balanced budget as the prime objective. Refusing to defend government as a potentially creative agency is a moral defeat for liberal causes and for the cause of elemental decency.

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responsibilities.*

B.C.: In your book *Beyond Hypocrisy*, you talk about what makes a revolution historically. Will the fax revolution — I'm thinking of China in 1989 — help the masses to rise up? Or will we be subject to Right Wing domination?

E.H.: What makes me a little pessimistic about revolt is that I can easily imagine the American people getting very upset and anti-government sentiments growing, but people are not putting forward a credible new vision of society even with access to fax machines and to the Internet.

You can't have a decent revolution come out of chaos. When you have chaos, there will ultimately be a crackdown by people who have money and who control the army.

To have a decent revolution, you have to have organized groups who support an agenda that's good and meaningful. You could maybe have a military government of the Right under some conditions in the U.S., but it would have great difficulty in keeping this vast population, which is very restive, under control.

B.C.: Would you say that the media create an environment which fragments the ability of a Left revolution to coalesce?

E.H.: Absolutely! They not only fragment, they don't allow any alternative to the status quo to be considered. People who have alternative ideas are so marginalized they can't get a word across.

B.C.: Do you think it's worth turning off CNN and canceling *Time* and *Newsweek* for a while? Will that be helpful to anyone trying to pursue a different agenda?

E.H.: I myself boycott them. I refuse to shell out money for them. I look at them occasionally in the library. I do subscribe, I must admit, to *The New York Times*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, and *The Financial Times*, all of which I dislike intensely. I get the minimum establishment material which I must have to do my job as a media analyst.

I don't get *The Reader's Digest*, *Time*,

Newsweek or *U.S. News and World Report*. I believe in boycotting them and putting my support into magazines that represent something decent.

B.C.: What about the Republican mandate? Was it a media creation?



When soldiers returned from the Gulf War in June, 1991, the New York Police tried to prevent photographers — even those with valid credentials — from photographing counter-demonstrators.

Andrew Lichtensten/Impact Visuals

E.H.: Reagan had a "mandate," Thatcher had a "mandate" although she was always a minority candidate. And now the Republicans with Gingrich are alleged to have a mandate. The media does not point out that the vote count was extremely small and the Republicans represented maybe 17 percent of the total eligible voting populace.

Also they don't discuss the fact that there are a lot of polls showing that two-thirds of the public didn't even know that there was a thing called the Contract with America a week before the election. The contract is a masterpiece of obscurantism, filled with clichés; it is straight Orwell, saying exactly the opposite of what is really intended.

A poll of 338 CEOs of business in

Forbes Magazine last January indicated that they loved Gingrich and what the Republican Party stood for. They said it was "too good to be true."

The public is confused and insofar as you can ascertain what they want by

specific polls on specific issues like the environment, they absolutely don't want what Gingrich is going to do. If you ask specific questions about the public's attitude toward the environment, the public still supports environmental control, but the Republicans are ripping off the environment immediately. If the media were democratic and honest, these things would be front and center and they would be screaming at the deception.

It's essentially a *coup d'etat* of the business community. Unbelievable.

B.C.: The militia movements seem to be a very interesting case. People who might not have been able to identify the phrase "militia movement" three months ago, now have it on their tongues every day because the major media filled the air-

waves with discussions and videos created by the militia movements.

E.H.: I have a complex view on that. After the Oklahoma bombing, the media were in a frenzy. If it had been Islamic people—they said Islamic terrorists from the word go—there would have been no holds barred.

Catering to militia violence

As soon as it turned out that they were “patriotic” white Americans, the media’s tone changed greatly. They became more sociological, more interested in understanding the social roots of the action. The Congressional hearings held concerning the militia were extremely brief and rather friendly. Some people who analyze the militia were interested in showing militia ties to the Klan and to anti-semitic groups, but they haven’t been heard.

Now Congress is having extensive hearings on the Waco incident which is no doubt deserving of hearings, but it’s going to be trashing the government. It feeds into the logic of Rush Limbaugh and Gingrich and the rest. They’re all attacking the government violently so the militia, in a sense, is a derivative of this Right Wing claim that it wants to get the government off our back. Of course, it only wants to do that for certain spheres—not the military, the police or prisons.

Ignoring militia economics

On the other hand, neither the Right Wing nor the media dig very deeply into the economic roots of the militia movement. The militia movement and the tremendous insecurity of ordinary citizens of the U. S. is a result of the fact that the American economic and political system is not working for ordinary people. It gets back to that 2.3 percent fall in average income. **B.C.:** What suggestions might you have that would help people who *are* organizing for change to cope with the current media environment?

E.H.: I think in the long run what’s going to make for progressive change is grass-roots movements that are close to people, and the development of new, more democratic ideologies, ideas, models.

The crucial thing is to organize, to organize people who are being crushed and to try to educate them to understand what’s going on. Also maybe sketching out some possible alternative models, but to get them to have the insight to see how the existing global system development is without any regard for the lower 80 percent of the population.

I also think it’s extremely important to

It’s extremely important to develop a democratic media from below. I subscribe to them just to support them—even when I can’t read them all—I think they have to be generously supported.

build up a democratic media from below—by generously supporting local newsletters and whatever alternative media exists.

Supporting alternative media

I think it is perfectly OK to write letters to the establishment press. I don’t think it’s going to get you very far, but there is something to be said for constantly assailing them for their apologetics for the status quo.

But it’s extremely important to develop a democratic media from below. That means local newsletters, it means supporting *In These Times* (Chicago), *Extra* (of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting) and all the progressive media institutions. I subscribe to them just to support them—even when I can’t read

them all—I think they have to be supported.

I believe in non-commercial broadcasting and radio, so every one of them should be supported and pressed to the Left, pressed into a democratic frame.

B.C.: Has the revocation of the fairness doctrine been critical in all this?

E.H.: The fairness doctrine was always almost entirely nominal. Insofar as it was effective, it caused the media not to show programs for which they would have to compensate with offsetting material.

I’d put back fairness and maybe impose some requirements on the media for carrying out the mandate that they were obligated to uphold when getting their licenses to the air, but I would also charge them a fat percentage of their advertising revenue as a franchise tax and turn it over to the non-profit media as compensation for their doing public service work.

A moral imperative to fight

We are now losers. We have been subject to serious defeats and we’re still losing, but you have to keep on fighting. You have to assume that the public will wake up when it is hurting enough and will be more receptive. You have to believe that institutions can be changed democratically. If you give up on that totally, you’re dead—you’re spiritually dead.

I’m coming out with a book called *The Triumph of the Market* (South End Press, 1995) that ends quoting Brazilian Catholic Bishop Casadaliga, who says, “We are the defeated soldiers of an unbeatable army.”

We *are* the defeated soldiers of an unbeatable army. Our army is the 90 percent of the global population—the ones that are being victimized by the existing system. We are beaten now. We’re getting trampled on. The system is riding high. But it’s not going to go on indefinitely.

There’s a moral imperative that we continue to fight.

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On-line insurrections

by Camille Colatosti

Students across the country are plugging into school computer networks which they often understand far better than their teachers. Through these networks, students can participate in personal e-mail, computer bulletin boards and global communication networks, like the Internet.

The benefits to students are enormous. As the *Technology Mission Statement* for public schools in Princeton, N.J. explains, "The pervasive nature of technology makes us increasingly dependent on our ability to understand and use it effectively."

Yet, troubles for administrators and faculty arise when they realize that students have the ability to receive unedited information and to send their opinions out to an enormous audience, using the technology much more effectively than educators do.

In school after school, administrators who began offering students broad access to new technologies have backtracked when they discovered unexpected student uses of cyberspace. Fearing an inability to control student discussion, administrators have chosen to shut down bulletin boards, to limit student access to specific networks and directories, and — in some cases — to censor students' communication and to punish students who discuss information over the Internet it considers embarrassing to the school.

"The power of networked speech and

its capacity to evade the censor are just now becoming clear," says Barry Steinhardt, associate director of the American Civil Liberties Union. "In use by more than 20 million people worldwide, Internet allows millions to both provide and consume almost unlimited amounts of largely uncensored information. At stake," he continues, "are three basic civil liberties: free speech, including access to information; privacy and equality."

Equal access versus control

Unfortunately, the vastness of the Internet has left educators feeling that they lack control. To reassert authority, they have made censorship decisions masked as efforts to promote "equality."

For example, administrators at Princeton High School introduced a computer system in the 1993-1994 school year. To facilitate the bulletin board, the administrators drafted students who understood the system better than the faculty.

The students believed they were being conscientious when they established "monitored" conferences which students could join only by getting the password from a designated student. This, they said, would preclude elementary school students from entering into the conversations of teenagers which, although not designed to use profanity or to allude to sexuality, sometimes did.

But when then assistant principal Ralph Heyman realized that, as he put it, "some bulletin boards were hidden," he became

worried.

"I realized that there were dozens of bulletin boards," he explains, "created by students and controlled by students, that I didn't have access to. I was concerned that other students, whose parents paid taxes, would also be denied access to these discussions. We are talking about public monies that are being used for purposes not consistent with [school] board policies."

Tensions were sharpened by the fact that the school board had just replaced a liberal high school principal with one whom it believed would run a "tight ship." Students resented the newly required hall passes and changed atmosphere. Naturally their complaints were prominent on the bulletin board.

Heyman started reading all public and private conferences on the school's computer. On occasion, students were called down to the office of the assistant principal in charge of discipline and asked to apologize. To students like Princeton High School senior Dwight Rodgers, this was an invasion of privacy.

"By reading the private discussion of the students, the administration was censoring thoughts and intimidating people," says Rodgers, who was a National Merit Scholarship semi-finalist. "Students felt that they couldn't say what they wanted."

Soon students learned that the school had severed the computer system's direct

link with the Internet, which confined all messages to computers within the school. Frustrated, students reconnected to the Internet by locating a computer in Taiwan through which

they could route their messages.

Asked how they reconnected, Peter Rodgers, Princeton class of 1994, ex-

Known as Robin Hacker, a 1993 sophomore made a game of hacking through the administration's attempts at security.

