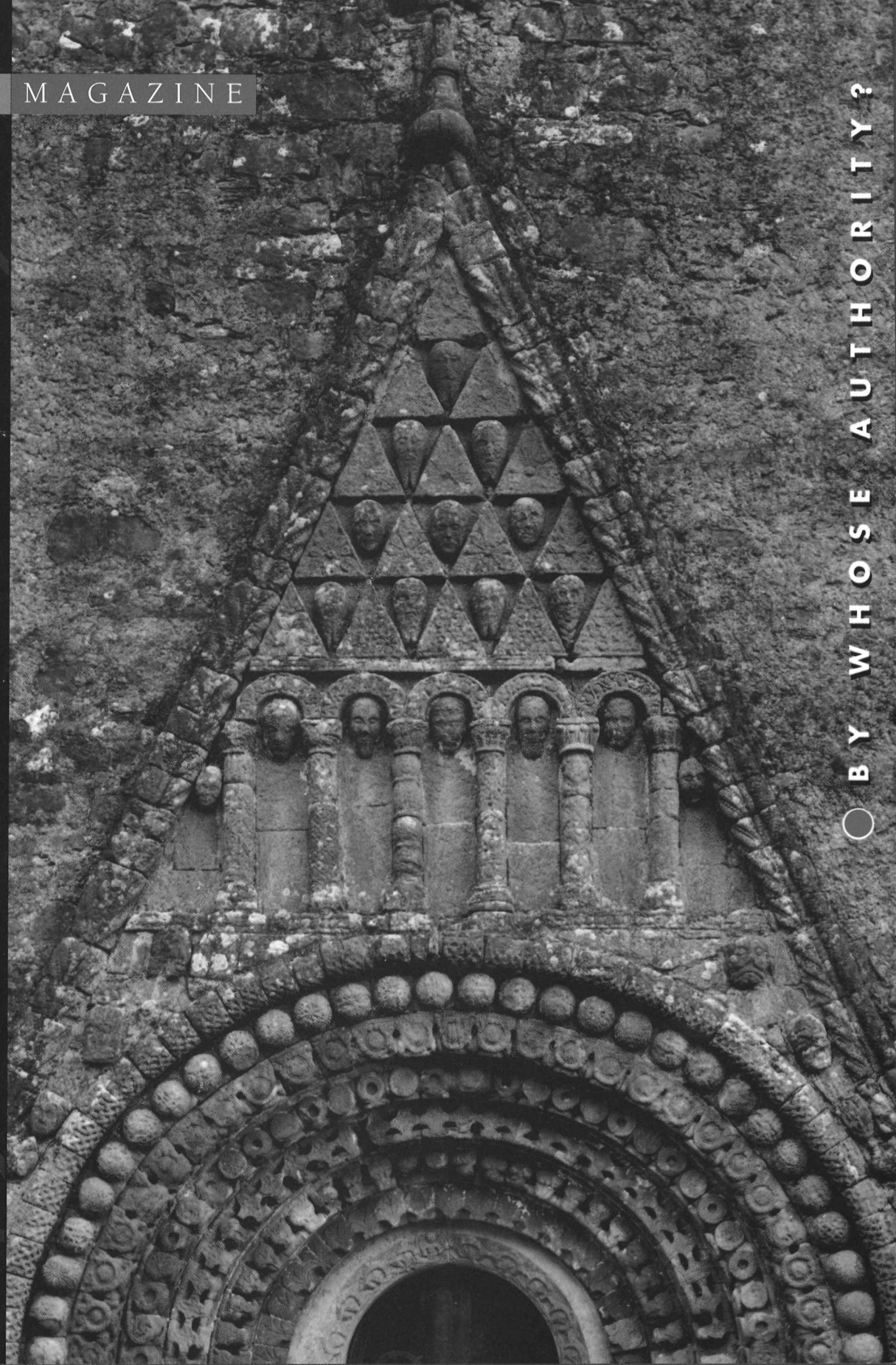
# The Witness

WITNESS MAGAZINE



BY WHOSE AUTHORITY?

VOLUME 83
NUMBER 3
MARCH 2000

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## DEPARTMENTS



**on the cover**

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VOLUME 83
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Since 1917, ***The Witness*** has been examining church and society in light of faith and conscience — advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those who, in theologian William Stringfellow's words, have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." With deep roots in the Episcopal Church, we are a journal of spiritual questing and theology in practice, always ready to hold our own cherished beliefs and convictions up to scrutiny.

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# LETTERS

## Harvest feast?

I was much uplifted with Marianne Arbogast's "Thanksgiving without apologies." As a vegetarian — (vegan) I sent copies to a few friends (along with Donella Meadows excellent article). Indeed, that issue (as always) was a Venerable feast.

*Jim Burlingham*
*Cedar Rapids, IA*

## Nuclearism today

The October *Witness* (10/99) continues to cope with the hard issues of today in Peter Werbe's "Campaigning for nuclear abolition now: an interview with Jonathan Schell." However, this particular piece offers some critical problems.

[My reading] clearly states that national policy is aimed at abolishing nuclear weapons. The real issue is when. Gradual, not immediate, abolition is the national policy. Mr. Schell is free to disagree, but errs in not dealing with the reasons for gradual versus immediate abolition. His claim that we now "have the chance" to abolish them completely is, actually, highly debatable.

What concerns this reader is Mr. Schell's implication that our policy makers do not face the possibility that a "chance" exists. The fact is that the policy of gradual abolition is the result of long-term debate about the timing of abolition.

A continuing reality that Mr. Schell fails to cite is the international anarchy that reigns today. The collapse of communism has lulled us into a false sense of security. Possession of weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical and biological — is, now, possible not only for nation states but for individuals and organized crime as well. This reality is what argues for gradual rather than immediate abolition of nuclear weapons. Perhaps, the call for immediate abolition of nuclear weapons reflects today's desire for easy answers?

Inquisitive readers might well begin with the March 31, 1998 statement of Edward L. Warner, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Threat Reduction before the Strategic Forces Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Follow this document with the President's *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, October 1998. Then read the *National Military Strategy of the United States of America* written by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Finally, Eric K. Shinseki, Army Chief of Staff, sets forth his vision for the U.S. Army as of October 15, 1999 in *The Army Vision: Soldiers On Point for the Nation ... Persuasive in Peace, Invincible in War.*

First, as I read these documents I was struck by their explicit or implied recognition of the breadth of human need in this world. More important, I was surprised to find from the military a whole body of thought that was both self-critical and humbly aware that their concerns were not the only factors to be considered. The experiences of Viet Nam and the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., founded in the early 1980s have resulted in a posture of reflection and self-awareness that permeates all of Army life today.

Mr. Schell refers to "launch on warning" as the policy in force today. He errs. "Launch on warning" means that as soon as we detect a missile has been launched, we automatically launch a counter attack. In fact, this policy is no longer in effect. Further, the ground observation available today gives us knowledge that something is underway well before a launch. This means there is more than Mr. Schell's "half an hour" to decide on our response.

Further, Mr. Schell tells of many among the military saying nuclear weapons should be abolished "from a strictly strategic and military point of view since they're unusable and, hence, useless." In the midst of today's international anarchy, such views ignore deterrence as a substantive strategic reason for keeping some nuclear weapons as we work for their total abolition in the longrun.

Does not responsible journalism call for *The Witness* [to present the other side]?

*A. Wayne Schwab*
*Essex, NY*

# An authority that doesn't need guarding

*by Julie A. Wortman*

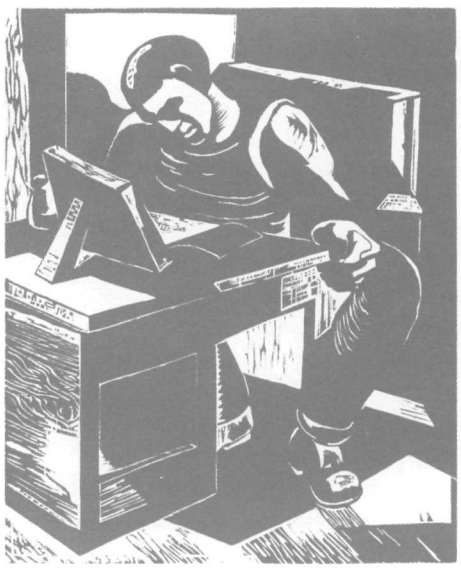
TUESDAY AFTERNOONS I spend two hours at Jump Start, a county program designed to help local juveniles who have gotten into trouble with the law learn to make more positive life choices. For most, it is also an all-too-rare chance to receive the undivided attention of community adults who listen rather than lecture.

Much of our time together during these sessions is spent puzzling out responses to various fictional dilemmas in the hope that the students will begin to gain insight into how to handle the confusions of their own lives. These exercises get a mostly lukewarm reception from the students — all of whom would admittedly rather be somewhere else — but recently there was a qualitative shift. The case study under discussion had to do with Joe, a general laborer who had been on the job for only a month. In this hypothetical situation, Joe's boss puts Joe in charge of getting a crew to dig a trench while the boss goes off to a meeting for two hours. But when the boss leaves the site, the other workers sit down and begin playing cards. What should Joe do?

Initially, I was as uninspired by Joe's problem as the students seemed to be. One of the other Jump Start mentors looked the same. But Woody, a longtime mentor whose normally outspoken manner can be intimidating, lit up. Eagerly, drawing on his own history in the construction industry, he began urging the students to note the key points of the problem. Joe was a "new hire," a general laborer. Someone, in other words, in a position in which any one of them might well find themselves sometime in the not-too-distant future.

Woody's genuine enthusiasm in this instance was engaging rather than overwhelming. Illustrating his points with amusing real-life examples, he step-by-step made Joe's dilemma come vividly alive. Students and mentors alike slowly adopted Joe's problem as our own, eventually reaching unanimous agreement about how Joe could best proceed with integrity.

It was a deliciously satisfying moment. Thanks to Woody's unexpectedly skilled tutelage, our solution to Joe's dilemma is not one I will soon forget. More importantly, I suspect our Jump Start students won't, either.



Reflecting on Woody's mentoring role in that Jump Start circle, I've found myself thinking of the Jews who were "astounded" because Jesus taught "as one having authority," while the scribes, those charged with mentoring the community and guarding its religious traditions, did not (Mk. 1:22; Matt. 7:29; Lk. 4:32). I don't see Woody as a Jesus figure, but in that Jump Start situation, he, too, taught with the sort of authority that changes lives.

And, as was true for the scribes of Jesus' day, I believe it is very difficult for the institutional church today to accept this sort of authority from its members.

I have no doubt that both the scribes and the priests and elders who later question Jesus' right to step forth as a teacher and healer cherished the religious tradition they were charged to guard. But I wonder if they hadn't lost touch with an important truth: That a faith tradition meant for saving lives isn't for guarding, but for engaging — for engaging everyone's "empowerment" as persons of conscience.

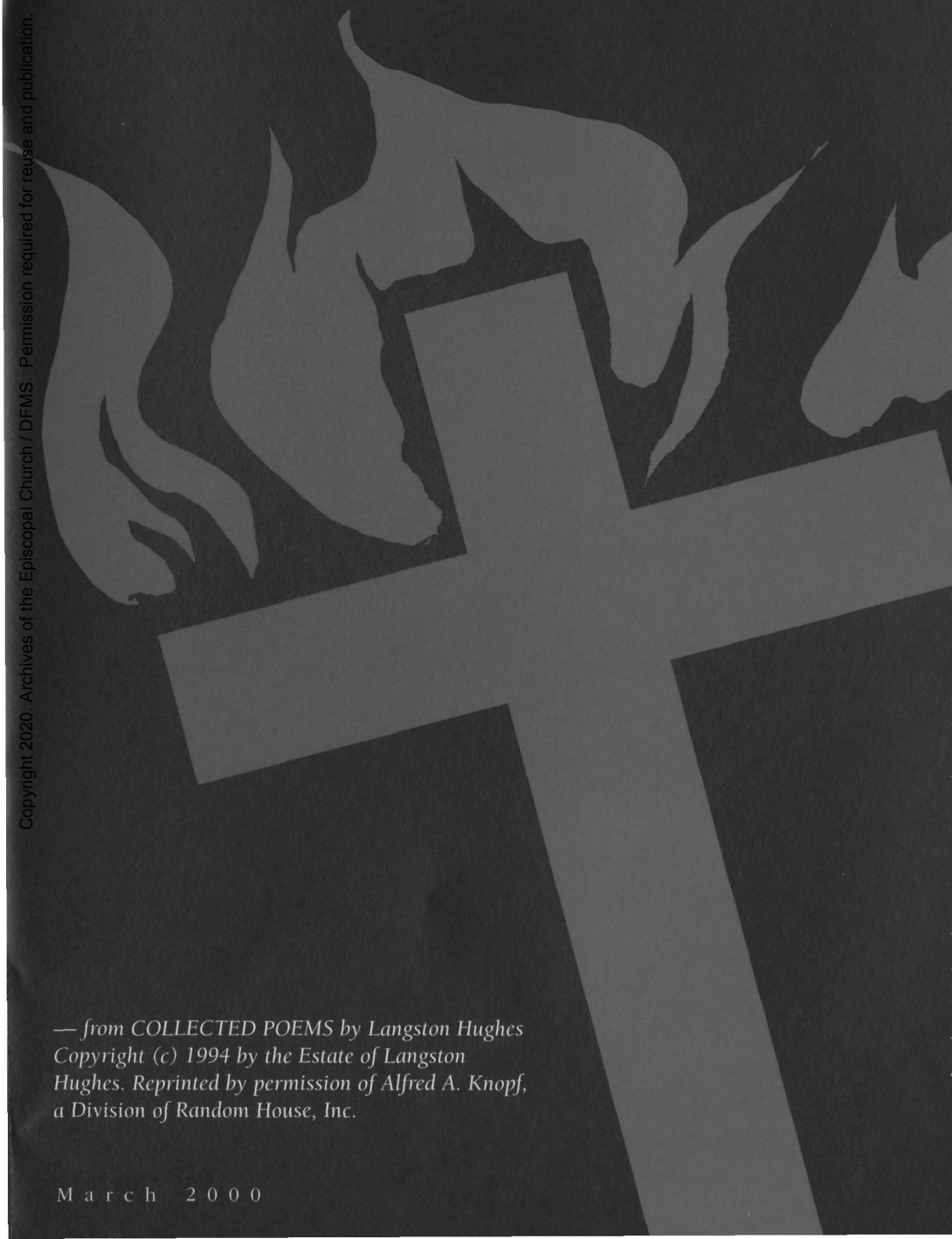
I also take as significant that, while Jesus taught with authority, his parables and puzzling sermons apparently frequently left people buzzing among themselves. The medium, I imagine, was much of the message. Jesus probably never countenanced that God's ways might be closed to questioning and interpretation. Or that insight would require anything less than a communal effort. His focus, it seems to me, was solely on helping his neighbors and friends live lives free from the power of death, self-possessed as God's own — like Jump Start's fictional Joe, with integrity intact.

The stories in this issue testify to both the struggle and the progress attending the church's efforts to free itself of the scribes' error and accept itself as a living, changing people of faith — a body with no useless parts, no inferior members and no single source of understanding about what its present vitality requires. As biblical scholar William Countryman points out, Anglicans long ago rejected the idea that there was any single, absolute this-worldly voice of authority for our denominational life. Questioning authority, one might even say, has been our founding vocation. That, I can't help thinking, is something to which my young Jump Start friends — who have an embarassingly accurate fix on the clay feet of most of the authorities in their lives — could all too easily relate. ●

***Julie A. Wortman*** *is publisher and co-editor of* The Witness, *<julie@thewitness.org>.*

# Ku Klux

*by Langston Hughes*



They took me out
To some lonesome place.
They said, "Do you believe
In the great white race?"

