

HOSPITALITY

Volume 3, No. 4

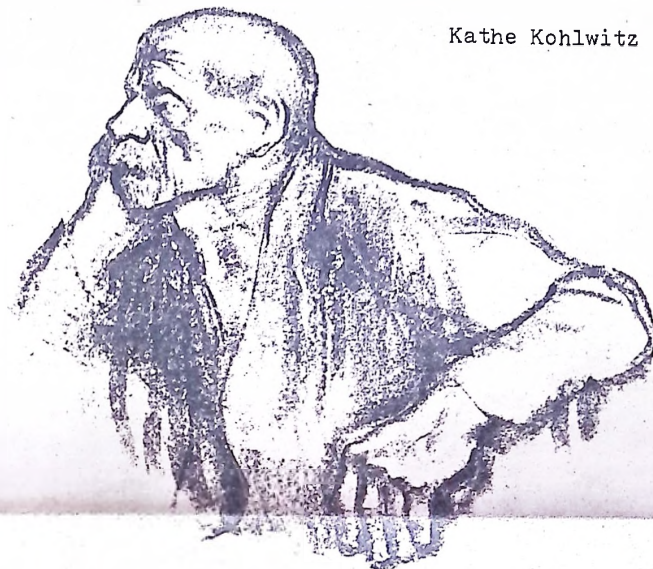
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REPRESSION of the GOSPEL in the United States

by Ed Loring



Kathe Kohlwitz

Holy Week is a very important season at the Open Door. We look forward to it from Ash Wednesday when we gather at 6:00 A.M. for the burning of our sins and the marking of a cross upon our foreheads with the ashes of our confessions. This year we spent Palm Sunday at the Powerhouse Church of God in Christ. I preached at the 11:00 A.M. service and Murphy preached in the evening. John and Robert joined Murphy as the Open Door singers provided music for both services. On Wednesday evening we celebrated with a Seder meal; the Haggada pointed us toward social justice issues in the criminal justice arena. On Maunday Thursday we washed one another's feet and then served one another the body and blood of our suffering Lord. Good Friday (what a terrible name!) was a full fast day, so we gathered in the evening for mutual support and prayers for the world. Our April 1st vigil in Central City Park and the lengthy cold weather in April brought an urgent sense to our prayers and fasting as we worshipped in the midst of homeless and hungry people. Good Friday was very painful for me. I could not get warm all day and I slept in two pair of socks, sweat pants, a thermal undershirt, and my stocking cap. Murphy put two extra blankets on the bed. On Saturday we struggled to be still and quiet, and then the day of victory finally arrived!! Off to Butler Street CME Church we went to join with our friends in sharing good tidings of great joy; HE IS RISEN INDEED!!! On Easter Sunday evening we began our time together with a covered dish meal. Most of us ate or drank what we had given up for Lent. Carolyn brought me a big carton of ice cream! After supper Murphy led us in worship and the eucharist. Holy Week was wonderful and empowering to us in our little community. But we did have our problems.

We work very hard for Hannah and Christina - our two little girls - to meet and know the Lord Jesus Christ. It is our community's prayer that these little girls will grow up and accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, following him in a life of discipleship as they work for the Kingdom of God to come on earth as it is in heaven.

The resurrection is the most important event in the Bible and all of human history. We want our children and ourselves to focus upon Jesus the risen Lord during the Easter season. However, the catechetical questions that seeped through our door during the days of Seder meals, fasting, footwashing, and prayers were such as these: Is the bunny coming to you this week, Christina? Hannah, where is your basket? Girls, how many eggs do you hope to get? Do you like chocolate? Did you get a new dress for church on Sunday? Since we have no TV, and because we parents and parenting figures do not mention these issues, the little ones were not too diverted from all the activity around the event of their good friend Jesus. To keep the Lord in view during Easter season, to find a place to reflect upon the crucifixion and the resurrection is not only difficult, but it seems out of place in our society. This situation calls for some changes in the way we live.

The more deeply I probe into the scriptures and the more clearly I understand the agenda of the American nation around such places as labor pools, blood banks, and Grady Hospital, the

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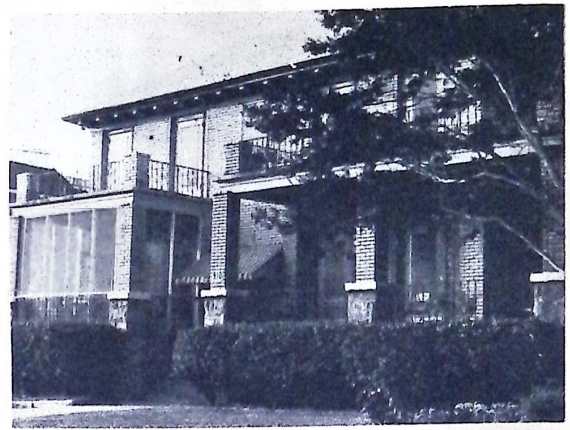
clearer it becomes that there is wide-spread repression of the gospel in the United States. This repression takes place in a wide variety of ways. I would like to mention two of them.