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plained that every message posted on the Internet carries the telephone number of every machine it passes through.

"Basically, it's like multiple postmarks. You can call each machine. They will all allow you to read messages, but every now and then you'll find one that allows posting. We passed through the gateways until we found one in Taiwan."

Unfortunately, a few students provided the administration with an excuse to shut the system down.

Known as Robin Hacker, a 1993 sophomore made a game of hacking through the administration's attempts at security — posting notes in areas to which the students weren't supposed to have access.

Dwight Rodgers and a friend found assistant principal Heyman's password.

"We logged in and sent mail under his name to all discussion groups informing them that he [Heyman] would no longer read students' messages. We did this because we believed that the administration shouldn't be reading student discussions and conferences. We thought that breaking into Mr. Heyman's account would be effective."

To Heyman, the stealing of his password proved that "things were out of control." He shut the system down until the school could create a network that was "more secure." He admits concerns about maintaining authority. "Kids know so much more than teachers and administrators about the working of the bulletin boards. As administrators, we need to be clear about the educational goals of everything we do."

Upset about the administration's decision, Rodgers and other students began publishing an alternative paper, entitled *Power to the People*. Their first issue criticized the school for censoring student ideas and for punishing all students for the actions of a few. Rodgers believed that the administration "made it seem like

we destroyed everything, that the system was down because of the work of hackers. We wanted to inform students of why we did what we did and rally students against the administration."

About one year after the administration shut down the bulletin boards, a new system was put in place. "This has more security," says Rodgers. "The administration doesn't allow private conferences." At the same time, Rodgers adds, when faculty ask him to help them with a problem in the system, he sometimes responds that he would have to suspend the security to be able to help. With faculty permission, he has frequently done so by hacking his way through.

Heyman wonders how secure the current system is. "I have no idea when I go on if there are things I'm denied access to."

Rodgers says he hasn't come across any.

Still, both Heyman and Rodgers believe that the controversy had a positive outcome. The controversy led to discussions between students, teachers, administrators and school board members about the role of technology in the schools. These talks, says Heyman, have resulted in a unified view of the purpose of technology in education. A recently instituted *Princeton Regional Schools Technology Mission Statement* recognizes the importance of new technologies to education, recommends professional development for teachers and administrators, and promotes "rules of conduct related to the ethical and legal use of technology." The school board is currently debating the boundaries of these rules of conduct. Nevertheless, the resolution in Princeton represents a degree of

understanding both of the importance of network communication and the free speech rights of students that remains absent in other school districts.

Embarrassment and lawsuits

As in the case of Princeton High School, school administrators' concerns about new technology seem to have more to do with control than with a desire to promote equality in education. Perhaps no example makes this point more clearly than the case of Paul Kim, a senior at Newport High School in Bellevue, Washington. An exceptional student with an overall grade point average of 3.88, a candidate for a National Merit Scholarship, Kim, on his own time, off school property, created a parody of his high school newspaper and made this available to users of the Internet. Entitled the "Unofficial Newport High School Home Page," this document was linked to other documents located on the World Wide Web.

Under "Favorite Subjects of Newport High School Students," Kim listed "sex," and linked this subject to publicly accessible documents of a sexual nature on the Internet.

Principal Karin Cathey, embarrassed by the parody, imposed severe discipline on Kim — even though the document was not created or accessible on school grounds and was in no way officially

connected to the school. She revoked the school's endorsement of Kim as a National Merit finalist, thus preventing him from winning that scholarship. She also sent letters to the col-

leges to which Kim had applied, informing them that the school no longer recommended Kim for entrance into their institution.

The extreme nature of the Newport

The fear of what adults do not understand, and children do, leads to efforts to limit what the younger generation can learn.

High School response suggests some of what is at stake with cyber communication. Fearing the unknown, fearing embarrassment and lawsuits, administrators censor students' free speech and limit student access to various network groups.

Carnegie Mellon University, for example, offers its students broad access to the Internet, but prohibits student access to six network news groups that deal with sexual topics. The University fears that it will be held responsible for the distribution of obscene material to minors.

According to ACLU's Steinhardt, the University's concerns are grounded in false conclusions. These news groups are not "obscene merely because they contain sexually explicit materials." Many discuss safe sex, responsible sexual behavior and other issues important to college students.

Government control

Steinhardt worries that "the full potential of information technology will never be realized if people are afraid to use it." Not only are institutions like Carnegie Mellon wary of lawsuits, but individuals worry about repercussions that stem from invasion of privacy. This worry is founded in reality, for the Clinton Administration has, according to Steinhardt, advocated installing the Clipper Chip — "a special window in telecommunications equipment through which the government alone, ostensibly for law enforcement and national security reasons, could peer into private communications."

Ominous as this sounds, Peter Rodgers says the usefulness of the Clipper Chip has already been destroyed. The purpose of the chip, which would be installed in every computer and telephone, is to encode messages supposedly to protect consumer privacy. The government would

have the key to the encoding and thus be able to surveil as it considered necessary. The government might then outlaw all other encoding programs.

Asked if people could remove the chips, Rodgers responded that one could reject new phones and computers. But one could also sidestep the government's intent by using an encoding algorithm called RSA on top of Clipper.

"RSA requires thousands of hours of computer time to break through one mes-

other content carried on their networks. To avoid legal liability, private carriers would need to censor e-mail messages and public forums.

According to Laura Murphy Lee, Director of the ACLU Washington National Office, "The Exon amendment would make the interactive environment one of the most censored segments of communications media when logic dictates that cyberspace should be the least censored. At a minimum, the safeguards against censorship in print media should be applied to online communications."

For Lee, the motivation for censoring cyberspace comes, in part, from the mistaken impressions of those unfamiliar with new information technologies. "Contrary to the fears of those who are not yet online," she explains, "neither pornographic nor indecent images flash across the computer screen when someone signs on to the Internet. It is not easy to find anything in cyberspace, and the individual must willingly—even diligently—seek it out."

In fact, the knowledge gap in using information technologies may be the single biggest factor affecting the responses of teachers and politicians to computer communication. The truth remains that children, in general, find it easier to maneuver in

cyberspace than do adults. The fear of what adults do not understand, and children do, leads to efforts to limit what the younger generation can learn. This fear is one that adults will have to counter. As Steinhardt urges, new technologies are a fact of life, and students must have the opportunity to learn. In addition, many students will undoubtedly consider any security system a challenge and one through which they may be quite able to hack.

TW



Anne E. Cox

sage. People who are security conscious are picking this up off the Internet. Unless the National Security Administration has found a way to decode it, these messages would be super-secure even from the government."

Meanwhile the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee debates the Communications Decency Act of 1995. Introduced by Senator J. James Exon (R-Neb.), this bill would make all telecommunications service providers liable for every message, file or

Resisting Babel: preserving sanity and conscience

by William Stringfellow

William Stringfellow wrote this essay during the Vietnam War. We reprint his observations about how words are used to disable our critical thinking and confuse our consciences, because they are prophetic as well as an accurate indictment of the early 1970s.

If the powers and principalities be legion, so are the means by which they assault, captivate, enslave, and dominate human beings.

Yet all of the demonic claims against human life have a common denominator. Typically, each and every stratagem of the principalities seeks the death of the specific faculties of rational and moral comprehension which distinguish human beings from all other creatures. Whatever form or appearance it takes, demonic aggression always aims at the immobilization or surrender or destruction of the mind and at the neutralization or abandonment or demoralization of the conscience. In the Fall, the purpose and effort of every principality is the dehumanization of human life, *categorically*.

Demonic tactics and the prevalence of Babel

I do not attempt, here, any exhaustive account of the ploys and stratagems of the powers that be. But I do cite some of those

William Stringfellow, a frequent contributor to *The Witness*, died 10 years ago. This article is excerpted from *An Ethic for Christians and Other Aliens in a Strange Land*, 1973, and is reprinted in the Stringfellow reader, *Keeper of the Word* (Eerdmans, 1994).

most familiar, as a matter of illustration and, moreover, in order to underscore the significance of the verbal element in the tactics which the principalities mount against human beings. That the verbal factor is so prominent among multifarious stratagems is related directly to the fact that it is the human mind which is being contested and it is human conscience which is being threatened. Indeed, I regard the verbal as definitive in all the ploys of the principalities.

The denial of truth

A rudimentary claim with which the principalities subvert persons is that truth in the sense of eventful and factual matter does not exist. In the place of truth and appropriating the name of truth are data engineered and manufactured, programmed and propagated by the principality. The truth is usurped and displaced

Babel means the inversion of language, verbal inflation, libel, rumor, euphemism and coded phrases, rhetorical wantonness, redundancy, hyperbole, such profusion in speech and sound that comprehension is impaired. And, in all of this, babel means violence.

by a self-serving version of events or facts, with whatever selectivity, distortion, falsehood, manipulation, exaggeration, evasion, concoction necessary to maintain the image or enhance the survival or multiply the coercive capacities of the principality.

This ploy is commonplace commercially in American merchandising and advertising, and has been for a long time. It has lately been transported into politics and sophisticated for political purposes on a scale and with a persistence that is profoundly ominous for human beings.

If citizens realize, by now, that they have been contemptuously, relentlessly importuned because of untrustworthy versions of Vietnam, they may also begin to sense how their humanity is similarly insulted by official falsehood and propaganda concerning Watergate, the cost of living, taxation, crime, product safety, certain notorious indictments, and practically anything else in which the same political principalities are implicated.

What is most significant in any of these examples is, I think, not the doctoring of the truth per se, but the premise of the principalities that truth is nonexistent, that truth is a fiction, that there can be no thorough or fair or comprehensive or detached discovery and chronicle of events, and that any handling of facts is ideologically or institutionally or otherwise tainted. Official aggressions against the media have been based upon this proposition. They take the position that the public media, by definition, have been engaged in indoctrination of a viewpoint and version which, insofar as it departs from the authorized administration line, must be either supplanted by official propaganda or suppressed.