I said, "Mister,
To tell you the truth,
I'd believe in anything
If you'd just turn me loose."

The white man said,
"Boy, Can it be
You're a-standin' there
A-sassin' me?"

They hit me in the head
And knocked me down.
And then kicked me
On the ground.

A klansman said, "Nigger,
Look me in the face —
And tell me you believe in
The great white race."

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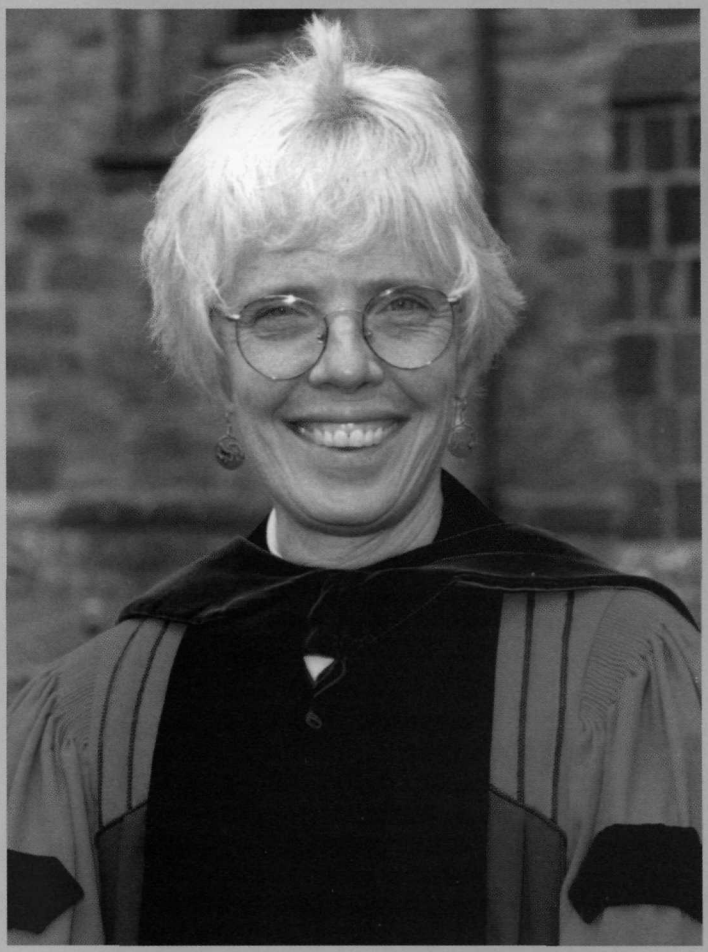

"IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO SAY THAT JESUS CHRIST IS LORD AND SAVIOR. IT NEVER HAS BEEN."

*— Carter Heyward*

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# 'THERE IS

## A conversation between Carter Heyward and Kelly Brown Douglas

CARTER HEYWARD, Howard Chandler Robbins Professor of Theology at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass., is the author of numerous books, most recently, *Saving Jesus From Those Who are Right: Rethinking What It Means to Be Christian* (Fortress, 1999). She is a founding member of a small community of writers, activists and justice-workers in western North Carolina. Kelly Brown Douglas is an Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Howard University in Washington, D.C. Her latest book is *Sexuality and the Black Church* (Orbis, 1999).

Heyward and Douglas were speakers at the annual gathering of the Episcopal Women's Caucus held in Alexandria, Va., last autumn. During that conference they began a conversation about authority in the Episcopal Church, as seen from their vantage points as ordained women doing theology out of a liberation perspective (Heyward was one of the first 11 women ordained to the priesthood in a controversial service held in Philadelphia in 1974 and Douglas was ordained in 1983). *The Witness* asked them to continue their conversation in these pages.

**Julie A. Wortman:** How would the two of you self-identify in terms of a tradition or a point of view?

**Kelly Brown Douglas:** Clearly, broadly speaking, one could talk about me as a liberation theologian, someone who always starts from the vantage point of being concerned about justice. But more particularly, I come to that table through the black community, understanding myself as being accountable to the masses of poor black women who get locked out of social, economic and political kinds of institutions, women at the bottom of society — as has been said, "the ordinary woman sitting in the pews, struggling every day to make it." And so, more particularly, I am a womanist theologian.

**Carter Heyward:** Kelly said very well why I, too, am a liberation theologian — I am someone who believes that the basis of anything that we name theology should be a concern for justice in the world. I speak of myself as a feminist liberation theologian as a way of locating myself more particularly within the convergence of certain cur-

# A RIVER'

rents. Feminism at its best is a commitment to justice-seeking for all women that leaves no one out — a commitment to women of different races, classes, sexual identities, ages and cultures. Therefore to be actively feminist in my work means to be about trying to make connections between and among the structures of oppression that keep women marginalized or cast out.

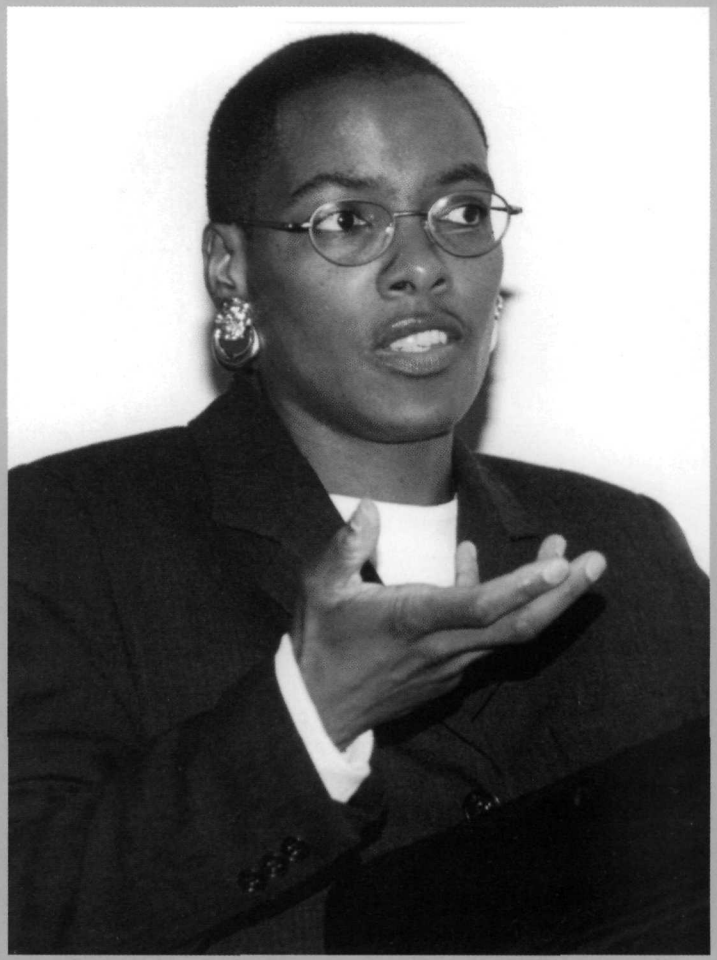
I'm also a lesbian who identified myself many years ago as a lesbian feminist. That has put me very consciously into a relationship of accountability with other queer people who are working in churches and in other institutions.

**JW:** Is your understanding of what has authority in your lives different from your sense of accountability?

**CH:** We have to be clear that accountability does not necessarily mean agreement and therefore to say that I hold myself in some sort of creative tension with others — other white women struggling against racism, with other lesbians and gay men who are in the church — means not letting myself go spiraling out into the ozone layer by myself just because I happen to have an idea that I think is interesting. Instead, it means trying to keep my ideas about God, about the world, about Christology, grounded in what Kelly was calling the people — the people in the pew who are at the margins of the church and society. And I would say, yes, it is from within those relationships with those people who are involved in the struggle that I find my authority to speak theologically.

**KBD:** I, like Carter, believe that when I talk about being accountable to, say, the ordinary poor, black woman who sits in the pew, accountability for me does not imply a non-critical, non-dialogical relationship. What it means is those are the people I'll fight it out with. Those are the people with whom I ultimately live in — as Carter says — creative tension.

When I talk about black theology and blackness, I like to talk about them in two ways. You see, it's one thing to happen to be born black. It's another thing to be committed to the black struggle for life and freedom. And so to me blackness takes on also a sort of ethical or moral dimension. It takes on an existential commitment. Cornell West said a long time ago that we need to move beyond racial reasoning and I agree with that. There's more to being black than having that on your birth certificate — as evidenced by some people sitting on the Supreme Court. It has something to do with one's existential commitment to justice for all black people. And so what makes one a black theologian is not whether or not one is black doing theology, but the kind of theology that one does. There are a lot of black people doing theology that aren't black theologians. And I think the same is true for womanist theology. You have to be more than a black woman doing theology to call yourself a womanist theologian. It has some-



"THE REAL TENSION LIVES BETWEEN MAINTAINING THE INSTITUTION AS IT IS AND SOMEHOW BEING CHURCH. THE CHARGE OF THE PEOPLE IN AUTHORITY IS TO DO ONE THING: MAINTAIN THE INSTITUTION. AND TO ME THAT RUNS AT COUNTER PURPOSES WITH WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CHURCH."

*— Kelly Brown Douglas*

thing to do with one's fundamental existential commitment to the life and freedom of every black person. Which automatically means we're committed to creating a just society.

**JW:** What about those who say that we should forget about such distinctions, that if we all just concentrated on proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we'd all be answering to the same authority and therefore be united?

**KBD:** To proclaim Jesus as Christ means that we have to come to understand what it is we are proclaiming in the midst of the messiness of the world in which we live. That is the context out of which Jesus understood what it meant for him to be Christ and that is the context out of which we come to understand who he was as Christ. So proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord is a vacuous proclamation unless we understand it in the context of the world in which we live.

**CH:** Recently I was in a meeting which highlights this point. A law enforcement department here in North Carolina allowed about a dozen of us from different religious traditions to come and view a film on satanism and ritual abuse being used in public school systems, in which, basically, the claim is made that if you're gay, you're likely to be satanic. The film is also anti-Semitic, racist, you name it. But the film kept talking about "Christian" values, "Christian" families, "Christian" this and "Christian" that. And we church people kept asking "Now wait a minute, what does this mean?" And the police officers were saying, "Well, you know, it means that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior." But we were asking, "Who is this Jesus Christ you're talking about?"

We really need to be concrete and specific about what we mean when we say Jesus Christ, because you can sit in a room with 12 Christians and get some very different images of Jesus Christ: the brother who's feeding the hungry? the guy who's ranting at the money changers? the obedient son of a not-so-gentle father? And what do any of these images mean to us today in the context of our lives? We cannot know who Christ is in a particular context unless we know who is using that kind of power in relation to whom. It's not enough to say that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior. It never has been.

**KBD:** Exactly. It's so easy to abstract these things out of their context and then you don't have to deal with what they mean — in any *real* context.

**CH:** That's right! I believe that one of the things that's going on right now in the Anglican Communion is that rather than working hard to find some creative ways of dealing with real difference our religious leaders are running too easily to religious formulas.

**KBD:** The church to me is most church or most alive when it remains dynamic. You can't have this static ideal of authority, because when you do that you've institutionalized authority. And when you've institutionalized something, it looks like somebody; it looks like a culture; you've created a norm — a normative measure which excludes. And so the church has to be dynamic. As you wrote early on, Carter, one of the church's first mistakes was to accept Constantine's conversion. As the church became the religion of the state it became a full-fledged social institution.

But from time to time the church cries out in these dynamic movements of people who are seeking justice within this institution. In so doing they are trying, still, to witness to being church. And so that's what women have done for the church. That's what African-Americans have done and now that's what non-heterosexual people are doing.

**CH:** And it seems to me if a little creative authority were exercised in the Anglican Communion right now, a global movement of dialogical learning could be underway. We could be learning from those on the margins in each culture what the church needs to be about, how we can stay a movement.

**KBD:** The real tension lies between maintaining the institution as it is and somehow being church. That's why you get so often this hostility or non-listening between the "people in authority" in the Episcopal denomination and those who are locked out of positions of authority. Because the charge of the people in authority is to do one thing: Maintain the institution. Keep the ship afloat and going. And to me that runs at counter purposes with what it means to be church.

**JW:** As clergy, you both have a pretty institutional identity. If you had it to do over again, would you still choose to be ordained?

**CH:** Well, I could take the easy way out and say that the church would not ordain me today! I know that for a fact. Because if I had had the audacity to say the things we've just been saying to a bishop or to a ministries commission people would have said, "Hello? And you want to be ordained an Episcopal priest?" But the church is still filled with my people and there's still work to do! What I can't do is be an obedient daughter of a static authority. I've always believed that the Philadelphia ordinations were at least as much about authority as about the ordination of women. They were a real challenge to how we understand that people are called forth and authorized to act in the world. On that occasion not only the 11 women deacons and the ordaining bishops, but thousands of other people who were in solidarity with us, came together and believed ourselves authorized to do what we did. We believed that the spirit herself was moving among us in that moment. From that point on, even as a priest in the church, I couldn't pledge obedience to a bishop who, in turn, is collegial with his brothers, or her brothers and sisters, and therefore cannot break rank regardless of what they, or we, may believe is God's will. That's a bankrupt understanding of authority and a corrupt morality!

**KBD:** I, like Carter, am always asked, "Why are you in the Episcopal Church?" for the more obvious reason of white church, black person. I also probably wouldn't be ordained today, saying the things that I'm saying. But even at the time I was very hesitant about the ordination process. It was always very clear in my growing up that the Episcopal Church was a white institution — it's sort of hard to miss! Ours was the only black Episcopal Church in Dayton, Ohio, so most black folks we knew weren't Episcopalian. And women weren't being ordained — and girls were not even allowed to be altar girls. So I didn't go to seminary because I had a dream of becoming a priest. I went to seminary to study black theology. Ordination came later. That was because a mentor of mine, Fred Williams, said to me once, "Kelly, if you're a priest, that's between you and God. The church as an institution may or may not recognize that, but that will not stop you from being a priest." And then I suddenly began to be in touch with a whole different tradition in the Episcopal Church and that's the tradition that

issues forth from an Absalom Jones, a tradition that is the movement that is the church.

Absalom Jones and others like him never saw their authority as coming from white men wearing purple and sitting on thrones. They never viewed it that way, just as when the first enslaved came over and white people were telling them who Jesus was, they never believed a word.

There's a whole different sort of prophetic strand in the black church and that's what I began to tie into, and still tie into. And to me, Carter, that's the history of which the Philadelphia women are a part.

**CH:** What you have just described is a helpful response to people who are outraged when they hear us say we don't accept the authority of the white, male-dominated institutional church. I'm thinking of people who say, "You're just being subjective and making an idol of yourselves — who are you to think you know God by yourself?"

There's always an assumption that somehow we are making decisions and acting alone, by ourselves. And that my authority, for example, is forged between me, myself and God, without community and apart from the movement that is the church. It took me a long time to realize the problem with that critique, but I had always known that by "authority" I didn't simply mean my own inner voice telling me that I should be a priest or come out as a lesbian, or do the theological work that I do. There has always been something larger going on.

**KBD:** Vincent Harding wrote a book, *There is a River*. There IS a river; there is a tradition that we are talking about here and I refuse, just as Absalom Jones and you 11 women did in Philadelphia, to give the Episcopal Church over to this white, static, patriarchal, heterosexist authority. Episcopalians like "tradition" and they act like if it's not their tradition, then you have no tradition, you have no roots, no anchor. Let's go back to Nicea or you don't have anything. Well, there are other, justice-seeking traditions even under the banner of Episcopalians!