First, American cultural values and the economic system of the United States smother the Biblical meaning of Christmas. Pope John Paul II said in his Christmas address of 1982 that the birth of Jesus is a remembrance and acknowledgement of the poverty to which the church and believers are called. Jesus was not simply born. He was born a Jew. And he was born a poor Jew in a barn, because there was no room for him in the inn. For those of us who are disciples of Jesus this is one of the most important facts concerning God's presence among us. This barn-birth is more important than the virgin birth or the exact dating of the moment. Jesus' birth in a barn tells us much about who our God is and how our God operates in this world. Jesus' birth was a very political act pointing toward the agenda of God in the world and the ways in which God's people will live and serve and die. God is on the side of the poor and oppressed peoples, and in Jesus Christ God joins in solidarity with the poor from the moment of birth. This is the message of the Christmas story.

To teach our children that there is a Santa Claus who brings presents according to whether they've been bad or good is a lie. To invest in an economic system which must have record end-of-the-year sales by making Christmas the major consumer event of the fiscal year is injustice to the poor and blasphemy toward God. To structure a holiday around the birth of God on earth where there is more death on the highways than any other season, more liquor consumed, more suicides, and greater loneliness than at any other time of the year is to expose our idolatry of death and our worship of ourselves.

Beneath this misappropriation of the Christmas message, however, lies repression. The image of Santa Claus has taken the place of Jesus' birth in a barn precisely because we are safer with Santa than with Jesus. Anyone supporting our foreign policy in Latin America would be opposed to a God who chooses to side with the poor of this world. Santa, feeling good with a coke in one hand and a cup of coffee in the other, with a bag full of toy guns and video games strapped upon his back, is the one who displaces the poor child Jesus during the Christmas season. The truth of the gospel message, which is Good News to the poor, is lost, is silenced, is repressed in a land at war with poor people, while the culture seeks for the one true painless way to lose weight.

Disciples of Jesus Christ must refuse to be seduced into the repressive regime of Christmas control. The only way to say NO to Santa Claus is to side with the poor in their oppression and degradation. Disciples must say NO to Santa, not only in December but all the year long, as we struggle to change an exploitive economic system which leaves more and more people in barns, on the streets, and in prisons.



HOSPITALITY is a regular publication of the Open Door Community, (P.C.U.S), Inc., an Atlanta community of Christians called to ministry with the homeless poor and with prisoners, particularly those on death row. Subscriptions are free. A newspaper request form is included in each issue. Manuscripts are welcomed. Inclusive language editing is standard. For more information about the life and work of the Open Door and about others involved in ministry to Atlanta's homeless, please contact any of the Resident Partners, listed below with their current administrative functions:

Murphy Davis - Southern Prison Ministry Director
Carolyn Johnson - Volunteer Co-ordinator
Rob Johnson - Treasurer, HOSPITALITY Editor
Ed Loring - Correspondence, Building, & Resident Volunteer Co-ordinator

The second point concerning the repression of the gospel to which I wish to speak is the ideological function of the translations of the scriptures. Most poor and less educated people with whom I work love the King James Version of the Bible. I find this to be true out on the streets, inside the Open Door, and within the prisons where I visit. The King James Version is certainly a beautiful translation. It is, nonetheless, almost impossible to understand the import of the scriptures, especially toward justice in the political and economic realms, unless one is well educated in Elizabethan English. It is clearly to the advantage of those who want to keep the poor poor and to keep the oppressed oppressed to have people reading the King James Version of the Bible. This is not only true for politicians, police, wardens and the stock market investors, but it is also true of preachers and social workers and other professionals who want to control the poor for either personal gain or social control. In the United States we have always sought to keep the poor and oppressed ignorant of the scriptures. For this reason during the last century many states in the nation passed legislation

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Volunteers from Atlanta area night shelters are encouraged to mark SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 29th on their calendars. Between 9am and 3:30 pm at MORNINGSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH the Christian Council of Metro Atlanta & others will sponsor a time of theological reflection & spiritual renewal related to hospitality ministry. For more information call Joan Leonard at 881-9890

Volunteer Recognition

by Carolyn Johnson

Mary and Bill Simpson have been preparing supper almost every week at The Open Door since February 1982. Although they are "retired" from particular jobs--Bill from Sears; Mary from social work with the Greensboro (NC) schools--they continue to work hard serving others. They are active members of Eastminster Presbyterian Church in Stone Mountain and are currently spending many hours working with a Cambodian refugee family sponsored by the church. Mary does volunteer work with The Warren Memorial Boy's Club and both Mary and Bill correspond regularly with a prisoner at Angola (Louisiana). Mary says they love working with people and they find the work inspirational at The Open Door. They have two children and three grandchildren (with another "on the way") and they have developed loving friendships with our children, Hannah and Christina.



Repression (Cont. from page 2)

forbidding slaves to learn to read or to have their own worship services. Today we do a similar work by keeping the poor from decent public education. In Atlanta, the lack of funds for EOA to continue the 20-year-old Head Start program this summer in Grady Homes is a spiritual and Biblical issue deep in the American tradition of controlling the poor.