Ominous, indeed! This presumption of the principalities that truth does not exist or cannot with some human diligence be uncovered and conscientiously

communicated outreaches the subversion of journalism. It abolishes any work of scholarship; it renders education — both teaching and learning — partisan and farcical and, in the end, condemns and banishes all uses of human intelligence.

Doublespeak and overtalk

The preemption of truth with prefabricated, fictionalized versions of facts and events and the usurpation of truth by official lies are stratagems of the demonic powers much facilitated by other language contortions or abuses which the principalities and authorities foster. These include heavy euphemism and coded phrases, the inversion of definitions, jargon, hyperbole, misnomer, slogan, argot, shibboleth, cliché. The powers enthrall, delude, and enslave human beings by stopping comprehension with “doublespeak,” as Orwell named it.

Orwell’s prototype of the phenomenon of doublespeak declares “war is peace.” That very example of doublespeak has become by way of the war in Indochina the literal watchword in America, more than a decade before Orwell’s doomsday date of 1984. The plethora of doublespeak contrived and uttered because of this war has been fantastic and evidently inexhaustible. Doublespeak has been solemnly pronounced to deceive citizens, not to mention the Congress, about every escalation, every corruption, every wasted appropriation, every casualty report, every abdication of command responsibility and every insubordination, every atrocity.

If the war has furnished innumerable instances of the doublespeak ploy, so has American racism. In the 1960s, it will be recalled, “violence in the streets” became the slogan for suppression of peaceful black protest.

Sometimes doublespeak is overtalk, in which the media themselves so accentuate volume, speed, and redundancy that

communication is incapacitated (even where the data transmitted may not be false or deceptive). The auditor’s mind is so insulted, inundated, or transfixed by verbal and visual technology that it is crippled or immobilized.

Secrecy and boasts of expertise

An aspect of the delusive aura enveloping the demonic powers is the resort to secrecy. Secrecy in politics is dehuman-

secrecy is an indispensable principle of government. Frequently, that claim is embellished by pleas of expertise, that is, the assertion by a principality — like the Pentagon, the CIA or the Henry Kissinger operation — that certain affairs are too sensitive or complicated for human beings to know about or act upon.

In ferocious application this really becomes a boast that bureaucratic routine or



Activists clash with police while protesting the lack of accurate AIDS reporting at the *New York Times*.

T.L. Litt/Impact Visuals

izing *per se*; political secrecy begets a ruthless paternalism between regime and citizens which disallows human participation in government and renders human beings hapless against manipulation by trick or propaganda or other babel.

Nowadays, Americans are told that

computer programming or institutional machinations are superhuman and obviate human abilities to be informed, to think, to decide and to act, thus relegating the person to a role of spectator or acolyte, submissive and subservient to the requirements of the principality.

Surveillance and harassment

Ancillary to secrecy in politics and commerce and in other realms is surveillance and the abolition of human privacy. The prevalence of industrial and commercial espionage; the monitoring of shoppers and elevator passengers and similar, now commonplace, so-called security precautions affecting ordinary business; the everyday atmosphere of apprehension in which people have come to live in America — all have worked to enlarge the tolerance of citizens toward political surveillance and the loss of privacy.

The kind of open society contemplated by the First Amendment seems impossible — and, what is more ominous, seems undesirable — to very many Americans. So there is little outrage when Senate hearings expose illegal military oversight of civilians or when the unprecedented political espionage at the Watergate is exposed or when education (if that is what it can then still be called) is conducted in so many schools in the presence of the police or other “security” forces.

It is not necessary to dwell upon such contemporary citations, however, because surveillance is a very old ploy of the principalities and not at all an innovation of electronics. One recalls that the purpose of the famous journey to Bethlehem of Joseph and the pregnant Mary was to be enrolled for a special tax applicable only to the Jews. It was not only a means by which the Roman occupiers collected revenue but also harassment of potential dissidents and minute political scrutiny of a captive and oppressed people.

Exaggeration and deception

In certain situations principalities act or overact so as to engender a belief that their conduct is warranted though no empirical justification exists. It is the audacity of the deceit, the grossness of the falsehood, the sheer excessiveness of the stratagem, the massiveness of the

exaggeration which works to gain public credence or acquiescence.

In American merchandising this wantonness has foisted a huge quantity and a startling array of phony, worthless, dangerous goods and services upon purchasers. What may be more significant, such commercial deception has been so com-

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mon, and practiced for such a long time that when the same techniques are politically appropriated human resistance has already been made pliable. This was a weapon of Nazi anti-Semitism. It was the snare of McCarthyism. The Department of Justice inherited it and has utilized it more often than one cares to recount.

Cursing and conjuring

The demonic powers curse human beings who resist them. I mean the term *curse* quite literally, as a condemnation to death, as a damnation. In earlier times, American Indians were cursed as savages in order to rationalize genocide. Somewhat similarly, chattel slavery involved cursing blacks as humanly inferior. In more recent American experience, has been the official defamation of the Black Panthers through indictments which conjure images of them as bloodthirsty black revolutionaries. If, by now, most of these prosecutions have failed and the charges

have proved to be false or frivolous or fantastic, the curse nonetheless survives.

Usurpation and absorption

A somewhat more subtle tactic which principalities initiate against humans who do not conform involves the usurpation of human resistance. To be concrete, in the Catonsville case in 1968 [in which draft board records were burned], the federal authorities prosecuted in circumstances where an admitted offense had been committed. If that prosecution can be faulted as overkill in its scope, the government nevertheless kept within the bounds of a prosecution.

In the Harrisburg trial a few years later [in which Liz McAlister and Phil Berrigan were accused of planning to kidnap Kissinger], the role of the State reached beyond prosecution. The Department of Justice was implicated in entrapment and use of a paid informer in procuring an alleged or imagined offense.

By the time of the Camden matter [in which a draft board action was attempted], the political and legal authorities moved from prosecution to perpetration, the offense having apparently been conceived, sponsored, subsidized and implemented by agents of the government. Thus the stratagem of the principalities destroys the witness of human resistance by pre-emption, fabrication, absorption.

This, too, is no new ploy. In the first century, the Apostolic Church suffered enormous pressures to accede to a politically innocuous position as one of the religious sects of Judaism existing under a comity of protective custody of the Roman State. Saint Paul's vocation to preach the Gospel of the resurrection from death to the Gentiles — including even the Roman authorities — and the traumatic vision which enlightened Saint Peter concerning the same outreach and mission, saved the early Church from being ignominiously absorbed into the Imperial *status quo*.

Diversion and demoralization

It must be borne in mind that any effort to designate and describe or illustrate characteristic ploys of the principalities is artificial to the extent that it necessarily abstracts a particular stratagem from the havoc and frenzy within which all the powers exist and act. None of these tactics can be sharply defined; they all overlap, and, moreover, they most commonly can be cited in simultaneous use.

The matter is, of course, further compounded by the intense rivalries and apparent collaborations as much as by how many of the powers besiege humans all at once. This is most pertinent to those ploys which have a distracting or diversionary aspect. That is illustrated by the political importance in contemporary American society of commercial sports. Sports engage the attention, time, and energies of multitudes of human beings, diverting them from politics as such and furnishing vicarious activity in substitution for their participation in political struggle.

More than that, in circumstances where there is little citizen involvement in the realpolitik of a nation, the persecution and punishment of nonconforming persons becomes itself a form of public spectacle. For the governing authorities, and for citizens who acquiesce to a spectator role, the American political prosecutions of Angela Davis or Daniel Ellsberg or Philip Berrigan serve the same purpose as the arena events involving lions and Christians in ancient Rome.

This same distracting factor is prominent, obviously, wherever scapegoats are sacrificed for the survival of principalities, whether the scapegoat be an individual (as Stokely Carmichael was for awhile in the 1960s, for instance) or a class of persons (as welfare recipients have now become).

There are numberless other diversions convenient to the demonic powers, some

of which may be thought of as dividends which accrue when other ploys are at work.

The relentlessness of multifarious babel in America, for example, has wrought a fatigue both visceral and intellectual in millions upon millions of Americans. By

circumstances. Babel means the inversion of language, verbal inflation, libel, rumor, euphemism and coded phrases, rhetorical wantonness, redundancy, hyperbole, such profusion in speech and



Sacrifice, this image was flown over the 1989 Superbowl.

M. Mendel

now truly *demoralized*, they suffer no conscience and they risk no action. Their human interest in living is narrowed to meager subsisting; their hope for life is no more than avoiding involvement with other humans and a desire that no one will bother them. They have lost any expectations for society; they have no stamina left for confronting the principalities; they are reduced to docility, lassitude, torpor, profound apathy, and default.

The demoralization of human beings in this fashion greatly conveniences the totalitarianism of the demonic powers since the need to resort to persecutions or imprisonments is obviated, as the people are already morally captive.

The violence of Babel

All of these snares and devices of the principalities represent the reality of babel, and babel is that species of violence most militant in the present American

sound that comprehension is impaired, nonsense, sophistry, jargon, noise, incoherence, a chaos of voices and tongues, falsehood, blasphemy. And, in all of this, babel means violence.

Babylon is the city of babel. The language and liturgies of emperor worship in Imperial Rome were babel. The Nazis practiced babel against the Jews. Babel spawns racism. In 1984, babel is the way advanced technocracy dehumanizes persons. By the 1970s in America, successive regimes had been so captivated by babel that babel had become the means of ruling the nation, the principal form of coercion employed by the governing authorities against human beings.

It is not just that babel incites violence — though it does, as the American experience in racism for nearly four centuries documents — but, more than that, babel *is* violence.

TW

Liberation radio

by Nkenge Zo!@

"If you're wondering why it's so quiet in here, I just kicked the radio to death."

Albert Brock to the psychiatrist in "The Murderer" from Ray Bradbury's *The Golden Apples Of The Sun*

Ray Bradbury's 1953 fiction anticipates the glut of media babble presided over by corporate United States in 1995. Since "The Murderer" entered the annals of American literature, production of electronic signals and their convenient receipt by "consumers" has ensnared even those who once may have been wary of submitting to such technologies.