The thing that keeps me going in the church, struggling to find voice and seeking justice, are the people who have gone before me. I am driven by that first enslaved African who must have said: "What does God have to do with this?" How in the world did those folk maintain faith in the God of Jesus Christ in light of the travesty and atrocities of their life? I think of my grandmothers, to whom I dedicated my first book, and how their faith was unquenchable. I am accountable to them. Because they believed Jesus Christ loved them, then that's why I continue to believe. It's a history of a people's faith that runs through my blood. That's where I get my sense of authority.

**CH:** You've put your finger on something very important when you talk about it being the people who have gone before who in many ways become the brightest lights of authority for us. Some of those beacons for me are people in the Episcopal Church. One of the first people I remember was William Stringfellow. I heard him in North Carolina when I was about 16. It was the first time I'd ever heard a white person speak on racism. This would have been in 1962, and it was a transforming moment for me.

Within about a year I found myself in the position of being the chair of the Episcopal Young Churchmen in the Diocese of North Carolina. We were trying to have a meeting of our youth commission and there was a black boy on the commission and the diocesan camp and conference center was not integrated. So this meant that those of us who were the officers had to talk with the bishop about this and we wound up refusing to have the meeting at all because they would not integrate that center for us. This set me on an opposition course with this particular bishop who later turned me down for ordination. He told me, "You have an authority problem!"

**JW:** Where do you see the church struggling to be church today?

**CH:** Kelly and I were talking at the Episcopal Women's Caucus gathering last fall about the Presiding Bishop's call for everybody to put aside disagreements at this upcoming General Convention — in a spirit of Jubilee. But we are at a pivotal moment in the history of the church and of the world where the claims of justice are intense and present and need to be taken very seriously and not backed off from. Regardless of Bishop Griswold's intention, a call to quiescence is a call to silence. Silent dissent is not what God's Jubilee is all about.

**KBD:** I agree. This is where Archbishop Tutu and South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission have it right [see *TW* 12/99]. We understand that "reconciliation" means coming together again. Now it's on the coming together AGAIN that I think we have to focus. How do we decide that we can come together again? There are prerequisites to that. One is telling the truth. Truth precedes reconciliation.

Now, telling the truth doesn't mean that afterwards we can all say, "Oh, we're all hunky-dory friends." It means that we have to deal with the pain, the agony, the tensions, the frustrations of the truth. But until we tell the truth, we can't come together again. For our church to talk about a time of quiet, or of peace is for our church to turn it's back on dealing with the agony of the truth!

**CH:** We are created as sisters and brothers in the Spirit. That is basic to the faith that we share. And if that's who we really are, spiritual siblings in this world, and we're broken apart in a myriad of ways, what greater call do church leaders have than to try to help us see who we really are together? But you can't be together and not be struggling for justice and bringing compassion — not as a soft and easy feeling, but as a deep statement of solidarity won through the struggle of learning with one another who we can be when we are together learning the wisdom that can only come from different quarters!

None of us has that wisdom alone. We can only have it together, it seems to me, if we're really talking about the wisdom of God.

**KBD:** Unity is not in the peace and quietude of the church. It lies in the tensions.

**CH:** Right! And it's certainly not in making statements about unity.

**KBD:** Because all those do is squelch the dialogue and say, "You know what? We can't come together in our differences. I can't appreciate you for who God has created you to be. Therefore let's not even talk about it. Let's just be quiet and let's just be — and you all do what I say."

And so what it really means in our church is we have said we cannot deal with the diversity of this church. ●

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***Julie A. Wortman*** *is publisher and co-editor of* The Witness, *<julie@thewitness.org>.*

# AUTHORITY AFTER

*U.S. Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold and the Archbishop of Canterbury chat as bishops of the Anglican Communion pose for a group photograph at the 1998 Lambeth Conference.*

## Power, privilege and primacy in the Anglican Communion

*by Ian T. Douglas*

EVEN TO THE CASUAL OBSERVER, Lambeth 1998 was not the garden party of yesteryears. For the first time, Anglicans in the industrialized West had to wrestle deeply with the reality that the Anglican Communion is no longer a Christian community primarily identified with Anglo-American culture. We in the West can no longer rest in the economic and political structures of colonialism or the theological and philosophical paradigms of the Enlightenment. We must admit that the Anglican Communion is moving into a post-colonial, post-modern reality, no matter how much that scares us. And scare us it does; especially those who have historically been the most privileged by the way things have been, namely: straight, white, male, Western clerics.

The changes in contemporary Anglicanism, from a white, predominantly English speaking church of the West to a church of the Southern Hemisphere, are consistent with the changing face of Christianity over the last four decades. Anglican mission scholar David Barrett has documented that in the year 1900, 83 percent of the 522 million Christians in the world lived in Europe or North America. Today only 39 percent of the world's one and a half billion Christians live in the same area. Barrett predicts that in less than three decades, in the year 2025, fully 70 percent of Christians will live in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Pacific.

Up until the summer of 1998, however, most Anglicans in the West could pretty well ignore these radical shifts in the world Christian community and thus avoid the hard questions of identity and authority implicit in them. Our cultural, economic and political hegemony shielded us from deeply engaging the realities of our increasingly multi-cultural and plural Anglican Communion. But Lam-

beth 1998 signaled a turning point for Anglicanism. In debates over international debt and/or human sexuality, it became abundantly clear that the churches in the Southern Hemisphere would not stand idly by while their sisters and brothers in the U.S. and England set the agenda. Aided by some in the West who stood to gain ground in sexuality debates by siding with bishops in Africa, Asia and Latin America, it became abundantly clear to all that a profound power shift was occurring within Anglicanism. For the first time ever, the Anglican Communion had to face head-on the radical multi-cultural reality of our post-colonial, post-modern Christian community. Anthems of Titcomb and Tallis sung by boy choirs in chapels at Cambridge and Oxford can no longer hold us together. Even bishops taking tea with the Queen in the garden of Buckingham Palace during Lambeth is not what it used to be.

To understand how the demographic and cultural shifts in the Church have begun to challenge historic patterns of authority in the Anglican Communion, we must first consider two roadblocks to change — one economic and political, the other philosophical and theological — which have historically characterized the Anglican Communion.

### Legacy of colonialism

The first force limiting our living into the possibilities of a multi-cultural plural community in Christ is the ongoing legacy of colonialism. For the majority of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century the Anglican Communion (as it existed) was dominated by Western Churches, chief among them the Church of England and the Episcopal Church in the U.S. From the 1850s to the 1960s mission was inextricably linked to Western colonialism and imperialism, for wherever the Crown went so too did the Chapel. Looking at a map of today's Anglican Communion reveals the undeniable fact that the majority of the churches of the Anglican Communion lie in areas of the world that at one time or another were territories of either England or the U.S.

All of this began to change, however, in the 1960s. In the wake of political independence for colonies in Africa, Asia and Latin America, the missions of the Church of England or the Episcopal Church, USA struggled to "grow up" into autonomous churches of the Anglican Communion. Although many of the countries where newly independent Anglican Churches have come into being still suffer at the hands of economic colonialism (witness the sin of international debt), the growth of the church in the Southern Hemisphere has occurred since the close of the colonial era. Whether we in the West are prepared to accept it or not, the Anglican Communion today has begun to move from a colonial to a post-colonial reality. As a result, the political and economic structures of power associated with colonial dominance have begun to lose their efficacy in the new Anglican Communion.

### Limitations of 'modern' world view

The second major force hindering those historically privileged in Anglicanism from embracing a radically different world and church is the philosophical and theological confines of modernity. Whether we mark the beginning of the Anglican Communion at 1784 with the consecration of the first bishop for an autonomous Anglican Church outside of the British Isles (Samuel Seabury for the U.S.), or with the first Lambeth Conference of Bishops in 1867, the Anglican Communion as a family of churches is no more than a couple of centuries old. As such the Anglican Communion is a thoroughly modern phenomenon; with "modern" understood as the age of modernity, the last 500 years, the Age of Enlightenment. Anglicanism, up until very recently, has thus rested on the philosophical and theological constructs of Enlightenment thought that values either/or propositions, binary constructs and dualistic thinking.

The Enlightenment mind prides itself on being able to figure things out, to know limits, to be able to define what is right and what is wrong, who is in and who is out. Modern man (and I use this non-inclusive term deliberately) values clear lines of authority, knowing who is in charge, a hierarchical power structure. Plural and multiple realities are an anathema to the modern mind and thus to many who have been in control in the Anglican Communion for most of its history.

But all of this is changing as the majority of Anglicans today are located in places where the constructs of Enlightenment thought have less efficacy. I do not mean here that sisters and brothers in the South and those who are more free from the constrictions of modern thought are less educated or caught in a world of superstitions, as Jack Spong, Bishop of Newark, asserted at Lambeth 1998. Rather, the majority of Anglicans in the world today are able to live in multiple realities — both the Western Enlightenment construct as well as their own local contexts. It is important to emphasize that the maginalized in the West, especially women, people of color, and gay and lesbian individuals, have always lived multiple realities — their own particularities and that of the dominant culture. It is only those in power, namely straight, white males in the West who have the privilege of believing and acting as if there is only one reality — theirs! The movement within Anglicanism from being a church grounded in modernity and secure in the Enlightenment to a post-modern or extra-modern reality is as tumultuous as the shift from colonialism to post-colonialism.

### Fear of change

These transitions in the Anglican world are terrifying, especially for those of us who historically have been the most privileged, most in control, most secure in the colonial Enlightenment world. The radical transition afoot in the Anglican Communion is frightening, for it means that we in the West will no longer have the power and control that

we have so much enjoyed. As a result we are anxious, confused, lost in a sea of change.

The movement from being a colonial and modern church to that of a post-colonial and post-modern community in Christ, with its concomitant specter of loss for the historically most privileged, is vigorously countered by many who have been in charge to date in the Anglican Communion. Various attempts to maintain control, reassert power and put Humpty Dumpty back together again are dominating inter-Anglican conversations at this point in history. Two attempts to maintain old structures of power and privilege in response to the changing face of Anglicanism are particularly insidious and thoroughly un-Anglican.

The first is a rather diffuse attempt to claim "historic documents" of the church as authoritative for all time. Driven by fear of change, some want to look backward to a perceived simpler time to claim clear definitions of what it means to be an Anglican today. There are thus new attempts in various corners of Anglicanism, especially in the West, to raise the 39 Articles of Religion or even the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral to be the defining statements of what Anglicans are and are to believe. What results is a "new confessionalism" as insecure individuals and those who fear loss of power in these changing times struggle gallantly to nail down Anglican theology and beliefs. Armed with clear doctrinal definitions and limits, the same folk are then able to count who is in and who is out. Control is reasserted, ambiguity is overcome, and traditional authority is maintained.

### A 'new curialization': the 'Virginia Report'

The second response to these changing times are attempts to construct a new central structure of authority for the Anglican Communion, what I call a "new curialization." There are those who believe that without well articulated lines of authority, or "instruments of unity" emanating from a strong center (such as the one our Roman Catholic sisters and brothers have), the Body of Christ, the Church catholic, will fly apart in a disorganized mess. And so some set about to develop a new kind of headship, a new form of primacy, with the Archbishop of Canterbury at the center and the Primates as a kind of "college of cardinals."

The much celebrated "Virginia Report" of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission represents this trend to greater centralization of power and authority in the Anglican Communion. A close examination of the history, tenets and use of the Report shows how this seemingly balanced and affirming document in fact leads in a direction that might not best serve the increasingly multi-cultural and plural nature of the Anglican Communion. In these changing times, do we really want to imbue bishops, especially the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates, with more power and authority than they have historically enjoyed, even in the bad old times of colonialism and modernity?

The instigation of the Virginia Report lies in one of the most significant challenges to straight, white, male, Western clerical hegemony in the Anglican Communion: namely the ordination of women, particularly their ordination to the episcopate. In the wake of the Diocese of Massachusetts' election of Barbara Harris as Suffragan Bishop in 1988, the 1988 Lambeth Conference empowered the Archbishop of Canterbury to call for a Commission on Communion and Women in the Episcopate under the leadership of Robert Eames, Archbishop of Armagh, Ireland. The "Eames Commission," as it came to be known, met five times between 1988 and 1993. Lambeth 1988 also saw an urgent need for "further exploration of the meaning and nature of communion with particular reference to the doctrine of the Trinity, the unity and order of the Church, and the unity and community of humanity" (Lambeth 1988, Resolution 18).

In response, the Archbishop of Canterbury called together a group of theologians for a consultation on the nature of authority in the Anglican Communion, which met at Virginia Theological Seminary in 1991 and produced an initial report, "Belonging Together." Three years later, a successor group to the initial consultation, to be known as the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (IATDC), was called into being. This group met in December 1994 and January 1996, on both occasions back at Virginia Seminary. IATDC was to be composed of representatives from around the Anglican Communion. Leadership of the new commission was provided by the principals of the now retired "Eames Commission" — Archbishop Eames, once again in the position of chair, and Mark Dyer, previously the Bishop of Bethlehem, Penn., and now Professor of Theology at Virginia Seminary. It was no surprise that Virginia Seminary announced its willingness to host the group, given Dyer's participation. The Commission would reciprocate by naming their findings the "Virginia Report."

### Tensions and a surprise ending

Although the IATDC was ostensibly inclusive and diverse with respect to geographic origin, gender and ordination status, reports emerged of tensions over process and theology between the commission's Anglo-American male bishops and both its women and Southern Hemisphere members.When the final consultation ended in January 1996, a consensus or "report" of the proceedings had not yet been achieved. It thus came as a surprise, even to some members of the commission, when the Virginia Report appeared in its final version with an added section on "The Worldwide Instruments of Communion: Structures and Processes."

Speculation as to the authorship of this new section has varied, but most informed observers believe that this section was drafted by Anglo-American male bishop-members of the group. If true, it is completely consistent, then, that the four instruments of unity outlined, namely the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates Meeting, have a decidedly episcopal emphasis.

Arriving in Canterbury for the 1998 Lambeth Conference, the bishops from the many corners of the Anglican Communion, were presented with the Virginia Report as a crowning statement of the common life of contemporary Anglicanism. As an observer and reporter at Lambeth, acknowledging my limited access to its meetings and conversations, there did not appear to me to be an organized opportunity for substantial discourse on the content and recommendations of the Virginia Report. As a result, little or no open disagreement with the report surfaced. Resolution III 8 of the conference welcomed and affirmed the Virginia Report and requested "the Primates to initiate and mon-

itor a decade of study in each province on the report and in particular whether *effective communion, at all levels does not require appropriate instruments, with due safeguards not only for legislation, but also for oversight* [italics in the original] as well as [noting the Papal Encyclical *Ut unum sint*] on the issue of a universal ministry in the service of Christian unity."

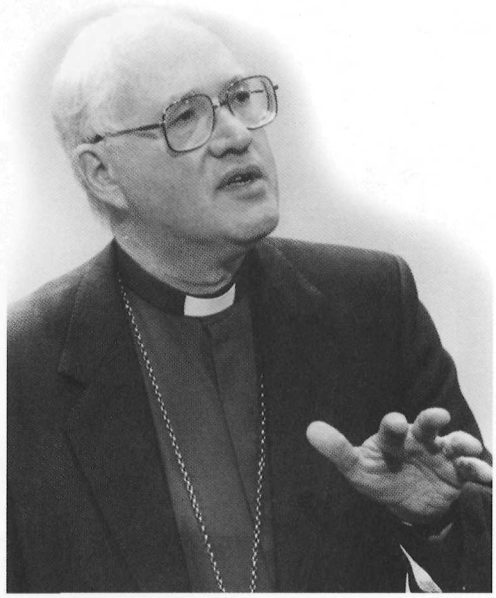
The fact that the archbishops, and not the church's entire leadership, were asked to initiate a study on the need for structures to safeguard and legislate "effective communion" portrays the real intent of the Virginia Report. Behind the resolution was the presupposition that, in these changing times, the Primates' have the responsibility to advance a clear authority structure centered in the Archbishop of Canterbury .