Early this century the presumption was that communities/society would ultimately benefit from the 40-hour work week and eight-hour work day. Yet the increase in free time for the individual pursuit of happiness seems, rather, to have contributed to the dissolution of cogent, functioning neighborhoods and communities. Likewise, the information age was supposed to enable common access to secrets presumably held in thrall by the privileged. How sad the reverberation of familiar image, sound and ideas.

"Before we start..." He moved quietly and quickly to detach the wrist radio from the doctor's arm. He tucked it in his teeth like a walnut, gritted and heard it crack, handed it back to the appalled psychiatrist as if he had done them both a favor. "That's better."

—from "The Murderer"

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) declared on its formation

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that the airwaves belong to the people. Yet, who is ignorant? Quality, style, substance, quantity in most media (exempting such as *Ms. Magazine*, celebrating five years *sans ads*) is determined by the expected return of ducats, loot, moola, presidents, enchiladas for fun and profit of fewer rather than more people.

The FCC has been upholder of decency on the airwaves, arbiting fair time and equal-access disputes, and awarding



broadcast licenses for stations of from 100 watts to 50,000 watts. (How many nights has your radio brought programs from other states that weren't carried on a local station?)

Meantime, without government sanction, women and men in California, Illinois, and Michigan have become broadcasters. They use the technology of "micro" transmitters. Hosts with names like The Goofy Girls, Rad Man, Judy Generic

As a participant in broadcasting for almost 20 years I am invigorated by micro broadcasters. They are going beyond protest, living the road to their vision.

and MC Rot-A-Lot have become part of a network of micro-power broadcasters.

Micro stations are those using transmitters of under 100 watts. They can be assembled for free or with kits costing as little as \$50. Many people access the 40 watts of Free Radio Berkeley in Oakland, Cal. For two years FRB has maintained a 24-hour signal; on a clear night it can cover a five-mile radius. Music and call-ins are programming staples, but the talk is exceptional. MC Rot-A-Lot spends three hours each Friday boosting composting as part of the way to a new society; the host of BLA Street Alert waxes on about bicycles as an antidote to pollution and poor circulation; Stephen Dunifer, founder of Free Radio Berkeley, co-hosts with Laura Drawbridge a weekly program "Acting Globally, Revolting Locally."

"Friends were always calling, calling, calling me. Hell I hadn't any time of my own. When it wasn't the telephone it was the television, the radio, the phonograph. When it wasn't the television, radio or the phonograph it was ..."

— from "The Murderer"

Free Radio Berkeley, broadcasting at 104.1 FM, emerges from the traditions of white anarchism. In the middle of the country a housing project in Springfield, Ill., is the base for 107.1 FM, the frequency for Mabana Kantako's broadcasts of Black Liberation Radio. Kantako experienced no interference from the FCC or the police—until he put on the air victims of police brutality.

Illegal broadcasts—those not licensed by the FCC—pose political questions much more profound than whether or not those with millions of dollars should be the only ones with access to the minds of citizens. For instance, how can broadcasting serve to truly encourage and sup-



Logo for Free Radio Berkeley and SF Liberation Radio

port face-to-face communications with individuals and groups? Can letter writing be revived, thus developing the potential for a more subtle and refined discourse?

Many proponents of underground radio, pirate radio, or, as it is now called, micro-power broadcasting, believe each community should have its own station which would address the specific needs of the people of its area as determined by

the residents. A ruling in January by Federal Judge Claudia Wilken denied the FCC a preliminary injunction to stop micro-power broadcasts of Dunifer and Free Radio Berkeley. The ruling is seen as a historic precedent because it is the first time the regulatory agency has been denied an injunction to stop the broadcasts of an unlicensed radio station.

The National Lawyers Guild's Committee on Democratic Communications

has published a brochure, "What to Do When the FCC Knocks on Your Door," to prepare those who dare.

Free Radio Berkeley and the Free Communications Coalition are making available transmitter kits, with the proviso from FRB's legal department warning they are for "the furtherance of one's knowledge regarding radio frequency design and principles (our emphasis). ... Part 15 of the FCC rules prohibits an antenna being used" which would direct a broadcast signal.

As a participant in broadcasting for almost 20 years I am invigorated by these developments. Those who have chosen to express their commitments through micro broadcasting are helping push the contradictions of U.S. society from another direction. And they are going beyond protest, living the road to their vision. I welcome their strength. Yet I cannot help identifying with the protagonist of Ray Bradbury's story.

All out access to the waves encircling Earth does cause me to temper my applause for even micro broadcasting. Like Albert Brock, I am trying to know silence. The interior landscapes, complex as they must be, by nature provide surcease from the glut of media babble.

"What made you think of spooning ice cream into the radio?"

"It was a hot day."

The doctor paused.

"And what happened next?"

"Silence happened next. God, it was beautiful."

— Ray Bradbury's "The Murderer"

art and society

CIC: What should be its bottom line?

by Julie A. Wortman

In every respect but one the Church Insurance Company (CIC) appears to be an arm of the Episcopal Church. A not-for-profit company, it is run by the Church Pension Fund, which is listed in the *Episcopal Church Annual* as an "official agency" of the Episcopal Church and whose trustees are elected by the church's General Convention (see box). The Episcopal Church shield adorns the company's letterhead and its many other printed materials. CIC accepts only Episcopal Church entities as clients. Even the music you hear if you are temporarily consigned to the telephone limbo of "on hold" when calling the company's New York headquarters is of the tasteful cathedral-choir-and-pipe-organ sort.

But the company's decision-making bottom line is money, not the Gospel.

"In the end," says Vincent C. Currie, Jr., a Church Pension Fund trustee, Episcopalians should realize that CIC "is just an insurance company."

For the most part, this reality hasn't posed a problem to the company's clients, who have welcomed its help, as CIC's motto puts it, in "Protecting Episcopal People and Property" when fires, floods, accidents and Oklahoma-type bombings occur. Now, however, with a steady stream of claims involving clergy sexual misconduct coming in, some see a disturbing conflict between CIC's churchlike image and the way it handles sexual misconduct claims. Some critics even argue that by acting more in accordance with church efforts to "do the right thing" in misconduct cases CIC could dramatically reduce the cost of claims.

'What is the insurance for?'

At issue is CIC's responsibility to those who purchase sexual misconduct liability insurance. "What's confusing to me is what is the insurance for?" asks Gay Jennings, the Diocese of Ohio's canon to the ordinary. "CIC's responsibility is to defend the diocese if a suit is brought against us, but is that all?"

Jennings notes that in two civil suits where plaintiffs claimed that the Diocese of Ohio was responsible for a cleric's sexual misconduct, the lawyers CIC hired to defend the diocese "did a phenomenal job." But she and others who work with clergy sexual misconduct cases would like to see CIC more willing to pay for victims' therapeutic expenses if that is all they are asking as restitution for the injury done them.

"In adjudicating cases we always try to get restitution from the offender—we see it as part of the offender's potential healing," says Harold Hopkins, who in his role as director of the Office of Pastoral Development for the House of Bishops is often involved in church disciplinary proceedings stemming from instances of clergy sexual exploitation. "But it is often impossible for offenders to cover the cost of their victims' therapy because they may no longer have a job."

In such situations, Hopkins notes, dioceses do not always have the financial resources to help. While more and more dioceses are creating line items in their budgets for the psychological evaluations, assessments and legal fees adjudicating misconduct cases usually entail—the Diocese of Ohio, Jennings says, has paid out about \$50,000 for such items in the last three years—bishops have been relying on discretionary accounts to fund the therapeutic expenses of victims (and sometimes of accused offenders).

The diocese could file a claim with CIC to cover the victim's therapy and claims personnel would process it like any other claim, investigating what happened and

the severity of the injury, according to CIC's claims manager, William Fischer. "But if the insured has already made payments to the complainant themselves, we won't pay," Fischer says. "Our policy says we will reimburse the insured only for first-aid treatment at the scene of an accident. That's the industry standard."

'Compassionate expenses'

But Hopkins and other church officials believe the definition of "first aid" should be broadened in sexual misconduct cases. "A diocese will often pay 'compassionate expenses' [for therapy] to complainants while still working to figure out what has happened," he says, a practice which runs counter to CIC's preference for waiting to be certain that the insured could be legally liable before paying out any money.

"We have discussed the need for CIC to be pro-active in responding to the needs of the victims for counseling and that kind of help," says Church Pension Fund trustee Currie. "But we tend to think that it is not appropriate to become a victim's advocate because you might be admitting liability." Currie, who is diocesan administrator for the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, also sees such payouts as an invitation to frivolous claims of wrongdoing. "We don't want to be paying out money every time someone claims someone brushed up against them at the water cooler," he says. "I'm a Southerner. I always believe a man is a gentleman unless proven otherwise. Women believe men are not gentlemen unless proven otherwise."

Chilton Knudsen, however, a Church Pension Fund trustee who works on sexual misconduct cases for the Diocese of Chicago, disagrees. Not only does she believe that helping victims with their expenses early on is a way of demonstrating that the diocese cares about their welfare, she finds that most of the victims with whom she deals are happy to accept a "pastoral settlement" of money for therapeutic expenses—in Chicago this usually comes from the bishop's funds—and leave things at that.

"The vast majority do not come back



for more," she says. "In a few instances victims with whom we've had a good relationship do come back, but those have usually been cases where someone several years later has advised that they get a lawyer and the lawyer says, 'Let's go for the big money.'"

Taking off the gloves

Once a suit is filed — whether prompted by an opportunistic lawyer or a victim's frustrated efforts to get a remedy — everyone agrees that the dynamics change dramatically.

"It's an odd kind of justice system we have," says Knudsen. "In an adversarial action, the gloves must come off. The plaintiff will trash the priest, the bishop and the diocesan standing committee — and the insurance company will do likewise [to the plaintiff]. This kind of process forces us into behavior that contradicts our values. It puts us in the position of having to defend being compassionate. In one case, I had a good pastoral relation with the victim but when the suit was filed I was told to have no further contact with her."

Hopkins particularly dislikes that the lawyers defending church officials restrict them from speaking openly about the church's responsibility for the misconduct. "How much we say about a case is frequently at issue. [The lawyers] say it will weaken the case to say too much. But if what the victim says happened is true, I'd rather have the case weakened by acknowledging it."

Another problem, Knudsen says, is that "there's a kind of 'legal liturgy' the lawyers are used to, in which each side begins with the most extreme position possible, holding out as long as possible. The whole process eats up a lot of legal time and is very adversarial." Revictimization of the complainant, she and Hopkins both point out, is a common by-product.

'A fair, cost-effective resolution'

CIC's fiduciary goal, Fischer says, "is to get a fair, cost-effective resolution" as quickly as possible, and that can't be done without disputing at least some of the complainant's claims (see Sally

Johnson, "The role and obligation of insurance companies").

"We take on the claimant regarding damages and value," CIC's Fischer says. "We have to respond or we might exceed the policy limit [on damages]. The plaintiff's attorney's thrust is to get to the employer, so it's a question of vicarious liability, not one of crime or intent."

CIC & the Episcopal Church

The Church Insurance Company (CIC) is an affiliate of the Church Pension Fund (CPF), which manages the company and controls its finances. The canons of the Episcopal Church authorize the CPF "to establish and administer the clergy pension system, including life, accident and health benefits, of this Church." The church's General Convention elects the CPF's trustees. The CIC, together with the CPF's other affiliates comprise the Church Pension Group.

Keeping the cost of claims down, Fischer says, is critical with such a small company — with 85 percent of all Episcopal Church entities already buying their insurance from CIC, Fischer notes, "there is not much room for growth." CIC's closest competitor, Church Mutual Insurance Company, sells policies to church customers of any denomination and is five to seven times larger. CIC averages 2,200-2,500 new claims a year. "We have lost money in the last few years, I don't know how much," says Fischer. "Misconduct cases are a factor, but not exclusively."

But misconduct cases make up a significant portion of CIC's claims load. In 1993 the company stopped providing liability coverage for misconduct claims as part of its basic property and casualty policy because, as Alan Blanchard, president of the Church Pension Group, told the church's national executive council, "cases are coming out of the woodwork." At the time, Blanchard said, claims were costing twice the amount of premiums. CIC customers must now

select a separate rider to get sexual misconduct liability coverage. The old limit of \$2 million per claim has been reduced to \$350,000, with an annual cap of \$700,000. In 1993 an out-of-court settlement that involved the sexual abuse of six teenaged boys had a price tag of \$800,000 and in 1991 a jury awarded \$1.2 million in a judgment against the Diocese of Colorado, a decision which was later reduced by the Colorado Supreme Court but which still eventually cost CIC a six-figure settlement.

Recognizing that preventing misconduct from occurring in the first place should be the primary goal, CIC is now requiring that purchasers of its sexual misconduct liability protection institute sexual misconduct policies, educate clergy and other employees about proper conduct and screen applicants for employment — requirements that the Church Pension Group's David Rider equates with the fire codes purchasers of fire insurance are expected to observe.

But in the short term sexual misconduct cases will likely continue to be a significant fact of church life. With complainants in sexual misconduct cases highly represented by legal counsel — only one in 20 goes unrepresented, CIC's Fischer says, as opposed to one in three complainants in other cases — settlements will take time, and perhaps should. As Tom Carpenter, the Diocese of Iowa's chancellor, admits, "If I were a complainant's lawyer I might not advise that she take a simple settlement to cover the cost of therapy — there has been more damage than that."

Laughing at mediation?

But is there a way to avoid lengthy legal proceedings and minimize the money CIC pays out? Although few of its cases actually go to trial, Fischer says, they usually involve multiple church defendants, each with their own lawyers, and take an average of two years to settle.

Margo Maris, a pioneer in developing fair and compassionate procedures for responding to complaints of clergy sexual misconduct during her tenure as canon to

The role and obligation of insurance companies

by Sally Johnson

An insurance policy is a contract. In the case of sexual misconduct liability insurance, the insured pays a premium to the insurance company for the coverage and promises to cooperate with the company in defending claims. In exchange, the insurance company generally promises to defend the insured if a lawsuit is filed against the insured for a wrong that the policy covers and to pay any damages (money) that the insured is *legally obligated* to pay as a result of the lawsuit.

The important qualification is that the insured has to be *legally* obligated, not morally obligated to pay. The role of the lawyer hired by the insurance company is to defend the company's client and to try to prove that it is not *legally* obligated to pay any money or to minimize the amount of money that is owed. This is because premiums for insurance are based, in part, on the number and size of claims the insurance company expects to be legally obligated to pay plus amounts for operating expenses and profits (if it is a for-profit company). If the company pays claims it is not obligated to pay, there may not be enough money to pay the claims it is obligated to pay or to pay its owners (shareholders or members) the dividends to which they are entitled. It used to be rare for insurance companies to go out of business but in the past 10 years a number of large insurance companies have filed bankruptcy.

Claims for misconduct that occurred many years ago pose particular problems. When insurance companies set premiums for church clients 15, 20,

or 30 years ago, they did not expect to pay for clergy sexual misconduct claims out of those premiums because few, if any, lawsuits had ever been filed against churches. No money was set aside for such claims. If they are paid today, the money comes from premiums that have been paid more recently to cover current risks, not risks from decades ago.

Another reason insurance companies are reluctant to pay claims they aren't legally obligated to pay is that it may encourage other people (lawyers or claimants) to bring frivolous or unjustified claims. While the number of such claims may be small, they can impose significant costs in legal fees or settlements.

The victim usually sues not only the clergy person (90 percent of the sexual abuse and exploitation that occurs involves a male offender and a female victim) but also the cleric's congregation and denomination (diocese, synod, conference or association) and sometimes the national church body. The lawyers for each of those "defendants" has to decide how to defend their clients in the lawsuit. Our legal system is an adversary system where each side has their own lawyer who advocates vigorously for their client's interests. Our system is based on the belief that the truth emerges from that process. The job of the church's lawyer is to gather information to evaluate whether the claim is justified or frivolous.

The church defendants can raise a number of different defenses to the victim's claims:

1. *The conduct didn't happen.* The church's lawyer may argue that the alleged sexual misconduct didn't occur. This can include defenses such as, "something happened but not what she said happened," or "she's lying," or "she's not capable of remembering or telling it accurately because she is mentally unstable or mentally ill." The church's lawyer must question the victim about the details of what the clergy person did. The church may also claim that the victim's memory of the misconduct isn't accurate

because it has been affected by hypnosis or suggestions made by therapists. Or, the church's lawyer may argue that while the victim was abused, she was abused by someone else. All of these can involve painful and embarrassing inquiries into the victim's background.

2. *The conduct wasn't illegal.* The church's lawyer may admit that the misconduct occurred but argue that it wasn't illegal. This can include such arguments as "she consented," or "it's not wrong for a clergy person to have a sexual relationship with someone in their congregation or someone they're counseling." The church's lawyer may delve into the victim's sexual history to show that she has been sexually involved with a number of people to prove that the clergy person did not coerce her or exert power of any kind to obtain her consent to sexual contact.

3. *The church isn't responsible for what the clergy person did.* The church's lawyer may claim that regardless of what happened it is not legally responsible for what the clergy person did because the church didn't know or have any reason to know what the clergy person was doing or isn't responsible for the clergy person's deliberate, intentional wrongful acts.

4. *She wasn't damaged by what happened.* The church's lawyer may argue that the conduct occurred and was illegal but that the victim wasn't harmed by it or wasn't harmed as much as she claims because, for example, she was sexually abused as a child, is a battered spouse, is exaggerating, or is making things up about the harm she's claiming. The church's lawyer may investigate the victim's background and question her about her abuse history and psychological and psychiatric history to show that her damages were caused by experiences in her life having nothing to do with the clergy person's misconduct.

5. *Courts can't regulate what the church does.* The church's lawyer may argue that it doesn't matter what happened; the First Amendment of the U. S. Constitution

Lawyer **Sally Johnson** is chancellor of the Diocese of Minnesota.

prohibits secular courts from examining and passing judgment on appropriate behavior for clergy and how the church supervises its clergy. The church, this argument goes, should exert its right to be free from government regulation (through the courts and legislatures) so that it can live and act according to what it believes it means to be the church.

6. *Too much time has passed.* The church's lawyer may argue that the time for bringing a lawsuit has expired. Each state sets its own "statute of limitations" for bringing lawsuits. If the victim was an adult at the time of the misconduct, the statute of limitations varies from two to six years. In some states the time is extended until the victim remembers the misconduct and recognizes the harm it caused. If the victim was a minor at the time of the misconduct, the time limit usually extends several years after the victim reaches the age of majority. If the claim is made after the statute of limitations expires, it is dismissed.

Many of these defenses appear to be inconsistent with what a "Christian" or "religious" or "church" response should be to a person who claims they've been abused or exploited by a clergy person. However, the role and obligation of insurance companies, even insurance companies that insure churches, is to use premium dollars paid by policy holders to pay claims the company is obligated to pay under the terms of the policy when a suit has been filed against a church. The insurance company has the right to fully and vigorously defend the lawsuit to eliminate or minimize the amount of money it has to pay even when that process seems to be contrary to how some think the church should respond to such claims. A church may choose to pay claims that the insurance company is not obligated to pay, but the church must pay them out of its own funds.

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the ordinary in Minnesota, believes there is, although she admits that CIC is skeptical. "The process I developed involves negotiation and mediation around the question of 'What do you need in order to heal?'" Maris says. "I told the Church Insurance Company that I would take their five toughest cases and use my process to get them settled. Then, I said, they could take the next five toughest cases and settle them their way and then see who comes out ahead in terms of wellness, healing and money. They didn't take me up on it. I know they were probably laughing at me, thinking I was hopelessly naive, but I have a track record of getting settlements that help everyone involved in a healing way. I have shown them that the cost is less, but they won't listen."

Chicago's Knudsen also supports the idea of using some sort of mediation. "I want to honor Church Insurance Company's fundamental metaphor of protecting its assets and I want to help victims but I don't want to make attorneys rich," she says. "I realize that settling too readily could open the company to abuses, but I think we could build an investigative body to sort cases out. Church Insurance fears that sympathetic people might give away the store because of concern about the victims, but there could be checks and balances."