Those who missed the subtle slide toward centralization and increased primatial authority in the Virginia Report need only consider the 1998 Lambeth Resolution III.6 on the "Instruments of The Anglican Communion." This resolution not only calls for the Primates to be the episcopal presence on the Anglican Consultative Council, but, for the first time ever in the history of Anglicanism, imbues the archbishops of the Anglican Communion with heretofore unheard-of pan-Anglican authority and power. The resolution "asks the Primates meeting, under the Presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury, [to] include among its responsibilities ... intervention in cases of exceptional emergency which are incapable of internal resolution within provinces and giving of guidelines on the limits of Anglican diversity." Resolution III.6 gives the Primates enhanced responsibility for pan-Anglican doctrinal and moral matters and unheard-of extra-metropolitical authority to intervene in the life of Anglican provinces locally when issues of diversity become "problematic." Such all but guaranteed that traditionalists in the U.S. would appeal to the Primates for intervention in the Episcopal Church over questions of human sexuality, as has come to pass.

### Canterbury an Anglican pope?

The 11th meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC 11) in Dundee, Scotland in September 1999 contrasted sharply with the Lambeth Conference's reception of the Virginia Report. This diverse body of the Anglican Communion, made up of lay people, priests and bishops from every church in the Anglican Communion, would not accept uncritically the slide to increased central authority implicit in the Virginia Report. Many ACC representatives were especially put out that the early sessions of the meeting, six hours in total, were given over to Bishop Mark Dyer's careful and deliberate presentation of the Report.

It was during Dyer's three presentations



*Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey*

that his bias toward authority resting in the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates was revealed. Owning his Irish Roman Catholic roots in New Hampshire and South Boston, Mass. (although not many knew that this extended to his having been a Roman Catholic Benedictine monk for more than a decade), Dyer's description of the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury as the first "instrument of unity" had a distinctly papal ring. He stressed, "the incarnation of Jesus Christ at the center [of the Church] must be personified in face-to-face people. It must be embodied in that literal sense of embodiment as the Church has carried [it] out throughout its history. [For Anglicans] the Archbishop of Canterbury, as an instrument of unity, is a personal embodiment of that particular ministry for us."

ACC representatives from Edinburgh, Scotland to Sydney, Australia (seemingly unlikely bed-fellows!) were aghast at Dyer's assertion that the Archbishop of Canterbury is the "personal embodiment" of Anglicanism's continuity with Christ and saw in it strong parallels to Roman Catholic understandings of the pope as the Vicar of Christ. Their fears were not allayed when Dyer noted that the theory of subsidiarity, central in the Virginia Report, was taken directly from Pope Pius XI's 1931 encyclical, "On Reconstruction of the Social Order." Members of the ACC reacted strongly to the centralizing ethic being advanced, with John Moses, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, asserting, "The Virginia Report could be an instrument to increase the curialization drift of the Anglican Communion." Likewise, Glauco Soares de Lima, Primate of the Episcopal Church of Brazil, emphasized that "the report is a sign of a still colonial mind, even in the structures described."

### Suspend Lambeth 2008?

Dyer's ownership and defense of the Virginia Report and its instruments of unity, in the face of the ACC's attempts to consider different types of Anglican relationships and authority, heated up when the ACC came to consider the possibility of a worldwide Anglican Congress for lay people, priests and bishops. When it became clear that the Communion could not afford to pay for both an Anglican Congress and a Lambeth Conference in the next decade, the Archbishop of Canterbury, unexpectedly enthusiastic about the proposal, suggested that perhaps the Congress should take precedence and replace Lambeth as the common gathering of the Anglican Communion. This idea was well received by many members of the ACC, especially lay people and priests, and a draft resolution affirming this was quickly set in motion.

Mark Dyer (who also served as a representative to the ACC from the Episcopal Church) rightly saw that such a resolution would be disastrous for the Virginia Report and its views on authority, for it would negate one of the four instruments of unity, namely the Lambeth Conference. Clearly agitated and chagrined by the direction of the discussion, Dyer led the successful charge to table the resolution on the Congress. By the time the issue surfaced again at the end of the

ACC meeting 10 days later, the resolution had been watered down to read, "that there should be an Anglican Congress in association with the next Lambeth Conference."

### Embrace Rome's 'Gift of Authority'?

The slide to increased primatial authority in the Anglican Communion found in the Virginia Report has wider ramifications beyond Anglicanism. The Introduction to the Virginia Report notes, "Resolution 8 of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission [ARCIC I], also had a direct bearing on the exercise of authority in the Church. It encouraged ARCIC to explore the basis in Scripture and Tradition of the concept of a universal primacy in conjunction with collegiality, as an instrument of unity." Is it any surprise, then, that the most recent statement of the Anglican and Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC II) under the dubious title "The Gift of Authority," concludes by challenging "Anglicans to be open to and desire a recovery and re-reception under certain clear conditions of the exercise of universal primacy by the Bishop of Rome?"

In addition, a quick glance of the membership of ARCIC II reveals that of the 17 members of the Commission, 15 hail from the industrialized West, with eight members coming from England alone! How can ARCIC begin to think outside of historic patterns of authority identified with straight, white, ordained men of the West when its membership includes only two women and two representatives from the Southern Hemisphere?

Perhaps Tanzanian Bishop Simon Chiwanga, Chair of the Anglican Consultative Council, said it best in his address to the ACC Dundee gathering: "In these times of profound change, many who are fearful of the future seek security and solace in what they perceive as safe and sound. ... Whether confession or curia, catechism or conference, constitution or council, the fearful are looking for easy answers."

### Looking beyond Anglicanism

Easy answers based on a shared Anglo heritage, it seems clear, will no longer hold the Anglican Communion together. In these changing times we must not put our hope in either tighter doctrinal definitions or a more centralized authority structure. Instead, a new understanding of Anglican identity is needed if we are to remain in communion across the colors and cultures, nations and nationalities that Anglicanism now embodies. This new identity must look beyond the historic structures of colonialism and the Enlightenment — must, in fact, look beyond Anglicanism itself. For only in a shared commitment with sisters and brothers in Christ from all races and cultures is there hope for genuine participation in God's mission of justice, compassion and reconciliation for all creation.

Konrad Raiser, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, has been quoted recently as saying, "Anglicans have become much, much more self-conscious and interested in protecting Anglicanism than in furthering the process toward genuine unity of the church." He has further written, "The imposition of a particular form of doctrinal or canonical unity can become the cause for stifling the dynamics of Christian mission. ... Searching for unity means to be engaged in the constant process of discerning the Spirit so that those telling the stories of God's great deeds in different languages can understand and affirm the witness of the other community as being truly inspired by the Spirit. It is this mutual resonance to each other's witness in the one Spirit which is the manifestation of unity, which constantly looks beyond itself towards the fulfillment of God's promise when God will unite and sum up all things on earth and heaven in Christ."

The "mutual resonance" of a multi-cultural community dedicated to God's mission offers the only true authority for the Anglican Communion; in fact, the only true authority for all the baptized, not just bishops and archbishops. ●


William Killough/Anglican World

*Episcopal Church bishops join in the opening worship service at the 1998 Lambeth Conference.*

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# Authority begins with baptism

*by Fredrica Harris Thompsett*



OF LATE I HAVE BEEN NOTICING the steadily creeping habit of putting the adjective "lay" before the names, identities and actions exercised by many Christians. There are "lay" readers, "lay" eucharistic ministers, and more generically "lay ministers" and "lay persons." Yet the adjective "lay" does not in common parlance convey authority or expertise. Thus we end up with oddly convoluted references to "lay leaders," "lay social justice workers" and "lay professionals" (although this latter example is clearly an oxymoron). In standard North American usage, the adjective "lay" suggests a second-class, diminished and (at best) amateur status. Byron Rushing, a longtime deputy to General Conventions from the Diocese of Massachusetts, rightly observes that few people in search of serious help would go to a "lay doctor" or a "lay lawyer." Then why, he rhetorically challenges, would we go to a "lay minister" to learn more about God's presence our lives?

The term "lay ministry" is redundant since "ministry" in its formative biblical understanding belongs to the whole community. Similarly, although I am a seminary professor, no one calls me a "lay teacher." The authority of the teacher can stand alone. Yet I wonder what skewed power dynamics are at work when I and others like William Stringfellow and Verna Dozier are called "lay theologians." Who with historical accuracy could claim that theology has been or is the exclusive preserve of the ordained?!

What is going on here? Several things. At the level of liturgical practice, those in the Episcopal Church who worked to revise the 1928 *Book of Common Prayer* sought to ensure that "liturgy" became true to its original meaning as "the work of the people." The new 1979 book expressed a bold, inclusive declaration when it defined the "ministers" of the church as "lay persons, bishops, priests and deacons." The direct naming of laity along with clergy as "ministers" of the church was intended to reflect biblical references to laity, the *laos*, as designating the whole people of God. Thus up-front participation was actively encouraged by "lay" readers, by those who would lead the aptly-named "Prayers of the People," and eventually by "lay" chalice bearers. Yet clericalist assumptions continue to mar American religion. William Countryman in his magnificent new book, *Living on the Border of the Holy: Renewing the Priesthood of All* (Morehouse, 1999), contends against cultural patterns that persistently see clergy today as the "real," the "serious" and even the "graduate" Christians. Countryman's analysis reminds us of the need to engage stronger biblical and theological foundations for claiming authority for all people of God.

THE TERM "LAY MINISTRY" IS REDUNDANT SINCE "MINISTRY" IN ITS FORMATIVE BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING BELONGS TO THE WHOLE COMMUNITY.

When I was a child, there were three words that stood out in the 1928 *Book of Common Prayer*: "Name this Child." This naming was key to the sacramental actions of Holy Baptism as the named child (or an older person) was then received and welcomed as Christ's "own." Today as an adult, I am emboldened by the authoritative promises and responsibilities conveyed in the Baptismal Covenant found in the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*. The authority of Christians begins first with naming and then with baptism. In her book *The Calling of the Laity* (*Verna Dozier's Anthology*, The Alban Institute, 1988), theologian Verna Dozier reminds us that "religious authority comes with baptism." Still, it is important to pay attention to William Stringfellow's warning in the preface to an uncompleted book titled *Authority in Baptism: The Vocation of Jesus and the Ministry of the Laity* (see *A Keeper of the Word: Selected Writings of William Stringfellow*, Eerdmans, 1994), that American churches persistently "belittle the authority that baptism vests in the laity." Sometimes this is done inadvertently, sometimes by passivity among laity and sometimes by clergy who believe that in matters religious they really do "know best."

As one modest step toward affirming the authority of the people of God, I propose that we suspend using the adjective "lay" to describe any group of Christians. This empty term in current institutional usage implies only that those signified are "not clergy." It is also an unnecessarily separating way of speaking about our common mission as Christians at work in the world. I prefer to speak instead of the ministry of all the baptized, the community of the baptized, the high calling of the baptized, and the authority of the baptized. I tend whenever possible to refer to "the people of God" and more simply to "Christians." I believe, as Dozier once observed, that we are primarily called "to make a difference in the structures of society." This urgent call shared by all people of God confirms the power and promises affirmed sacramentally in baptism. This authoritative mission does not call for second-class witnesses! ●

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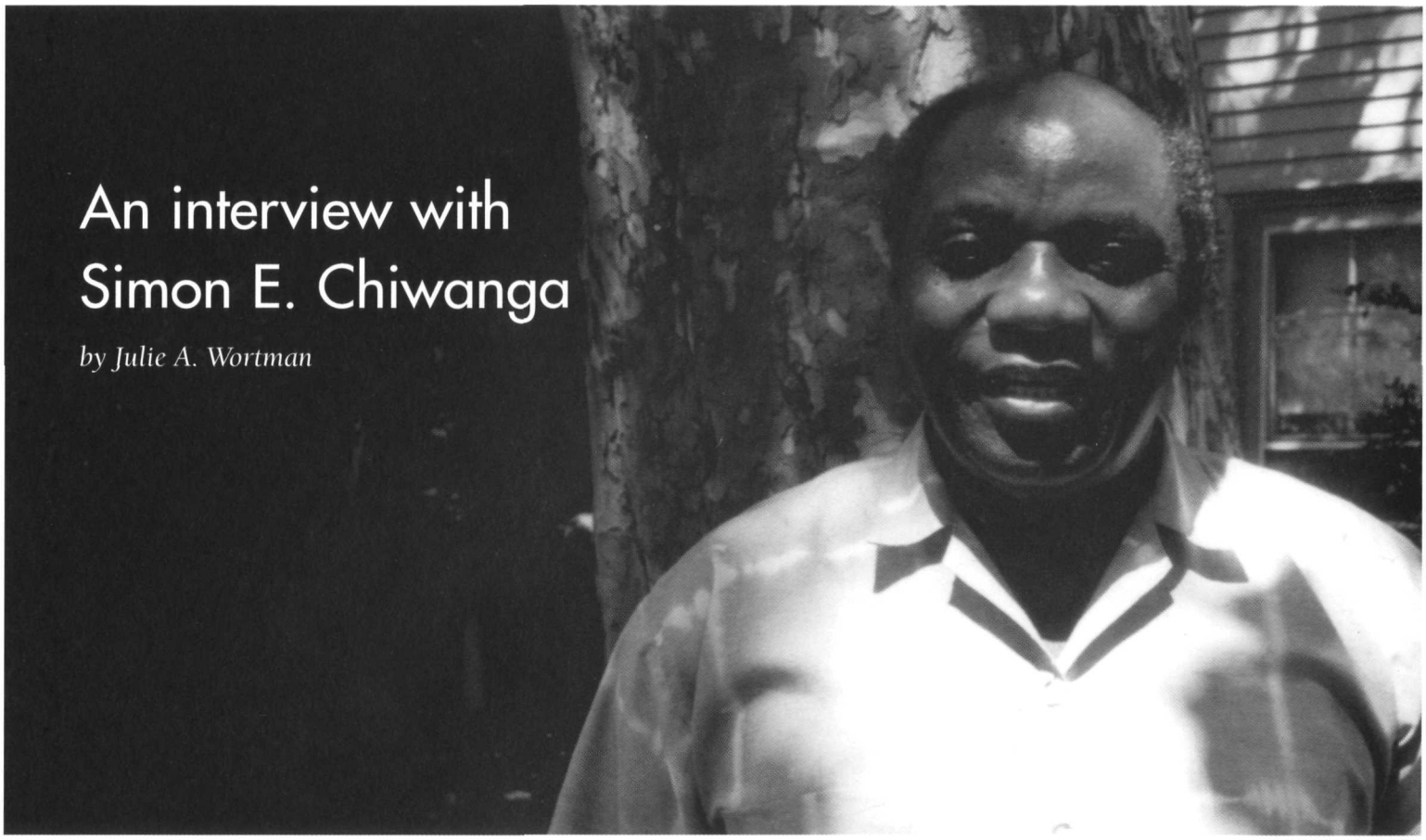
# AN AFRICAN REVISIO



## An interview with Simon E. Chiwanga

*by Julie A. Wortman*

Julie A. Wortman

I TEND TO THINK THAT THE VALUES OF COMMUNITY, OF *UJAMAA*, SHOULD BE SEEN AS GOD'S "PREVENIENT GRACE" TO AFRICA. AND IF WE THINK OF THE CHURCH AS *UJAMAA* COMMUNION, WE ARE CALLED TO MINISTRY THAT IS COLLABORATIVE.