The question, Maris says, is "Who is the client? To whom is the Church Insurance Company accountable? They think they are accountable to the great insurance gods in the sky. The rub comes from the fact that Church Insurance is operating in a sacred world in a secular way — they don't appear to reflect behavior that is compassionate and/or religiously ethical."

Getting CIC to even consider deviating from normal industry standards, however, is difficult, as Harold Hopkins knows too well. His efforts to get CIC to change its policy about not reimbursing dioceses which pay for therapeutic "first aid" — or to contribute to a carefully administered sexual misconduct "superfund" that would create a pool of money that dioceses

could use to pay for victims' therapeutic expenses following church adjudication of cases — have met with polite but firm refusal.

A mandate from the church

Curiously, however, it is true that the Church Pension Group, which controls CIC, does not always let "industry standards" dictate how it operates. Witness last year's General Convention, when Church Pension Group president Alan Blanchard urged a legislative committee to take definite action on a resolution from the Diocese of El Camino Real requesting that the General Convention sanction the Group's selling of medical insurance for the domestic partners of employees. Blanchard admitted that insurance carriers now routinely sell such coverage, but said the Church Pension Group wanted the church's opinion about whether to do so, since "domestic partners" could mean homosexual couples. In the end, the committee signalled its disapproval of the coverage — it would interfere with efforts to "continue the dialogue" on human sexuality, some members said — by deciding not to take the resolution to the convention for a vote.

But Church Pension Fund trustee Currie says there is no comparison between asking the church's advice about what sort of insurance to sell and asking the church for advice about pursuing models of negotiation and mediation like those suggested by Maris and Knudsen and endorsed by Hopkins and many diocesan chancellors.

"The point is that homosexuality is such a volatile issue in the church that Church Pension Fund could not get involved in that unless they had a mandate from the church — that would become a plank in the platform of those who want same-sex unions."

Does that mean CIC, as an affiliate of the Church Pension Group, might be considered more than "just" an insurance company after all? The answer depends, no doubt, on just how volatile the company's handling of sexual misconduct cases becomes.

TW

Taking a 'clear stand' on women's ordination

by Katie Sherrod

At a meeting held in Arlington, Va. on July 5-7, 1995, the committee charged by the 1994 General Convention with the task of determining how the church's ordination canons can be "fully implemented" — that is, made equally applicable to men and women — in every diocese of the Episcopal Church gave the Episcopal Synod of America (ESA), which opposes women priests, the "clear stand regarding the question of ordination" it called for last year. The committee's recommendations, passed by a vote of five to four, would render the so-called "conscience clause" inoperative, and would clarify that Canon III.8.1 is mandatory, not permissive, thus removing the two primary arguments so-called "traditionalist" bishops have used to justify their refusal either to ordain women to the priesthood or to allow women in their dioceses to pursue ordination to this order.

The Episcopal Women's Caucus (EWC) praised the committee's work as "the first time ... [the EWC] has found support within the church to hold accountable those bishops and dioceses which have refused to implement the canons concerning women in Holy Orders." Currently, this applies to Fort Worth, Eau Claire, San Joaquin and Quincy.

William Wantland, bishop of the Diocese of Eau Claire, spoke for the committee's ESA members when he branded the committee's action a "Final Solution" aimed at "extinguishing one of the two recognized theological positions in this church." In a July 12 memo to a diocesan committee, the Diocese of Fort Worth's ESA bishop, Jack Iker, called the committee's action "a very dangerous and destructive proposal" that would leave "those who hold my position" only three options, to "acquiesce and compromise ... one's conscience," "active resistance

to the canons," or "resignation from any leadership positions in the Church and probably from membership in the Episcopal Church as well."

The committee made its recommendations following testimony by Jane Holmes Dixon, suffragan bishop of Washington, who testified on behalf of the church's women bishops, and more than 25 lay persons, deacons and priests. "Speaking for myself, Barbara Harris, and Mary Adelia McLeod," Dixon said, "we will no longer participate in a dialogue intended to delay implementation of Canon III.8.1."

Others who testified detailed how difficult life in the church is for those who support women's ordination in dioceses whose bishops do not. "It's not just [Clarence] Pope and Iker who are draining my strength," said Cindy Hearne of Fort Worth. "It is you! My church! You have abandoned me and my family and left us in the care of evil and deceitful men who cry to you of their own pain and persecution while holding us hostage to their consciences."

Two people, Dorothy Spaulding, of Washington, D.C., and Earle Fox, a priest from Ambridge, Penn., protested any compulsory implementation of the canon.

Later, reflecting on the testimony, Dale Balfour, a General Convention deputy from Maryland, said, "I just had no concept until now of the shaming and shunning to which men, women and children are subjected in some of our dioceses. A decent attempt to honor conscience on the part of the church has led to abuse and hostility, and to the persecution of people who simply want to bring their dioceses back into the Episcopal fold."

EWC president Cynthia Black noted, "The Committee's proposals draw a careful distinction between belief and practice. While people may hold a variety of theological views, they will be 'obliged to obey and implement the canon law of this church.'"

The resolution which created the committee and defined its mission

included a statement that "those who support and those who oppose the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate each hold a recognized theological position in this church." The ESA trumpeted the inclusion of this phrase as a victory, but failed to acknowledge that the dialogue was to be focused on implementation of the canon in every diocese, not on simply more talk about the validity of women's ordination. This point apparently continued to elude the ESA members of the committee at the conclusion of the July committee meeting.

"In our two meetings no real time was given to dialogue leading to understanding. Instead a rather rushed agenda was pushed aimed at completing the business of the committee by mid-summer, 1995, in order to present a 'solution' to the House of Bishops in September 1995," committee member Wantland said in his minority report.

The committee's recommendations will go to the 1997 General Convention in Philadelphia. The committee also voted five to four to recommend to the Bishops' meeting in Portland, Ore., this month that it adopt the following resolution: "It is the mind of this House that Canon III.8.1 is mandatory in all dioceses of this church."

The chair of the committee is Robert Rowley, Bishop of Northwestern Pennsylvania, and members are Frank Allen, Bishop of Atlanta; James Bradberry of Southern Virginia; Gay Jennings, a priest in the Diocese of Ohio; Sarah McCrory of Upper South Carolina; Rita Moyer (ESA) of Pennsylvania.; David Rawson (ESA) of Pennsylvania.; Anne Robbins, a priest in the Diocese of Southern Ohio; Rebecca Conrad Spanos, a permanent deacon in the Diocese of Pittsburgh; and William Wantland (ESA), Bishop of Eau Claire. **TW**

[Ed. note: The recent announcement that three of the four nominees in the Diocese of Rhode Island's upcoming episcopal election are women — a "first" in Episcopal Church history — will undoubtedly be received as further salt in "traditionalist," anti-women's ordination wounds.]

Katie Sherrod, lives in the Diocese of Fort Worth. She is vice-president of the EWC and editor of the group's magazine, *Ruach*.

Sexual misconduct in light of a theology of evil

By Chilton Knudsen

When Ministers Sin: Sexual Abuse in the Churches, by Neil and Thea Ormerod, Millenium books, Alexandria, Australia: 1995. (Distributed in the U.S. by Seven Hills Book Distributors, 49 Central Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio 45202.)

When Ministers Sin: Sexual Abuse in the Churches is a brave title. No euphemisms here. No "ministerial stress," "boundary problems," "betrayal of trust," or "pastoral dysfunction." This book is blunt indeed, but strikingly compassionate and responsible. We have in this work an important and unique contribution to the developing conversation on a painful and complicated issue. Neil and Thea Ormerod, theologian and social worker, husband and wife, manage to integrate in one manageable volume the relevant clinical and ecclesiological issues within a deep theological core.

What Peter Rutter has done in his important clinically-oriented work, *Sex in the Forbidden Zone*, the Ormerods do here with a slightly different emphasis. Rutter's work took us inside the mind of an offender, tracing the kinds of thought processes, rationalizations and self-deceptions into which offenders enter as they encounter the women who trust them. *When Ministers Sin* examines the same issues in light of a theology of evil, evil which is manifested in both individual and systemic patterns of denial, deception and the abuse of power.

Fundamental to both works is the conviction that power differentials in caregiving relationships are always present to a greater or lesser degree, but that this difference in power presents a significant life moment to both parties. Such a moment presents an opportunity for the deepening of trust, the empowerment of the vulnerable and, indeed, the

experiential re-ordering of oppressive dynamics into movements of mutual respect. Or, in the tragically frequent "missed opportunity" which occurs when abusive and exploitative dynamics are unleashed, the life-moment becomes not opportunity but opportunism.

When Ministers Sin includes a sensitive discussion of the experience of a victim as the journey is made from victim to survivor. There is a clear discussion of the important roles of anger and remembering in this healing process. Anger, the authors assert, like prophetic anger and the anger of Jesus at the cleansing of the temple, is the normal and appropriate human response to an experience of wrong. The authors write: "Such anger is not just inevitable, it is necessary and good. ... It is a righteous anger which rejects evil done, rejects it in the name of justice and truth" (page 39).

The process of remembering, which the authors call "the descent into hell," is explored in the context of Dante's *Divine Comedy* and the descent of Jesus after his crucifixion.

This is but one example of the profound theological and scriptural grounding which threads through the entire book. I especially appreciate the frequent references made to the vital role of trusted friends in the healing process. Too often, we think of healing as the exclusive province of mental health services. They also mention that important element of friendship in the section on offenders and their repentance and healing. In a world where "support" often means "give unquestioning affirmation and protection from consequences," we need to take deeply to heart the sacred vocation of friendship, which embraces truth-telling, attentive listening and tough love.

Another particularly strong section of the book is the material in the chapter entitled "A Theology of Abuse." It's all here: idolatry, guilt, original sin (here framed as "the logic of evil"), the

generational nature of abuse, the disappearance of true empathy, the tenacity of oppressive structures, the refusal to be accountable. This accountability is helpfully described as accountability to "those below": "This is the accountability that Jesus speaks of in the Gospel. It is not the accountability to a harsh and exacting superior, waiting for us to step out of line so that he can pounce — the archetypal abusive father. Rather, it is an accountability to those below, to the victims, the abused, that Jesus speaks of" (page 107).