SINCE 1992 Simon E. Chiwanga has served as Bishop of Mpwapwa in the Anglican Church of Tanzania. He is also Chair of the Anglican Consultative Council, one of the so-called "instruments of unity" of the Anglican Communion (see p. 6). Chiwanga served as Minister for Education under President Julius Nyerere from 1970 to 1984.

During the academic year 1998-99 he completed a Doctor of Ministry degree at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass. The title of his thesis was "From Monarch/Chief to *Mhudumu*: An African Re-Visioning of Episcopacy."

**Julie A. Wortman:** What were your reasons for coming to this country to take on a study of the episcopate?

**Simon E. Chiwanga:** I wanted to step aside and look at the seven years that I've been bishop to see what I've learned. I've always chosen an academic program to provide the structure for this kind of reflection. The last time I did this I studied at King's College at the University of London. This time I wanted to study in the U.S. because England and the U.S. are the two giants among the big players in the Anglican Communion. The American church for a long time has had a lot of influence in the government of the Anglican Communion so I want-

# NING OF LEADERSHIP

ed to get to know it better, to feel some of its heartbeats and see what strength I can draw from it.

**JW:** When did you first begin being drawn to the idea of shared leadership?

**SC:** One of the circumstances of my life is that although I was born poor, my mother came from a chiefly family. In fact, if the Independence government of Tanzania had not come to power and abolished the institution of Chiefs, I would have been made a Chief. If that had occurred, perhaps I wouldn't care about shared leadership. Instead, I became involved with the government of Julius Nyerere, our first president. To this I owe my enthusiasm and commitment to community-based thinking, self-reliance and empowerment of the people.

Nyerere was a devout Catholic whose heart was with the poor. He deplored our country's heavy reliance on foreign aid. And he spoke often about how a poor person cannot depend just on money as a weapon in the war against poverty, ignorance and disease. Gifts and loans, he said, can be turned into agents of enslavement instead of empowerment, if the receivers do not develop their own self-reliance. To me, this was very much Paul's image of the church as a body, every part working together for growth.

**JW:** So the community — in your thesis I believe the concept is *ujamaa* — is a very important part of your vision of leadership?

**SC:** Yes. God is a communitarian in the Trinity! And God's mission is one of reconciliation, which is essentially the work of Christ — and as Christians, reconciliation is our work, too. That means bringing every person and the whole creation into harmony. I seek to live in peace with my neighbor. There cannot be peace if justice is not present, and therefore I have to respect my rights and I have to respect my neighbor's rights. My rights are influenced by my neighbor's rights and vice versa. That's why the community is there: because I cannot be complete without my neighbor. There has to be always that meeting point, that meshing, that interaction. All the time. That is dynamic! It's not the same as emulating or copying or simply compromising. It's a dynamic and creative interaction.

*Ujamaa* in Swahili means familyhood, a way of life that can be found within a nuclear family or an extended family. Through belonging to a family, clan and tribe, the African learned to say, "I am because I participate." The life of the community was made possible through an interplay of three cardinal principles which permeate all aspects of life: respect for everyone, hard work for everyone, and mutual caring by everyone. These principles guided traditional African life; they guided Julius Nyerere's government and they still pertain today despite the great changes that have swept Tanzania. I tend to think that the values of community, of *ujamaa*, should be seen as God's "prevenient grace" to Africa. And if we think of the church as *ujamaa* communion, we are called to ministry that is collaborative. The leader in this type of communion would be a servant leader or *mhudumu*.

I grew up in what is called the East African Revival Movement which resulted in the breaking of all sorts of barriers. One of the very important features which made it grow and remain for a number of years was this fellowship, this community. When we met in a Bible study group, everyone felt free to share and to

▶ *Continued on page 18*

## Creating a 'ministering community'

*by William Kondrath*

Perhaps as many as 20 dioceses in the Episcopal Church have Total Ministry or Mutual Ministry (the terms are used almost interchangeably) programs where members of congregations match their gifts to their ministerial needs. Together a team of members receive training and are then ordained or commissioned as priests, deacons and ministers of education, outreach, social justice and pastoral care.

Historically, the Total Ministry movement owes much of its inspiration to Roland Allen, the maverick early 20th-century missiologist. The more immediate crafter of Total Ministry as an overall diocesan strategy was Wesley Frensdorff, who, before his fatal plane crash in 1988, was the bishop in Nevada, having also served in Navajoland and Arizona. In addition to Allen's work, Frensdorff built on the work of liturgist Boone Porter and on the efforts of several bishops — Norman Foote, William Gordon, David Cochran, and George Harris — who pioneered the ordination of "local priests" and who helped change the face of ministry in many communities which are "small, isolated, remote, or distinct in respect of ethnic composition, language, or culture" (Title III, Canon 9). And while it is still those sorts of communities that find most resonance with the Total Ministry message, others are joining the caravan.

### Radical call to community ministry

At the heart of the Total Ministry movement is a radical call for Christians to join in discerning the needs of their own local community and to be trained together to exercise their particular gifts in the service of the wider community. On one level, fostering the ministry of the whole people of God is a matter of "de-centering" clergy in the life of the community, or as Frensdorff said, creating "a ministering community, rather than a community gathered around a minister." For this to happen, priority must be given to baptism, not to ordination, as the center and source of ministry. Boone Porter put it succinctly when he quipped: "When we look for the Christ figure in the Eucharist, we see the priest. When we look for the Christ figure in Baptism, we see the one baptized."

▶ *Continued on page 19*

THE IDEA THAT ONE PART OF THE BODY IS ABOVE THE REST IS INCONSISTENT WITH PAUL'S TEACHING IN CORINTHIANS THAT WE ARE ALL MEMBERS OF THE SAME BODY AND EACH PART IS ESSENTIAL.


learn from the others, regardless of position. We could see that the same text impacts different people differently. Together, there was tremendous richness. In a way you have to have different readings of Scripture to get its fullness. So if someone says that they have comprehended the whole truth, I can only envy them!

Now, one more thing about community. I've said that in sharing we enrich ourselves and each other by each individual's contribution and perception. But also, we correct each other. Community sharing is correcting. I may begin with an assumption, but when I listen to others, if I really adopt an open mind and spirit to receive — which is always very crucial in community — then by the time the third person has made his or her contribution, I may have changed my original position, because they have thrown in more light without necessarily criticizing.

**JW:** No one leaves with their position the same?

**SC:** Exactly.

**JW:** So it's suspicious if anybody leaves unchanged?

**SC:** That's right! Absolutely! And that's why qualities like listening and the willingness to risk vulnerability are indispensable in community.

**JW:** In your thesis you say that because of Tanzania's history, both colonial and indigenous, the nature of the leadership in the church today makes it difficult to achieve that sort of mutual transformation?

**SC:** That's right. Over the years I have observed an enormous problem in Tanzanian society as a whole: a dependency mentality. The colonialists didn't trust Africans. Some missionaries for a long time didn't trust Africans. Hence the delay in developing the ordained ministry in our church. There was this idea that Africans can't lead themselves. So now many in the church don't trust that they can.

**JW:** So what's needed?

**SC:** As Minister of Education I always emphasized that the first important thing is to create an environment conducive to learning. That is very difficult because it means making sure that each person is free to speak their mind; each one is assured of safety and that their dignity will be respected. You create the norm that no question is silly.

I began to try to create this sort of environment in 1994, in preparation for our diocesan synod. The slogan that I publicized was, "Vision is not a monopoly of one person or one position." You see, traditionally the so-called bishop's "charge" in synod gives the vision, the direction, which the diocese should follow. But then you are perhaps blocking better visions than yours from the floor.

**JW:** Better visions than the bishop's?

**SC:** Yes, absolutely. So from the beginning of that synod I said that the bishop's charge would be debated afterward, that people could be free to say, "The bishop here is wrong. Our church needs to go this direction and not what he's proposing." My idea was that I've made my contribution, the members of synod should make their own contributions and then we'll meet.

Community sharing also must include the empowerment of the participants. For example, for a long time women in our culture were very, very slow speakers. The men were up front and always had a chance to speak. So to change this, we said that the lay representation from each congregation had to be one man and one woman. Of course, we don't have women ordained, so that balance is still tilted in the sense that of the three from each parish, two will be men because the priest will be a man. But now we have women participating in synod.

We also prepared people to understand the rules of order used at synod because to know them — and to understand that using them is a kind of game — is to be free.

**JW:** At the Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops in 1998 I saw African bishops, especially, espouse an attitude that the bishops speak for the whole church. There were also those asking that the Archbishop of Canterbury and the primates be given greater powers. So by urging a more shared kind of church leadership aren't you bucking a movement in the opposite direction?

**SC:** The idea that one part of the body is above the rest is inconsistent with Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 12 that we are all members of the

same body and each part is essential. We bishops also make the mistake of setting ourselves up as THE theologians of the church. There was a time in the history of the church in Tanzania when a priest was the highest educated person in the community. That time passed away long ago. More highly trained theologians are emerging, many lay people. We need to recognize that fact.

Instead of being preoccupied with the hierarchy of orders, or with building the church by increasing members, we ought instead to travel towards preoccupation with God's work of reconciliation in God's world. The *mhudumu* idea of leadership that is associated with *ujamaa* communion would have little to do with "my lord bishop." A *mhudumu* bishop is accountable to the community and will ensure the sharing that the community requires for transformation.

The monarchical model of church leadership involves an ordained ministry independent, though aware, of the laity. It stresses a chain-link Apostolic Succession. It creates a pyramid structure in which all orders derive from the "fullness of ministry" possessed by the bishop. Clergy shape policy and make plans. The laity are then enlisted to assist in carrying out those plans.

In the *mhudumu* model of leadership the structure is circular, with no higher or lower rankings. Each ministry has its own integrity, function and type of authority which is derived not from the bishop, but from the community in the power of the Holy Spirit, who bestows gifts.

**JW:** The monarchical model seems pretty well entrenched, though, doesn't it?

**SC:** I'll tell you one very simple thing. To change from the priest or bishop being chair of every committee in our diocese was an active task. So now these committees are chaired by a lay person, man or woman. But I had people ask me, "Are you sure what you are doing is Anglican? Because we've never seen this."

**JW:** So the people are saying that Anglicanism is a top-down, clerical-led enterprise?

**SC:** Anglicanism is what we received from the missionaries. ●

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# Creating a 'ministering community'

▶ *Continued from page 17*

On a deep level, what is called for is a profound understanding of the doctrine of the Incarnation, which implies that every space is sacred, every people holy. Such a view, says Mark MacDonald, who is Bishop of Alaska, gives authority to the individuals' gifts for ministry and to the nuances of local belief and culture, potentially the source of liturgical and ministerial freedom. The pitfall, MacDonald, says, is too strong an adherence to the mantra that "the local community has within it all the gifts that it needs, " although this may be an important corrective for the more prevalent view, that the local community "is a complete zero until you download all of the ideas of the so-called universal church."

### Order and structure

With Total Ministry, the notion of career clergy takes a back seat to the needs of the local congregation and its ability to meet those needs from within its membership. Here, seminary-trained clergy function more like the apostle Paul, setting up new churches or providing education and formation for congregations and, by implication, for their leaders.

According to Steve Kelsey, Bishop of Northern Michigan and convener of Leavenners (a cooperative of ministry developers from the northeastern U.S.), one of the major obstacles the church faces is that "we have confused itinerant and indigenous leaders," meaning we have confused ministry development with ministry delivery. In the Total Ministry paradigm, ministry development — helping people identify their gifts and offering them training for ministry — is more the domain of the seminary-trained professionals. Ministry delivery — actually doing hands-on ministry — is more appropriately handled on the local level by locally trained lay persons, deacons, and priests.

Still, with the increase of Canon 9 (local) ordinations, there's a hidden problem — a two-tired system of ordination which can relegate the locally ordained to second-class status. It is not uncommon to hear seminary-trained clergy, for example, question this newer order's influence in diocesan decision-making — even as others wonder the reverse: Is it fair that the seminary-trained have such a disproportionate amount of influence? In an effort to establish a new model of diocesan life that focuses on neither, the Diocese of Northern Michigan has gone to a unicameral diocesan convention to which each congregation can bring four representatives — in any combination of laity, clergy, or both.

### Mission imperative?

One of the promises implied in Total Ministry has been that a congregation — freed from the burden of devoting the vast majority of its budget to a full-time priest and freed from the myth that the priest is the minister — would engage more fully in missionary work, proclaiming the Gospel in word and deed. But the movement has yet to live up to that promise in most areas. Perhaps slaying the dragon of clericalism has distracted too many advocates of Total Ministry from the work of evangelism and communal social change.

And, for some, there is also a larger question. "We don't need to add to the Episcopal Church," says Edmundo Desueza, executive secretary of the Episcopal Province of the Caribbean, "but to enter into the life of the community." From this mission-focused perspective, the energies Total Ministry congregations are now directing toward surviving as Episcopal Church congregations might more faithfully be redirected toward ecumenical models of worship and ministry.

Still, it is in the ordering and structuring of ministry that Total Ministry proponents offer the greatest challenge to the rest of the church. A new understanding of the diaconate and the priesthood is emerging as priests and deacons are called forth by a congregation, formed alongside other members of that congregation, offering their gifts without compensation. In these congregations, the priesthood and the diaconate of the community is replacing the priesthood and diaconate as an individual's personal possession and career. ●

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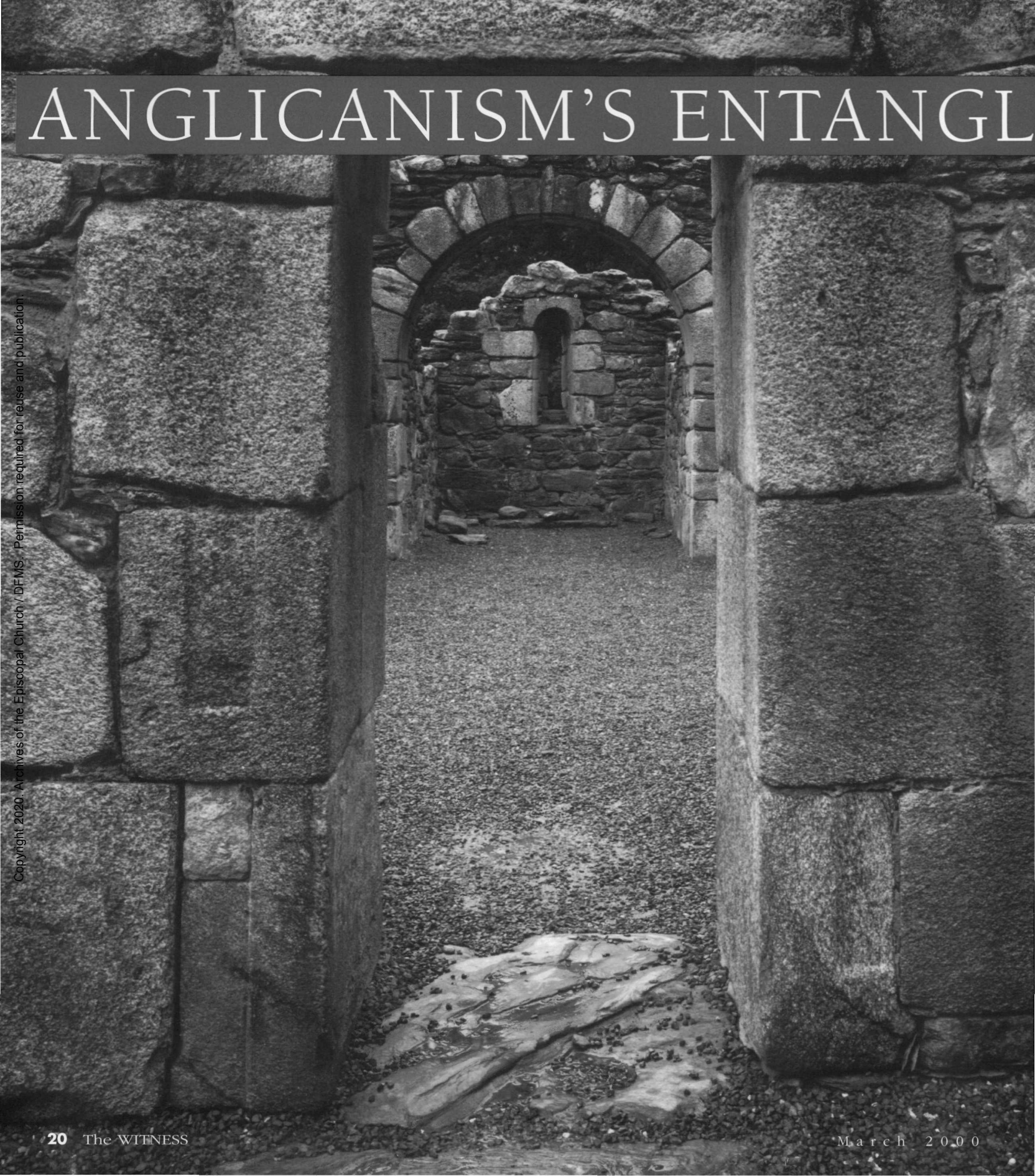
# ANGLICANISM'S ENTANGL



# ED SENSE OF AUTHORITY

## A tradition that allows for great disagreement

*by L. William Countryman*





SOME TIME AGO I was asked to present the "liberal position" on authority in Anglicanism to a diocesan conference. I found myself a bit perplexed. The word "liberal" means different things to different people; but, to tell the truth, I seldom use it of myself. In matters of theological reasoning, I'm a rather traditional Anglican, and about all I could offer was the tradition that I learned from parish clergy, from bishops, from my teachers at The General Seminary and, of course, from the writings of such venerable Anglican divines as William Temple, Brooke Foss Westcott, F. D. Maurice and Richard Hooker. Over the years, I have discovered that I am not alone; in fact, most Anglicans of whatever stripe seem to think themselves rather traditional in theological terms.

What, then, is this common tradition that occasions (or at least allows) so much disagreement? The tradition is complex, because Anglicans have always had mixed feelings about authority, as we still have today. We insist on conducting the life of the community with decency and order, with a certain degree of predictability and conformity. We're not individualists. But we've also been suspicious of the tendency in some other Christian traditions to make too much of authority. We rejected the authority of the pope in Rome in the 16th century. And we also rejected the authority of the "paper pope," the Bible in the way that the Puritans used it, in the 17th century.

In both cases, what we rejected was a certain way of using (or, from our perspective, abusing) authority. We were happy to retain the traditional ministry of the church. We claimed the Bible as our own. But we were suspicious of those who claimed absolute authority to define the will of God, whether they did so through the office of the papacy or in the name of the Bible. E. J. Bicknell, who wrote a venerable (and certainly not radical) book on the 39 Articles of Religion, says: "Since God is perfect Wisdom and perfect Truth, to refuse belief in any truth that He has revealed would be not only presumptuous but unreasonable. The real difficulty is to prove the genuineness and accuracy of what is claimed to be a revelation from God."

ANGLICANS HAVE BEEN SUSPICIOUS OF THE TENDENCY IN SOME OTHER CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS TO MAKE TOO MUCH OF AUTHORITY. WE REJECTED THE AUTHORITY OF THE POPE IN ROME IN THE 16TH CENTURY AND WE ALSO REJECTED THE AUTHORITY OF THE "PAPER POPE," THE BIBLE IN THE WAY THAT THE PURITANS USED IT, IN THE 17TH CENTURY.

Do we believe what God says? Certainly! Are we certain what God says? That is another matter. We have no direct access to God of a kind that could resolve our uncertainties and disagreements once for all. God has become incarnate in Jesus; but Jesus, too, is unavailable to answer our specific questions. At a kind of third level of authority, we speak of the Bible as God's word; but if you read it carefully, you quickly discover that it was written with an eye to the issues of distant places and times — related, no doubt, to our questions, but not identical with them.

### The Anglican risk: dispensing with absolute authority

Anglicanism did a daring thing in the Reformation when it took the risk of dispensing with absolute authority in this world. We all hanker after certainty. But if we insist on having it, we run the danger of idolatry — the danger that having a pope, whether human or on paper, will lead us to trust in an accessible, this-worldly authority rather than in the true God, the hidden Holy One, the One who alone fills all in all. "The real difficulty is to prove the genuineness and accuracy of what is claimed to be a revelation from God." We chose the difficult — but spiritually safer — course of seeking the will of God not from a single this-worldly authority but in the confluence or congruence of several witnesses.

Anglicans acknowledge not a single authority, but a group of witnesses to God's will. We have traditionally summed them up as the three legs of a tripod: Scripture, tradition, and reason. Why a tripod or, as it's commonly called, a "three-legged stool"? Perhaps it's because it is an inherently stable object. It will stand on its own, even on rough ground, and unlike a chair with four legs, it will be solid—not rocking back and forth. The image of the tripod is, in other

words, an image of our hope and longing for theological stability!

In one respect, however, it's a misleading image. It suggests that the three elements — Scripture, tradition, and reason — are all quite distinct and separable from each other, as if each one had a pure and unique existence, unrelated to that of the others (except, of course, that they're all holding up the stool we sit on). If we look at the three more carefully, however, we shall find that this isn't the case. Each of the three is dependent on the other two; indeed, at times, they tend to merge into one another.

### The Bible: always entangled with tradition ...

Of course, someone might be thinking, "He's off his rocker. I can hold a Bible in my hand. I know what it is. It's not the same as tradition. It's not the same as reason. It's a book." Well, yes, the Bible is distinct from tradition and reason. But it's always entangled with them. Consider how the New Testament came into existence. It is very much a story about tradition. The church, of course, is older than the New Testament books; from the start, it preserved the traditions about Jesus and created new traditions of church life. And the church is much older than the collecting up of the New Testament books as a canon. In fact, the church did the collecting and canonizing.

How did it go about that? To begin with, it looked at tradition. What books were actually being read in the churches as legacies from the earlier days of Christianity? That's how we came up with the somewhat odd business of four gospels. It isn't very convenient. Some early Christians tried various ways to reduce the number. But it was hard to get rid of any of them because they were all traditional.

Forming the New Testament canon required the use of reason, too. The early Christians employed historical reasoning in an effort to determine which books were really from the first generations of Christianity. The Epistle to the Hebrews, for example, almost didn't make it in because nobody was sure who had written it. Only when the scholar Clement of Alexandria suggested that the ideas were Paul's and the writing was Luke's did it begin to gain real acceptance. Other works were kept out of the canon on the basis of theological reasoning. If they taught doctrines that sounded Gnostic or Marcionite or Montanist, they were rejected. In other words, the scriptures themselves have always been deeply entangled with both tradition and reason.

Of course, one might think, "That was then; this is now." But even now our reading of Scripture is dependent on both tradition and reason. Think about our Anglican tradition of standing up for the reading of the Gospel at the Eucharist. It seems a small thing; but it has a big influence. Anglican preachers tend to choose the Gospel reading for their text in part because we honor it in this way as central. All reading of Scripture in the church typically begins with the presupposition that we know, at least roughly, what to expect there. We assume the Bible will be more or less consistent with what we've already experienced and learned of the faith. Tradition surrounds and permeates all our reading of the Bible, even if we don't want it to. It's a fact of reading.

OUR DISAGREEMENTS OF THE MOMENT FOCUS PARTICULARLY ON THE MATTER OF SEXUALITY. SCRIPTURE BY ITSELF WON'T SETTLE THIS ISSUE FOR US. IS THERE A SPECIFIC PROHIBITION ON AT LEAST SOME SEXUAL ACTS BETWEEN TWO MEN? YES. IS THERE ANYTHING ON THE OTHER SIDE? YES, AGAIN.

### ... and reason

What is true of tradition is true of reason, too. Let me quote from our most distinguished theologian, Richard Hooker: "For whatsoever we believe concerning salvation by Christ, although the Scripture be therein the ground of our belief; yet the authority of man is, if we mark it, the key which openeth the door of entrance into the knowledge of the Scripture. The Scripture could not teach us the things that are of God unless we did credit men who have taught us that the words of Scripture do signify those things."

Someone may object, "Wait a minute. I've got a copy of the Bible right here. I can read it for myself." Yes and no. When you read a page of the Bible, you are always reading from the accumulation of centuries of study, thought, and reflection. What did this Hebrew word really mean in the 8th century B.C.? What did that Greek word mean in the 1st century A.D.? Why do New Testament writers sometimes quote the Hebrew scriptures in a form different from the one we know? What is the idea behind this odd expression in the original language? What is the correct text of this passage where the manuscripts do not all agree? What was going on at Corinth that disturbed Paul? Why was it such a problem that a woman with a hemorrhage touched Jesus? Where did the Revelation of John get all those strange images? What do they mean? Even if you are reading the scriptures in their original languages, you are reading them through the lens of reason—all our cumulative human learning about language, literature, history, and culture and all our long history of thought about philosophy, theology and ethics. Without reason, in fact, we not only couldn't read the Bible. We couldn't read at all. All reading is an exercise of reason.

### Tradition and reason: always tempered by Scripture

Tradition and reason, in turn, are also dependent on the Bible and on each other. As Anglicans, we look to the Bible to serve as a kind of brake on the free and unconstrained growth of tradition. Our official statements about the Bible are very clear on that. Its primary value, they say, is that of a limiting factor: "... Whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man [or woman, one presumes], that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation" (Article VI). Scripture is our pruning hook—and our compass as well. For tradition can not only grow too luxuriant; it can out and out lose its way at times. Then we

come back to Scripture to rediscover our center and direction.

Scripture also shapes our reasoning because it helps form our perspective on the world. We would not bother to be Christians if we did not think there was a profound revelation about God and the world to be found in the teaching of Jesus. We expect a lot from Scripture, and it demands much from us. If we find ourselves struggling with Scripture, often it's because Scripture itself requires it. The 20th Article tells us that the church is not allowed "so [to] expound one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another." Good. The church is not allowed to muddle the scriptures unnecessarily. But we'll still have to deal with the reality that this extraordinary collection of works written over more than a thousand years contains some real tensions within itself. There is, for example, a real tension between Paul's insistence in Galatians on the baptismal equality of men and women in Christ (3:23-29) and the insistence elsewhere in New Testament writings on the subordination of women (e.g., 1 Tim. 2:12-15). We do not create that tension. We find it in the scriptures. And because we expect that in Scripture we will hear the word of God, we have to work with the tension, to reason with it, to try to find in each era what it means for our life together.

Late in the last century, Brooke Foss Westcott wrote: "As the circumstances of men and nations change materially, intellectually, morally, the life [of faith] will find a fresh and corresponding expression. We cannot believe what was believed in another age by repeating the formulas which were then current. The greatest words change in meaning. The formulas remain to us a precious heritage, but they require to be interpreted. Each age has to apprehend vitally the Incarnation and the Ascension of Christ."

Now Westcott has been thought of down the years, by all sorts of Anglicans, not as a radical but as a model bishop, scholar and theologian. Yet, he was recognizing here something that is inevitable. Every age has its own questions, its own problems, its own language and, one hopes, its own God-given vision of our common human and Christian hope. And therefore every age has to grasp anew the vitality of the Incarnation and Ascension of Christ — and indeed of the Trinity, of the creation, of all the great and ancient Christian teachings. It takes Scripture, tradition, and reason, all three in intimate interaction, to help us rediscover the gospel life.

**Three-legged stool, three-ply yarn**

I'd like to suggest that we stop thinking of Scripture, tradition and reason solely with the image of a three-legged stool and start using, as well, the image of a three-ply yarn — the kind that needle pointers use. Yes, there are three distinct strands. But they all partake of the same dye. And the very process of spinning them has made them entangle themselves with one another in such a way that they do not like to come apart. You cannot, simply as a practical reality, read Scripture without the help of tradition and reason. You cannot safely follow tradition without reflecting on it with the help of Scripture and reason. You cannot reason as a Christian without being part of the ongoing tradition of the community and seeking the word of God in Scripture. The results of our theological reflection will always reveal the interaction of all three strands, even if we are not fully conscious of using them. And the way in which the three interact will never be predictable in a simple way.

WE RECITE THE OLD CREEDS. BUT WE LONG AGO REJECTED THE IDEA THAT ANY ONE THIS-WORLDLY VOICE COULD SETTLE OUR QUANDARIES. OUR TRADITIONAL CENTER IS NOT DOCTRINE; IT'S A COMMUNITY SEEKING THE WILL OF GOD.

Let me point to a few examples. One might be the matter of taking Sunday as the central day for Christian worship. The Bible repeatedly and solemnly commands the observance of the Sabbath, which is the period from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday. Nowhere, even in the New Testament, does it explicitly replace Sabbath observance with Sunday observance. A few denominations like the Seventh-Day Baptists and the Seventh-Day Adventists have gone back to the keeping of the Sabbath in obedience to scripture, but I doubt that most Anglicans feel much anxiety on the point. Here, tradition settles the question for us, even against Scripture.

Another example: Most of us probably have savings accounts or other accounts where we receive interest on money. The paying and receiving of interest is specifically forbidden in the Bible. It was forbidden in church tradition, too, until some time in the Middle Ages, when the economic system had undergone changes that made the biblical prohibition seem difficult to defend. Our own Anglican Reformers disapproved of it. Yet, today, while we may well differ among ourselves as to whether the modern institutions of banking are entirely a good thing or not, very few people in today's world try to get along entirely without them. Even the *mullahs* of Iran have been finding it difficult. Christians have allowed reason to take the lead on this one — though, by now, the acceptability of interest is virtually a tradition for us.

Another example: the American Revolution. The New Testament contains explicit admonitions to "honor the king" (1 Pet. 2:13-17; cf. Rom. 13:1-7, Titus 3:1). In 1776, we Americans decided not to do that any more — at least not in any literal way. Anglicans split down the middle on the issue and even killed one another over it. Many of us were Tories, including Samuel Seabury, who later became our first bishop. Others were Patriots, including William White, who later became our second bishop — not to mention a prominent layman named Washington. Part of the argument between them was about the scriptures: Which was more important, the specific command to honor the king or all that proclamation of liberty to be found in the Law and the Prophets? But another big part of the argument came from the changing political philosophy of the 18th century. Here again reason was a critical factor.

Another example: In the mid-19th century, American Christians of all sorts argued about the Bible and slavery. Some held that the Bible ordained slavery, others that the Bible

made it unthinkable. One of the pro-slavery writers was Bishop Hopkins of Vermont, who published a book in the middle of the Civil War maintaining that the Bible commanded the institution of slavery. Today, we're appalled that one of our forebears could make such an argument. But, for them, it was the same kind of difficult, distressing struggle that we are encountering on other issues in our own day. In this case, reason and one way of reading the Bible eventually prevailed over tradition and other ways of reading the Bible.

Currently, we Anglicans are still struggling over issues of racism and of the roles of women and men in the church. But our disagreements of the moment focus particularly on the matter of sexuality. Scripture by itself won't settle this issue for us. As often, there are tensions with the Bible. Is there a specific prohibition on at least some sexual acts between two men? Yes. Is there anything on the other side? Yes, again, for the prohibition is framed in the language of physical, ritual purity; and there are teachings in the gospels and in Paul that say the physical, ritual requirements of purity no longer apply to Christians. Even within the Old Testament, we encounter one male-male liaison that certainly sounds sexual (that of David and Jonathan) and nonetheless plays a critical role in salvation history.