The reflection in this same chapter on the sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22 is, by itself, a provocative and fresh consideration of faith, fanaticism, and redemption. Readers may not agree with this interpretation, but the very impulse to dispute this interpretation will prompt the reader to examine the text anew.

In Part II of *When Ministers Sin* the authors have gathered together several first-person stories of sexual abuse by church leaders. Those who have not faced such issues directly or personally may be tempted to disbelieve these stories, for the horrors they describe are incredible. But as one who has spent the last several years in this area consulting, training, investigating, and seeking avenues for healing, I find the stories utterly typical, utterly true. Not only the abuse at the hands of an offending minister, but the cover-ups, re-traumatizing behaviors, and institutional denial of the church are all detailed here. In the epilogue, the authors offer a reflection on the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

Like the rest of this book, the truth stands gentle and powerful in the retelling of this parable. There is the truth: simply presented, clearly articulated, without the kind of finger-pointing which perpetuates the abusive dynamic. The authors prayed over this book, they tell us in the introduction. It was difficult for them to write, they say. It is not easy to read either. But, like painful truth which sets us free, it is Good News indeed. I hope many of us will dare to read it. TV

Chilton Knudsen is the pastoral care administrator for the Diocese of Chicago.

Execution staid

Mumia Abu-Jamal, the radical radio journalist in Pennsylvania whose questionable murder conviction and death sentence mobilized a worldwide campaign on his behalf, has been granted an indefinite stay of execution.

The stay was issued late and "very reluctantly," said Kwasi Seitu of Equal Justice U.S.A. "Judge Albert Sabo issued the stay as a result of growing national and international publicity."

Seitu, who called the stay "a small victory in a continuing bad situation," said that it should not be allowed "to dissipate public interest and support in the case." He urges continued pressure on the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania to remove Judge Sabo from the case. For more information contact Equal Justice U.S.A., Quixote Center, P.O. Box 5206, Hyattsville, MD 20782.

Journey of hope

Marietta Jaeger, *The Witness*' circulation coordinator, will speak out against the death penalty with this year's Journey of Hope, a two-week public action/education tour sponsored by Murder Victims' Families For Reconciliation (MVFR). MVFR members, accompanied by friends and abolitionists from across the country, will travel from San Diego to Sacramento (9/22-10/8) telling their stories and why they oppose the death penalty. Daily events will include church presentations, media events, university classes, tree-plantings, town hall meetings and concerts. To participate, contact Mike Penzato, Journey of Hope, 9000 W. Washington Blvd., 2nd Floor, Culver City, CA 90232; (phone) 310-815-0450 or (fax) 310-815-0457.

Observations from Haiti

Haiti was once the sacred home of the Taino-Arawak Indians who regarded earth as Mother. Over 500 years later, their memory and spirituality is still very strong and influential in the minds and lives of the Haitian people.

Christopher Columbus re-named this holy land "Hispaniola" and responded to the gentle welcome of the natives with brutal force. Within a short period of time, Columbus had murdered every Taino Indian (over two million) and had to bring in slaves from Africa — the true ancestors of today's Creole people. The Spirits of the new black slaves united with the Spirits of the Taino. This is most evident in the practice of Voo Doo.

Thanks to an unscrupulous media, Voo Doo has been misrepresented, much like Christianity was in the first century. I was surprised to hear Voo Doo drums coming from a Roman Catholic Church during a celebration of the Mass. I found it delightful!

A few days later, I followed the sound of drums through pitch black darkness and found myself in the middle of a Voo Doo ceremony. To my surprise, I and my white companions were accepted as guests of honor. I was shocked to see so many similarities between Voo Doo and the Charismatic Christian Church. Speaking in tongues, falling under the spirit, joy, singing, and being possessed by a spirit of love and devotion. I also observed that the dance steps they were doing are the same as my people, the Odawa Nation of Michigan. I was quite disturbed, however, by one dance which paid honor to the white race as being superior to the black Haitian people. I attribute this to the slave mentality which is still very prevalent among Haitians.

In the Parliamentary elections on Sunday, June 25, local election officials did a marvelous job. If there was fraud, it was fraud which could not be controlled by local election officials nor even President Aristide — the fraud perpetuated on the Haitian people by the U.S.A. Several Haitian election officials told me that the U.S. State Department told the country's wealthy Haitian leaders that if

they wanted to maintain their status and continue receiving financial aid they would have to subvert the will of the people and establish a U.S.-type democracy in Haiti, one in which property is more important than people — what I call "U.S. Imperial Democracy." Over and over again, Haitian people told me, "This is not a Haitian Democracy!"

—Tom Trimmer, deacon in the
Diocese of Eastern Michigan

One million women

Elsa Tamez, president of the Latin American Biblical Seminary (*Seminario Biblico Latinoamericano*) in San Jose, Costa Rica, is asking one million women around the world to contribute one dollar each for the construction of a smaller, more efficient building to house their school, which will soon become a full university. Tamez is committed to a decentralized model of theological education which responds to the special needs of women and men who have historically been excluded. She is asking for only one dollar from each donor so that all women — "poor and rich, black and white, indigenous and mestiza" — will share equally in the project. You may donate one dollar in your own name, or in the name of a woman you wish to honor. The names will be recorded in a special place in the university's new home. Send checks (payable to: *Seminario Biblico Latinoamericano* — One Million Women) to: Seminario Biblico Latinoamericano, Dept. SJO2174, P.O. Box 025216, Miami, FL 33102-5216 USA.

Fourth World publication

Stories of very poor families from the U.S.A., Guatemala, Thailand, Burkina Faso and Germany are collected in *This is how we live*, a new publication of the Fourth World movement. The study, which also contains analysis by Fourth World Volunteers, is available for \$12 from Fourth World Publications, 7600 Willow Hill Dr., Landover, MD 20785; (phone) 301-336-9489, (fax) 301-336-0092.

short takes

Centering on culture

by Errol Henderson

Moving the Centre, by Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, Heineman, 1993.

WE.B. Dubois spoke of the cultural duality of African-Americans that resulted in "two warring souls" within blacks who struggled with their ostensible citizenship as Americans juxtaposed against their caste position as a denigrated people.

Today, Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's *Moving the Centre* devolves from the Duboisian view of cultural centrality. Ngugi's essays change both the Eurocentric ordering of the world and the dominance of Eurocentric culture among Third World elites — a by-product of enslavement, colonialism, and neocolonialism. For Ngugi, cultural resistance to Eurocentrism through the practice of indigenous culture lays the basis for political and economic resistance within the Third World. In the global system such resistance takes the form of cultural self-determination and practice — not simply in the arts — but in the unfettered expression of cultural norms of political legitimacy, social responsibility, economic development and political and spiritual expression.

For Ngugi, the role of the intellectual is to be the living expression of the best of this cultural practice. Europe is not denounced, in this view, for its European culture. Instead, it is denounced for its white supremacy, economic exploitation, political-military subjugation and

cultural repression of Third World people.

Much of this we find rationalized if not valorized in European culture. It is the racist and economically exploitative aspects of Eurocentric culture that Ngugi views as the biggest impediment to world peace and prosperity.

World peace cannot be left to Europeans but it must emanate from the multicultural global family liberated from the fetters of domination. Cultural self-determination, then, is a key tool in Ngugi's liberation strategy. His main thrust is to achieve a cultural reaffirmation of the world's people starting with his own Kikuyu of Kenya. Ngugi berates intellectuals for neglecting their own culture and instead imitating the West.

Ngugi became an international *cause célèbre* as a political prisoner and exile whose troubles began as he steadfastly rejected publishing his writings in English, opting instead for his native tongue. His anti-government tone brought him censure from the corrupt Arep Moi regime of Kenya. He and other African centered *literati* were the subject of police terror as they attempted to revive in literature and art the vision and valor of Kenyan resistance.

Ngugi was forced into exile. It is apparent that Ngugi understands both the need and the cost of his cultural resistance undertakings. Nonetheless Ngugi's attempts should not simply be reduced to their impact as tools of resistance within a neocolonial African state.

The beauty of his thesis — centering culture both globally and locally — resonates even to our urban centers in the U.S. For example, the most propitious attempts in recent years at organizing peace within and among urban gangs is rooted in a

process of cultural reaffirmation.

In some of my work with SOSAD [Save Our Sons and Daughters, Detroit — TW 12/93], cultural symbols and imagery are wedded to issue-resolution techniques which allow us to challenge gangs — using their own criteria — to represent the best aspects of their own culture. This process has a strong spiritual element. It also roots gang youth into a broader historical context within which their responsibility to the vulnerable and their ethical interplay within the group are enlarged beyond the original gang context.

Only culture appears to be able to serve as the template for this process. At this point — with agendas broadened — long-term issues and concerns begin to emerge and become salient. Discussions turn away from impulse and towards investment. Community concerns enlarge beyond personal concerns for reputation. Value begins to take precedence over money and victimization. Principles emerge where preferences once ruled. When this is done successfully, the seeds for a justice-based peace may be planted.

This process is rooted in cultural reaffirmation, challenging youth to represent the best views and values of their culture group. Discourse between culture groups then truly becomes multicultural. Moving the center towards the best — human and non-chauvinistic — aspects of one's culture can be very reaffirming.

In sum, Ngugi reemphasizes the long legacy of cultural resistance and reaffirmation of Third World people. This cultural emphasis reminds us in the U.S. that our country is not a finished multicultural product, but one that is ongoing. **TV**

Errol Henderson is a political science professor at the University of Florida and author of *Afrocentrism and World Politics* (Praeger, 1995). He was a participant at the 1994 Kansas City gang summit.

book review

Oriana Fallaci is at war with “The Power”; her weapons are her intelligence and her audacity. She has interviewed many heads of state and, although she has a reputation for asking shocking questions, presidents and generals grant her interviews because they’re flattered and because Fallaci is one of the few people who knows most of their colleagues and expresses her opinions freely.