EVEN IN TIMES WHEN OUR DISPUTES OCCASION DISTRESS, WE STRIVE TO STAY TOGETHER BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THAT GOD HAS CALLED US AND LOVED US.

Anglicans have traditionally read the scriptures in a way that prohibits honorable gay-lesbian partnerships. But Anglicans also have a tradition of asking, "Is the tradition always right? Or has it gone off on its own tangent in this matter?" In any case, we ask these questions in a new way that had not been raised before. Just as the questions about democracy had not really been asked until the 18th century and the questions about slavery until the 19th century, significant questions about racism, about the status of women, and about sexual orientation simply were not asked until our own time. Now that they are being asked, we have to seek appropriate answers that are continuous with Scripture and the faith of the church—and, as Westcott forewarned us, with the legitimate concerns of our own day. To find these answers, we will employ Scripture, tradition and reason in combinations that we will fully understand only as we work our way through the process.

**A unique kind of authority?**

When all is said and done, what is really central to Anglican faith? The central thing in our faith is a message known to us from Scripture: the proclamation of God's love for every one of us, of God's forgiveness which doesn't wait on us to be perfect, of God's open arms welcoming us home, of the opportunity this good news gives us to welcome one another as well. The truly distinct thing about Anglicanism, I think, is its strong grip on this last thing — the opportunity for Gospel community. Our church doesn't stand on a clear, eternally guaranteed system of doctrine. We recite the old creeds. But we long ago rejected the idea that any one this-worldly voice, whether papal or biblical, could settle our quandaries. Our traditional center is not doctrine; it's a community seeking the will of God. We know ourselves as a people called together by God, even through the most painful of dissensions. (And we've been through some real troubles: In the Revolution and the Civil War, remember, we actually killed one another over these issues.) Even in times when our disputes occasion distress, we strive to stay together because we believe that God has called us and loved us. We even hope that, somehow, that makes it possible for us to love one another. Our tradition, we expect, will ultimately prove to offer a unique kind of authority: a sturdy, stable three-legged stool to sit on and also a strong three-ply yarn to bind us together in unity. ●

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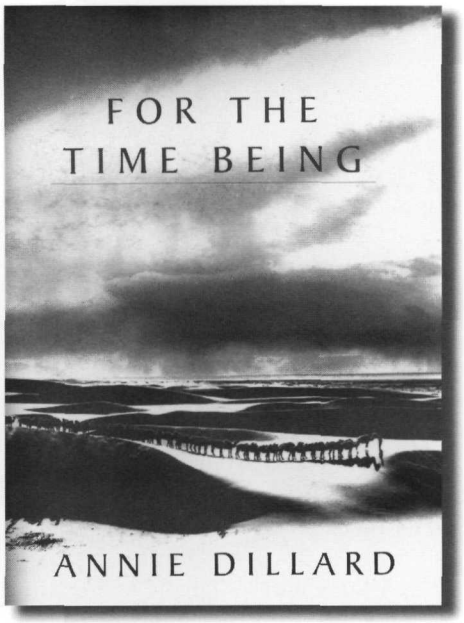
BOOK REVIEW

# For the time being

*by Anne E. Cox*




***For the Time Being***
**by Annie Dillard**
**(N.Y.: Alfred Knopf, 1999)**

DOUGLASS ADAMS, in *A Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* was content to let "42" be the answer to "life, the universe and everything." In *For The Time Being*, Annie Dillard intuits the answer in the relationship between rounded grains of sand, layers of dust, Hasidic dancers, galaxies and God; the testimony of the paleontologist Teilhard de Chardin, an Elvis-imitating skycap in Israel, Chinese Emperor Qin, the Shekinah — the divine Presence.

"Given things as they are, how shall one individual live?" she asks in her introductory note. And while Dillard explores the question more readily than she provides an answer, she does tip her hand in the book's title: We are, each individual one of us, "time beings" — living in this time, now. This book is for us.

Dillard's text skates between the big and the small. The "big" is the truth that individually, like single grains of sand, we don't matter; we humans are puffs, clouds that change and disappear in an instant. In the grand sweep of history, we each mean nothing.

Dillard looks at this reality — and the different statistics that can convey it — with wry amusement. "At any one time, the foam from breaking waves covers between 3 and 4 percent of the earth's surface. This acreage of foam — using the figure 4 percent — is equal to that of the entire continent of North America. By another coincidence, the U.S. population bears nearly the same relation to world population: 4.6 percent. The U.S. population, in other words, although it is the third-largest population among nations, is about as small a portion of the earth's people as breaking waves' white foam is to the planet's surface."

The numbers she stirs up are often sobering: Sixty million people die every year; 138,000 Bangladeshi drowned in a typhoon on April 30, 1991; every 110 hours, a million more humans arrive on the planet than die, but the dead outnumber the living, something like 85 billion to 5.9 billion.

Yet, in the face of this bigness, we have smallness — that is, we have the particularity of our lives, and the significance of every action, every thought, every person born on this earth. Witness the care every infant born in an obstetrics ward receives as Nurse Pat Eisberg washes and swaddles it.

But Dillard doesn't lead us into an innocent "his eye is on the sparrow" specificity. Rather, her tendency is to slam us up against specific horrors and injustices. She describes photographs of human birth defects in *Smith's Recognizable Patterns of Human Malformation*, fourth edition, spending particular time with the phenomenon of bird-headed dwarfs. Elsewhere, she reveals how in the 5th century Christians killed the lady Hypatia: "They stripped her flesh with oyster shells, and threw the shellfuls of flesh, 'quivering' in a fire."

We live in specificity, Dillard's knife-sharp descriptive method forces us to understand. We can imagine the bigness of the world, be numbed by the numbers, confused perhaps, or distressed, but the truth is that we must dwell in our own specific, incarnate and small situations. Genocide ennervates, but the death of one we love rips us apart.

Jesus, too, must have known the reality that we are puffs of clouds, lilies of the field, blades of grass as he counseled us not to worry about our lives, what we will eat or drink or wear (Mt. 6:25). We are free, then, to live fully in this physical reality.

Jesus could do the things that caused his death because he knew that whether he lived or died he was in God. That was the source of his authority. He was free. Nothing much matters, every act matters much. No wonder he taught in parables: The twist is too fast to capture in regular discourse. Truly incarnate living is astounding.

Dillard intimates that we all can choose to live this way. We can live free from the oppression of bigness and insignificance and because of this, we can live free to hunt the divine or holy in the world.

So she ends with her own sort of parable:"In Highland New Guinea, now Papua New Guinea, a British district officer named James Taylor contacted a mountain village, above three thousand feet, whose tribe had never seen any trace of the outside world. It was the 1930s. He described the courage of one villager. One day, on the airstrip hacked from the mountains near his village, this man cut vines and lashed himself to the fuselage of Taylor's airplane shortly before it took off. He explained calmly to his loved ones that, no matter what happened to him, he had to see where it came from."

When we feel impelled to strap ourselves to the airplane, I think, we'll know we've finally chosen to toss in our lot with God. ●

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*Witness contributing editor* ***Anne E. Cox*** *is an Episcopal priest who lives in Martinsville, Me., where she makes twig furniture and designs gardens.*

# A COMMITMENT

## Lay presidency and appeals to Catholic 'order'

*by Robert Tong*

APPEALS TO "CATHOLIC ORDER" OR CHURCH TRADITION FALL ON DEAF EARS HERE IN SYDNEY. THIS IS BECAUSE THESE CONCEPTS CANNOT BE SUSTAINED IN THE BIBLICAL TEXT.

THE LATEST REPORT from the Anglican\Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) is called "The Gift of Authority," a document which offers a biblical image (2 Cor. 1.19-20) as a key to understanding how the universal primacy of the pope is a gift to be shared (see <www.anglicancommunion.org>).

ARCIC argues that primacy is about authority and authority, rightly exercised, is a gift of God to bring reconciliation and peace. Christ's commission at the end of Matthew's Gospel authorizes his apostles to make disciples, baptize and teach. In a unique way those in succession to the apostles who are ordained to the ministry of bishops continue to exercise that authority.

Although past differences between the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches are recognized, the report urges that "the exercise and acceptance of authority in the Church is inseparable from the response of believers to the Gospel, how it is related to the dynamic interaction of Scripture and Tradition and how it is expressed and experienced in the Communion of the churches and the collegiality of their Bishops."

The local church, says the report, is centered on the bishop. Contrast this with Article 11 of the 39 Articles of Religion (agreed to in 1562 as a means of defining the Anglican view of the faith in light of Reformation controversies) where the "invisible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached and the Sacraments be duly administered."

Remember however, the Bishop of Rome, in exercise of his authority, still refuses recogni-

Jeff Sells

*The order of things ...as bishops at the 1998 Lambeth Conference prepare to discuss unity and diversity.*

tion of Anglican clerical orders — so of what value is an Anglican bishop? Is an Anglican bishop just a lay person and, by extension, is each celebration of the Eucharist by Anglican clergy really lay administration? And if celebration of the Mass is the heart of Roman Catholic belief and practice where is the genuine collegiality?

In October 1999 the Anglican Diocese of Sydney, Australia, which is predominantly evangelical in character (clergy serve an average of 60,000 church attenders in 260 parishes each Sunday; the archbishop is assisted by five regional bishops), made a preliminary response to the "Gift of Authority." It noted that ARCIC did not speak for the diocese and dissented from any notion that the Bishop of Rome had "a special ministry to discern truth" and that tradition had a "dynamic interdependence" with Scripture. The Diocesan Doctrine Commission will produce a full response for this year's synod (see <www.anglicanmediasydney.asn.au>). There will be little support for ARCIC.

Appeals to "Catholic order" or church tradition fall on deaf ears here in Sydney. This is because these concepts cannot be sustained in the biblical text. If you ask in Sydney, "What is church?" the answer runs like this: The word "church" translates the Greek *ekklesia,* which means assembly. Nearly every reference in the New Testament refers in its context to an actual meeting of believers. The first great congregation of believers occurred at Sinai around God who had just delivered his people from Egypt (Exodus 19). This pattern continues in the New Testament with Jesus building a congregation around himself (Matthew 16:18). The Epistles present the same picture. The church is a meeting with Christ as its head. Local assemblies of Christians are local manifestations of the perpetual meeting of believers around Christ in heaven. Thus, at the same time, there is the local (intermittent) church meeting and the continuous heavenly one (Ephesians 2:6 and Hebrews 12). This textual result permits a critique of notions of Catholic order, the authority of bishops, church tradition and denominational church structure.

### A vote for lay presidency

Although North Americans are familiar with the reality and caricature of the fundamentalist "Bible believing" Christian of the "deep south," it would be a mistake to dismiss Sydney Anglican Evangelicals in the same way. Serious theology undergirds both our practice — and innovation. The controversial vote by the Diocese of Sydney to allow lay persons and deacons to preside at the Holy Communion (which did not, however, receive the necessary assent of the Archbishop — in the name of Anglican unity) is symbolic of the theological perspective which has framed our debate on this issue for the past 10 years (see <www.acl.asu.au>). A Sydney theologian, Robert Doyle, puts it like this: "Since the Reformation there have been two competing views of spiritual reality. The first and dominant view is that of Roman Catholicism and Anglo-Catholicism, whether traditional or liberal. Here, the understanding of Christian ministry, or how God works in the world, is set in the context of a firm belief in a relentlessly sacramental universe. On this view, in a fundamental way, God works downwards through his creation to reveal himself and to redeem, through a hierarchy of sacraments or sacred symbols. ... Within this understanding grace flows down from God through Christ to the earthly church via the priestly performance of sacramental rites ... without the bishop or the priest as his sacramental deputy or vicar, there would be no valid holy communion. This older and dominant view of spiritual reality is that of Roman Catholicism and with the rise of Anglo-Catholicism in the 19th century it has also become the majority view in Anglicanism. ... [By contrast the Reformers] saw that God works in the world personally and directly by his word and Spirit. They based this on the promises of Christ, that when the Spirit comes to us, both the Father and the Son, all of God in his very person, comes and dwells and does his work in us. God is not 'at a distance' at the other end of a chain of sacraments."

Under the lay presidency legislation, deacons and laity, female and male, would have been authorized to "administer" the Holy Communion, there being nothing in Scripture to contradict this. In classic Anglicanism, the minister is minister of word and sacrament. Word precedes and explains sacrament. Without the word, the sacrament is meaningless. At ordination the minister is given a Bible (not a cup and bread) and exhorted to preach the word of God and to model his life on it.

Sydney's decision to vote in favor of lay presidency was no isolated act of bravado. In 1995 the Australian General (National) Synod authorized an additional prayer book for use alongside the *Book of Common Prayer* (1662) and an Australian prayer book (1978). Sydney representatives, outnumbered in the General Synod, were unable to delete passages they believed not agreeable to Scripture. As no General Synod measure takes effect in an Australian diocese unless specifically adopted, the 1995 prayer book was decisively rejected by the Sydney Synod.

Likewise, the issue of women priests and bishops. According to the "Eames Report on Women in the Episcopate" (Toronto, 1998), the Anglican Communion is now going through "a process of Reception" of women in these orders That is, a period of transition where a new order takes root. Given the longstanding Sydney commitment to biblical primacy — and the belief that Scripture stands in opposition to women priests and bishops (see <www.anglicanmediasydney.asu.au>) — Sydney is unlikely to receive this new teaching.

Is Sydney alone? Is Anglican commitment to Scripture now a pretence? Richard Holloway, Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church, apparently thinks so:

"The single most potent sign of [the Anglican Communion's departure from the commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture] has

been the ordination of women. There is far more in Scripture about the subordination of women than there is about the theological status of gay and lesbian people but we have come to terms with the ordination of women ... whatever is going on in the debate about homosexuality it cannot be mainly about Scripture because we have already shown great versatility in our interpretative approaches" (address at Derby University, 2/6/99).

But Sydney does not stand alone in the Anglican world. Deeply concerned at the apparent widespread American dissent from the Lambeth resolution on homosexuality and driven by an overriding commitment to the norms of Scripture, orthodox bishops have applied pressure on the Episcopal Church USA to be obedient to the Word of God (see <www.anglicanmediasydney.asu.au>).

And so the insistent biblical stance of Sydney Anglicans is unlikely to evaporate. Fuelled by scholars in the forefront of biblical commentary writing and a theological college full to bursting, trained men and women are taking up positions of full-time ministry.

Newman, Keble and Pusey in a few short years changed the face of Anglicanism (mostly!). Do the signs now point to an evangelical renewal? Will the old wineskin of the Anglican Communion bear the strain? The last word should remain with the gospel writers: "And the word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth" (John, 1:14). "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; ... and everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand ... and when Jesus finished these sayings the crowds were astonished at his teaching for he taught them as one who had authority and not as their scribes" (Matthew 7:24-28). ●

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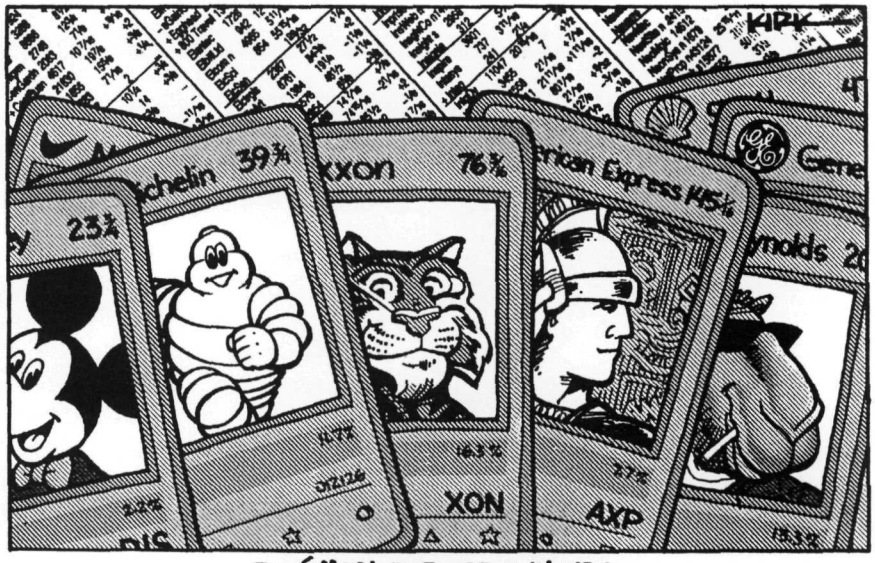
## SHORT TAKES




POKÉMON FOR GROWN-UPS

### Women and terminator technology

"The basmati rice which farmers in my valley have been growing for centuries is today being claimed as 'an instant invention of a novel rice line' by a U.S. Corporation called RiceTec," writes Vandana Shiva, of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology in New Delhi, India (*Resist*, 9-10/99). "The 'neem' which our mothers and grandmothers have used for centuries as a pesticide and fungicide has been patented for these uses by W.R. Grace, another U.S. Corporation.

"Women farmers have been the seed keepers and seed breeders over millennia. The basmati is just one among 100,000 varieties of rice evolved by Indian farmers. Diversity and perenniality is our culture of the seed. In Central India, at the beginning of the agricultural season, farmers gather at the village deity, offer their rice varieties and then share the seeds. This annual festival of 'Akti' rejuvenates the duty of saving and sharing seed among farming communities. It establishes partnership among farmers and with the earth.

"Intellectual property rights on seeds are, however, criminalizing this duty to the earth and to each other by making seed saving and seed exchange illegal. The attempt to prevent farmers from saving seed is not just being made through new IPR laws, it is also being made through the new genetic engineering technologies. Delta and Pine Land (now owned by Monsanto) and the USDA have established a new partnership through a jointly held patent to seed which has been genetically engineered to ensure that it does not germinate on harvest, thus forcing farmers to buy seed at each planting season.

"When we sow seed, we pray, 'May this seed be exhaustless.' Monsanto and the USDA on the other hand are stating, 'Let this seed be terminated, that our profits and monopoly be exhaustless.'

"There can be no partnership between this terminator logic which destroys nature's renewability and regeneration and the commitment to continuity of life held by women farmers of the Third World."

### A 'second round of feudalism'

In a world where corporations wield more power than governments, our notion of democracy must expand to include economic life, says Frances Moore Lappe, anti-hunger activist and co-founder of the Vermont-based Center for Living Democracy.

"At the time of our nation's founding, for the majority of people, economic life consisted mainly of managing one's family farm or shop," Lappe says in a Nov., 1999 interview in *The Sun*. "In that environment, it made sense that people thought of econom-

ics as private and politics as public. But what made sense then is now standing in our way, preventing us from embracing economic life as part of democratic public life. Now 'private' corporations have more public impact than governments.

"The result is that, while economics exerts a powerful influence on political decisions about jobs, the environment, and so forth, we have almost no voice in the process. We have some minimal voice in politics, but virtually none in the economic system. ...

"We are now experiencing what I think of as a second round of feudalism, where the corporation has replaced the manor. Until we see this new economic structure for what it is — a world-governing system that exists alongside governments but outside democratic accountability — we cannot create life-serving societies."

## Earth-friendly choices that count

Automobiles and meat rank first on the Union of Concerned Scientists' list of consumer choices that harm the environment, according to a new book reviewed in *Timeline* (9-10/99). *The Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Choices: Practical Advice from the Union of Concerned Scientists* by Michael Brower and Warren Leon (Three Rivers Press, N.Y., 1999) evaluates "everything people buy and use — from distilled liquors to shoes," and "shows how each thing impacts the environment in four areas: global warming, air pollution, water pollution, and alteration of natural habitats.

"Personal automobiles and light trucks are the worst overall environmental offenders," reviewer Mac Lawrence writes. "Meat and poultry come in second overall, causing 20 percent of 'common' (not toxic) water pollution, and using 860 million acres for livestock grazing and animal feed.

"Conventional cultivation of fruits, vegetables and grains comes next on the harmful list because of the large quantities of pesticides, herbicides, artificial fertilizers, and irrigation water used. Then come home heating, hot water and air conditioning; household appliances and lighting; home construction; and household water and sewage."

Some choices — including paper or plastic grocery bags, cloth or disposable diapers, or occasional use of disposable plates, cups and utensils — actually make little difference, the authors say.

The bottom-line advice? "Choose a home no larger than you really need in a location that involves as little driving as possible. Buy a car that gets good gas mileage. Eat less meat, buy certified organic produce, install efficient lighting, buy efficient appliances, choose an electricity supplier offering renewable energy, buy things made of recycled materials, and be a 'weight watcher' — all things being equal, the purchase of a heavy item will have a larger impact than the purchase of a light one."

## Pentagon.com

The Pentagon is now offering "excess defense articles" on-line, the Council for a Livable World Education Fund reports.

"The Pentagon, not about to miss the opportunities provided by e-commerce, has created a 'virtual warehouse' web site to assist in the sale, transfer or reuse of excess U.S. military arms parts, vehicles and electronics equipment. The Defense Reutilization and Marketing Service (DRMS) is the Pentagon office tasked with disposing of billions of dollars of Excess Defense Articles on the Internet.

"The DRMS site (<www.drms.dla.mil>) services U.S. government agencies, the armed services, and foreign arms buyers.

"The ultimate goal for the web site, the Pentagon notes, is to create a completely automatic process: sales would be made directly from the military agency housing the excess equipment to the foreign customer (which we are assured can only occur if you represent a foreign government and have a valid user-ID), thus eliminating the current intermediary role of DRMS.

"While most items currently for sale on-line are spare weapons parts and some items easily purchased in a military surplus store, our fear is where this might be going. Will the Pentagon one day offer small arms and ammunition on-line? And how secure are those user-ID numbers? Are they changed when the foreign officials leave the military? Can they be given, or sold, to rebel groups or other non-state actors?"

## U.S. child soldiers

According to the international definition of "child soldiers" to mean anyone under 18, the U.S. uses children in combat, the Center for Defense Information reports.

"Although conscription is limited to those 18 and over, the U.S. military has a long-standing practice of recruiting youths under the age of 18 and allowing them to be designated to fill combat positions. The Pentagon opposes the Optional Protocol [to the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child] because the U.S. wants to preserve its current practice. According to Department of Defense statistics, under-18s make up only one-half of one percent of the total U.S. military force — approximately 7,000 troops. But U.S. 17 year-olds did serve in Bosnia and the Gulf War." ●

PROFILE

# Offering a Gospel-based, personal challenge to wrongful authority

*by Marianne Arbogast*



WITHIN THE FAITH-BASED peace movement, the voices of Jim and Shelley Douglass carry a great deal of authority. Co-founders of the Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action, next to the Trident nuclear submarine base near Seattle, Wash., the Douglasses helped build a community of resistance that spanned 250 towns and cities along the railroad tracks traveled by the "White Train" which transported nuclear weapons to the base. Living in a house so close to the tracks that it shook with each passing train, they vigiled at the base, engaged their neighbors who worked there in serious and respectful dialogue and went to jail repeatedly for praying on the forbidden side of the fence. Through their writing and speaking — Jim Douglass has written four books on the theology of nonviolence and, with Shelley Douglass, co-authored a fifth — they have offered support and guidance to many whose consciences have put them in conflict with the authority of the state.

Now living in Birmingham, Ala., Shelley Douglass runs a Catholic Worker house while Jim Douglass pursues research for a book challenging the official version of the King and Kennedy assassinations — an unpopular subject, he attests, not only with the mainstream media but in progressive circles as well. Last November, when a jury in a civil trial brought by the King family found U.S. government agencies implicated in King's death, the verdict was almost universally ignored or discredited.

"I think it's hard, even for people in the peace and justice movement, to accept systemic evil in our immediate presence," Jim Douglass says. "We can talk about the CIA in Guatemala or the Middle East or Cuba assassinating people, but it seems to be impossible for us to accept that happening in the U.S. — which I think is naive. When Archbishop Romero was shot, the people of El Salvador didn't say, 'There goes another lone nut killing a prophet.' They understood the source of his death.

"I THINK THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY IS THE COMMUNITY WE HAVE WITH OTHER HUMAN BEINGS — AND IF CIVIL AUTHORITY SEEMS TO BE VIOLATING THAT AND I FEEL LIKE I CAN DO SOMETHING TO STOP IT, THEN I DO IT."

*— Shelley Douglass*

"If we don't take King's death seriously, we don't take his life seriously, either. King was killed because he had moved beyond civil rights to a condemnation of the war in Vietnam and an organizing of the Poor Peoples' Campaign, whose purpose was to shut down Washington, D.C. until the U.S. government would agree to eliminate poverty. He envisioned a global poor people's campaign, which would dislocate the functioning of cities across the world without destroying them. That was taken seriously by people who control wealth and that's the issue at the center of the questions about the King assassination."

Both Jim and Shelley Douglass credit the Catholic Worker with helping to shape their understanding of the Gospel and its challenge to wrongful authority.

Shelley Douglass, who grew up in a CIA family posted to Switzerland, Pakistan and then Germany, was surprised when she returned to a U.S. that failed to match the picture she had been given.

"My family was Christian and we read the New Testament and I took civics at army high schools in Germany. When I came back to the States in the early 1960s I didn't know about segregation because that wasn't something that you read about in the military press overseas. It seemed obvious to me that segregation was wrong and we had a Christian and civic duty to do something about it, and the same for the Vietnam war."

As a high school student, Shelley Douglass had been drawn to Catholicism by the Latin mass, which struck her as a stable alternative to her family's practice of changing denominations with each move, going wherever services were held in English. Because her parents were opposed, she had promised to wait until she was 18 to become Catholic.

"By the time I turned 18 they weren't using the Latin any more, but once we came home one of the first things I discovered was the Catholic Worker and that more than made up for the Latin. Here were people doing what I thought the gospels said to do."

Authority in the Catholic Worker community is linked with responsibility, she says.

"We tend to call ourselves anarchists in the Catholic Worker movement, which does not mean that everybody goes around and does just what they want to do. It comes from the personalist philosophy, that each of us is personally responsible. When you see something that needs doing, whether it's mopping the bathroom floor or going out on the picket line, then you do it."

As the sole permanent resident at Mary's House, a house of hospitality for the homeless (the Douglasses maintain another house where Jim Douglass can continue his writ-

ing), Shelley Douglass finds herself the main decision-maker.

"It's a little scary because I call the shots and other folks don't have that power. I hope when people cooperate it's not because they're afraid I'm going to make them move out, but because it makes sense not to do drugs and to be here for dinner, to take care of each other. If I have authority, I would hope to have the kind of authority that comes from the inside and from who I am. That's the authority I recognize in my life. The people I look to are not necessarily the people with the titles, but the people I see who are living out what they believe."

In decisions on matters such as civil disobedience (she is planning a trip to Iraq this spring with the Fellowship of Reconciliation, of which she is past national chairperson), Shelley Douglass says she looks "inside — how it feels in my gut," as well as to Scripture and community discernment.

"I think the ultimate authority is the community we have with other human beings — and if civil authority seems to be violating that and I feel like I can do something to stop it, then I do it."

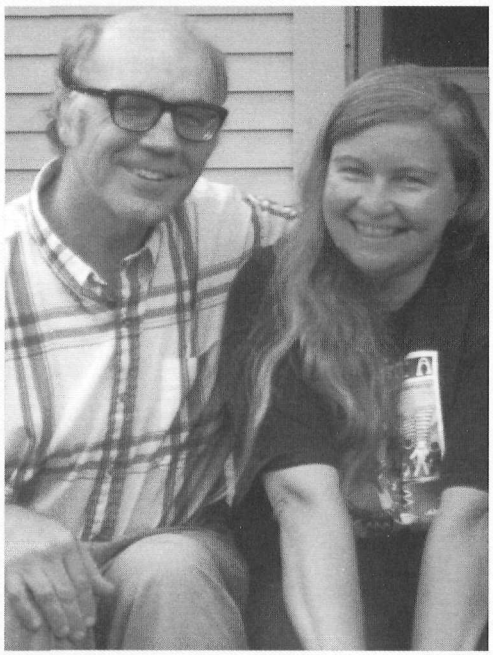
Firmly committed to nonviolence, she stresses the Gandhian principle that "everyone has a piece of the truth — which means the people on the Trident base, or the government of Iraq, or even perhaps the U.S. government. And nobody's perfect, so no matter how deeply I feel about something, I could still be wrong. I may not know all the facts, or I may be interpreting things incorrectly, or I may not be acting wisely on what I know. It's a difficult thing to keep as a duality, because you have to believe pretty strongly that you're right, in order to risk arrest or jail."

Jim Douglass discovered the Catholic Worker after a stint in the army, which he joined after leaving a nuclear physics program at the University of California in Berkeley.

"I kept turning in directions where I didn't have any sense of the end and wound up reading and meeting Dorothy Day. That brought me into an understanding of the gospels. It was through the question of nuclear weapons that I came to nonviolence, because how could one be a Christian and agree to the destruction of all life on earth? That was inconceivable when the question was raised to me by the Catholic Worker."

Taking up theological studies on war and peace, Jim Douglass found himself in Rome during the Second Vatican Council, where he advised bishops who were shaping the document to recognize conscientious objection as an option for Catholics.

"I talked to as many bishops as I could who seemed open to the question and, although I was a person of no import and didn't even have an advanced degree in theology, they listened to me more than I could have imagined, because there were very few



theologians who had dealt with that question," he says. "I was able to work on speeches for some of the bishops, and thanks to a lobbying group that included Eileen Egan, Jean and Hildegard Goss-Mayr, Dorothy Day and, at a distance, Thomas Merton, the bishops did reach a position that turned the church in a new direction on the issue of war and peace."

He describes his relationship with official church authority as "ambiguous."

"I've fasted in support of the pope going to Bosnia and now to Iraq because I believe he has a conscience and a voice that can go beyond all governmental authorities in this world. When he uses it as he did, for example, in Cuba, it's a voice that can transform situations, and that's a voice right out of the Gospel. But on the other hand, when the Vatican demeans gay and lesbian people or refuses to recognize the priesthood of women, the Vatican has rejected the Gospel."

Shelley Douglass, who once considered being ordained in the United Church of Canada, says that she would not now choose ordination — even if it were open to Catholic women — unless church structures changed radically.

"It makes no sense to me for one person to be this sort of supreme being in a parish and it isn't something I'd want to be part of. But when it comes down to feeding the family, being able to consecrate the Eucharist ... someday, if things were transformed, if I were still alive, maybe."

She distinguishes between power and authority.

"Whereas the structure in the church has all the power, they don't have all the authority. What is it they said about Jesus? — 'He taught with authority.' That kind of authority comes from the integrity of a person's life. I do take the teaching of the church seriously, because it's a body of tradition that comes down from our ancestors. Ideally they all go together — the people who have authority in my life, the teaching of the church, Scripture and my own gut feeling."

Jim Douglass also speaks of an authority of those who suffer.

"The experience of being in Iraq four times since the Gulf War has made it impossible for me to read headlines about Saddam Hussein without thinking of the 22 million other people in that country. I think that's an authority that needs to be at the center of our foreign policy so that it becomes, as A.J. Muste said, a foreign policy for children. The suffering of Iraqi children in hospitals that I visited, who die because their water systems are full of sewage and they have no medicines to deal with the illnesses that come from the consequences of war and the result of U.S./U.N. sanctions — that's an authority that has touched me probably more deeply than anything else in recent years." ●

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Paul Caponigro—Stonehenge England 1967



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