“Whether [power] comes from a despotic sovereign or an elected president, from a murderous general or a beloved leader, I see power as an inhuman and hateful phenomenon,” Fallaci writes in the preface to *Interview with History* (Houghton Mifflin, 1976). It’s small surprise that few of the world leaders interviewed in the book receive her praise, and she is free with adjectives like “squat,” “fat,” “swollen,” “unbearable,” “clumsy,” and “diabolically shrewd.”

Yet the objective of her sometimes rash and always lacerating observations is not to aggrandize herself, but to liberate the minds of readers who may find a way to join the resistance.

She describes journalism as an “extraordinary and terrible privilege,” because one is a “direct witness” to the making of history who may, sometimes, help shape it.

Fallaci was born in Italy under Mussolini’s fascism. Her father was part of the resistance in Florence. When his young daughter came home with an un-

Our job is to inform and raise the political consciousness of the people, that consciousness which The Power always tries to put to sleep.



Oriana Fallaci in 1993.

Yusef El-Amin, Courtesy Library of Congress

Opposing the powers

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

derground pamphlet that disputed the official propaganda, he answered her query: The official propaganda was a lie.

“I was so *shocked*, so *scandalized*, that I shouted, ‘Some day I shall write for papers that speak the truth and are sold in the news stands,’” Fallaci told students at Amherst College in 1976.

For the remainder of the war, Fallaci worked in the resistance. She saw executions, arrests, and tortures. Her father was arrested and tortured. She ran guns and messages to the mountains.

But she says she was most influenced by a resistance newspaper called *Don’t Give Up*.

“I loved that paper as if it were a person. Once I risked my life under a bombing to save 50 copies of it. But what I cared for mostly was reading it myself, to *know* through it my right and my duty to be free. Because freedom is first a duty, then a right.”

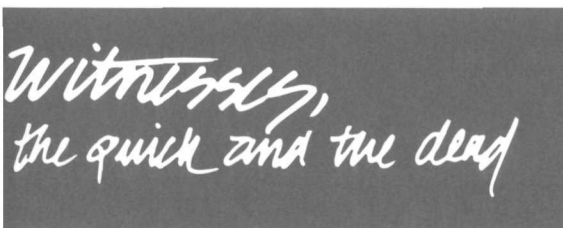
Fallaci told Amherst’s students, “I hope you comprehend what this story means for me — it means that journalism must exist not to fulfill banal curiosity, not to feed gossips or amuse. It must exist to help people to find or to keep their dignity, to fight their ignorance, to defend themselves. It also means that journalism is not only facts, but interpretation of the facts through ideas.”

The U.S., Fallaci believes, has eroded the power of journalism in two ways.

First, through magazines like *Life* and *Time*, it has overwhelmed readers with visual images and content which “pretend to say all but end with saying nothing.”

She speaks of carrying the Sunday *New York Times* into her apartment in New York with a warm feeling that she’ll do her civic duty reading it.

“Each time I buy a Sunday paper, I get nervous. It’s so well done from a techni-



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

cal point of view. I take it in my arms as a baby —so heavy it is! I wonder how shall I read all of it? Once I tried. I shut myself at home the whole Sunday. And I read and read till nightfall came. But I hadn't read half of it. And I knew much less than I would know after reading *Le Monde*."

The second way American journalism has damaged the industry, she says, is through the myth of objectivity. The illusion of facts-not-opinion journalism is a method of social control, she says.

"How? Through an *impossible* objectivity that gives the license of the truth *only* to the official truth. Aware of it or not, we all followed that road, without understanding the fraud it contained, the lies it propagated, the omissions it was guilty of. Hysterically afraid of not being 'objective' enough, we forgot the simplest truths: Yes, truth usually stays in the middle. But sometimes it stays on one side only.

"In order to understand the truth, one must be offered many interpretations of the truth, many opinions — exactly what the industrial press prohibits. Because of it, our political consciousness has been delayed. Because of it, we have been denied truth *and* facts."

Fallaci gave Amherst's students another illustration. A few months earlier, she had attended a dinner in Washington. A U.S. senator asked her about the Italian Communists. To her horror, he did not know the names of the key Communist leaders in Italy or France. He did not know about the schisms within the party.

"His lack of knowledge was so frightening, so hopeless, that I felt lost. Then I say, whose is the fault? Technically speaking, the Americans have the best press in the world. Don't they read it? Sure they read it. But what is given to them, in the name of the objectivity, reflects The Power's interests."

In Europe, Fallaci says, "We are richer

because our press is not monotone. Some are liberal, some are right-wing, some are moderate, some are leftist. Plus, every political party has its daily newspaper. Hence, its dialectics has its opposite poles to develop. And truth can be searched."

Working as an international correspondent, Fallaci provoked the Ayatollah Khomeini by yanking off the obligatory veil in the middle of an interview. Like

In order to understand the truth, one must be offered many interpretations of the truth, many opinions — exactly what the industrial press prohibits.

wise, in a series of questions to Henry Kissinger about Vietnam, she suddenly asked why people labelled him President Nixon's "mental wet nurse" and asked him to describe his "fascination with power." The interview ends with Kissinger saying, "There are those who depict me as a mysterious, tormented character, and those who depict me as almost cheerful, always smiling, always laughing. Both these images are incorrect. I'm neither one nor the other. I'm ... I won't tell you what I am. I'll never tell anyone."

She claims that Kissinger later said consenting to this interview was one of the stupidest things he'd ever done.

But while provoking her subjects and pushing personal questions, she also gets them to offer evaluations of themselves and each other, evaluations that may explain a great deal about why a war does not end or a border gets redefined. In the provocative mish-mash of the answers are glimmers of what beliefs and idiosyncrasies are ruling international and do-

mestic affairs.

Unlike the industrial product that journalism has become, Fallaci says she is wedded to the vocation of the *menante* who passed out hand-written tracts in Italy in the 1500s criticizing the rulers, their courts and administrations. In return, they were persecuted, tortured, sometimes executed.

"I pay a high and constant price," Fallaci told Amherst's students, "in anguish, in rage, in solitude, and also in threats, in insults and hate.

"The moment journalists add their comment, either positive or negative, they take a position. And taking a position, they become political. Is it possible to write about politics without having political ideas? A journalist is *always, inevitably* political."

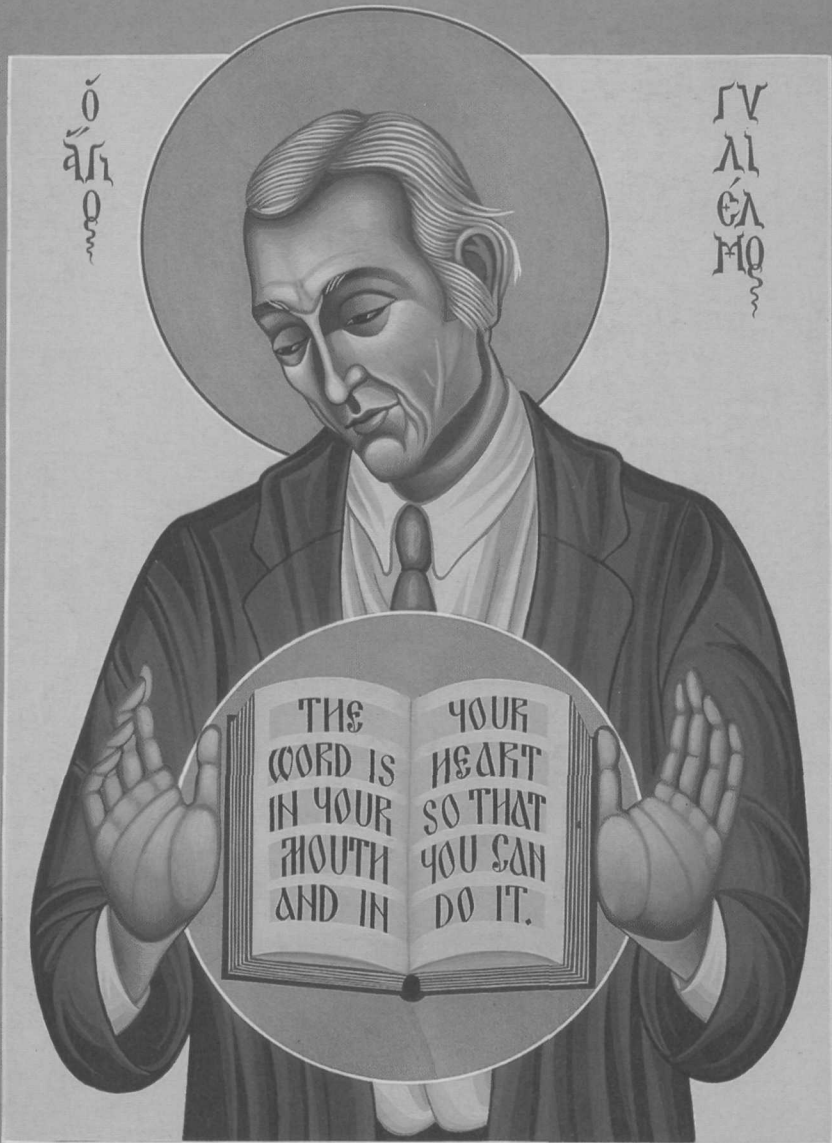
The question of course is the nature of the political allegiance that reporters have made. Have they exchanged their consciences for a considerable salary, for benefits, for the perks of access to the halls of power?

"A journalist who has not enemies, who does not disturb, who does not live in trouble — even the minor trouble of having his telephone tapped, as I always have, or the major trouble of being condemned to death by fascists — very rarely is a good journalist."

Fallaci, who survived gunfire while reporting on several wars, is now battling cancer. Quite inaccessible and always idiosyncratic, she can be counted on to continue her irascible and pointed exposure of The Power.

"A good journalist should *never* be a comfortable person, even less an innocuous one. If all goes smoothly for him or her, it means that he pleases The Power. Our job is *not* to please The Power. Our job is to inform and raise the political consciousness of the people, that consciousness which The Power always tries to put to sleep."

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