Another problem with the bible, as we have it available to us, is the modern translations. Translators must produce Bibles for companies who will publish them. Publishers want translations that will sell. (Many Bibles are sold at Christmas, and even Santa has been known to leave a pocket New Testament beside a G.I. Joe doll.) Therefore the truth of God is often put in tension with the demands of sales at the market place. A non-sexist translation which adequately translated the Hebrew and Greek regarding issues of wealth, peace, and human relationships would hardly make the best seller list as the bible often does in the USA. In fact, the Hebrew and Greek translations are still too much for some people even with status-quo affirming editions that are now available, so they turn to insipid paraphrases which give comfort to those who would have both Santa and Jesus, both God and Mammon.

A final note concerning Bible translations. The Bible teaches us that truth comes from the bottom up, from the outcast into society, from the weak to the strong. In fact Jesus often taught in parables precisely so that the well educated and powerful people could not understand the secrets of the Kingdom of God. The translators of the Hebrew and Greek texts are most often people who have little in common with the poor. They are men and women, brilliant of intellect and well intentioned of heart, who reside at universities and seminaries, often protected by the institution's own police force which carries guns

and has the authority to shoot and to arrest. These translators are well protected from the reality of the oppressed and the cries of the poor. Thus, they attempt to grasp the meaning of a document which promises that its content is most available to the sick not the well; therefore their work fits into the mold of a society which has displaced the barn-born Christ with the coke-carrying Santa. When the product must be published for the author to keep her job or receive his tenure, the radicality of a few Greek words may well pale in significance.

The consequence of these forms of repression of the gospel is a church which comes closer to the mainstream of American culture than to the Bible. There is confusion in the land as to who is the Lord (see the article in this issue by John Fickens), and many Christians believe that the bible actually sustains Reagan's foreign policy, justifies capital punishment, and is in accord with an economic system which produces mass poverty within the First World and mass dependence and death in the Third World.

Every Wednesday morning, Ash Wednesday included, John boils 200 eggs at 6:00 A.M. He does not color them, but he does go hippity hoppity down town to the Butler Street CME Church. Here he and others give the eggs to hungry men and women. He carries the eggs in a soup pot not an Easter basket, and his heart breaks as he gives an egg and grits to a dying man who has become very old in 40 years. John gets back to the Open Door about 9:15 ready to work in the clothes closet. He never saw a bunny nor an old man from the North Pole. John saw Jesus, the man for whom there is no room in downtown Atlanta. John saw Jesus, the man who is crucified on the cross of hunger and nailed to the tree of homelessness. But John returns hopeful, sometimes even joyful. For down in the basement at Butler Street Church he looked up and saw his Lord arising. Every now and then Hannah or Christina walk up to John and innocently ask: "John, what have you been doing?" Hallelujah and amen.

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When Mama Goes to Prison

by Murphy Davis

"It was two years before I saw my child for the first time since the hospital. My family was seated in the lobby of the administration building and when I came out and tried to hold my baby she screamed and would continue to scream every time I approached her throughout the entire visit. I left the visit unable to speak and went back to my dormitory and laid my head on the lap of a friend and cried for what seemed to be an eternity. She and I never discussed what happened at the visit--I guess we both just understood, as she has two children of her own."

Sharon Smolick, an ex-prisoner quoted in Women Behind Bars

Most women in the Georgia prison system are mothers. Almost all are poor; and often they were--before prison--the sole source of economic support for their children. Most women sentenced to prison are there for economic (non-violent) crimes; bad checks, forgery, shoplifting.

When a mother goes to prison, care of her children must be arranged. In occasional situations, a father is able to provide this care. More often the children are placed with another family member. If such arrangements are not an option (and it is not an option in a significant number of situations) the mother must sign her children over to state foster care.

Wherever the children are placed, visitation is generally a problem. The state women's prison is located in Hardwick, Georgia, a rural area inaccessible by public transportation. If a family does not own a car, getting to the prison for designated visiting hours can be an insurmountable problem. If children are in foster care there is usually little push to find transportation for the children to visit.

When visits are accomplished, they are for a two-hour period in a visitation room furnished only with tables and chairs. There is no play area or equipment and therefore little to ease what can sometimes be an awkward and painful time for all concerned.

Little wonder that mother and children often come out of the prison experience as near-strangers.

Every year a number of women give birth to their babies while in prison. For the birthing time, there are presently two options; 1) Depending on the "nature of the crime," length of sentence, and if the pregnant woman has a place to go, the Pardons and Parole Board may allow a furlough of about six weeks. During that time a woman may return to her home, give birth, and spend any remaining time with her baby. Then the mother returns to prison and the baby stays with family or friends. 2) If a furlough is not granted, the woman gives birth at the Macon Medical Center. Within two to three days of birth the mother returns to the prison and the baby is "placed" with family, friends, or foster care.

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Neither of these options provides an adequate opportunity for bonding to begin between the mother and child. It is generally acknowledged that the first weeks and months of a baby's life are a critical time for the bonding process to occur. Separation at a very early age can irreparably damage a child's normal developmental sequence. To ask hospital personnel, foster parents, or even another family member to provide the primary parenting relationship is an unlikely expectation.

Clearly there are other ways to deal with women prisoners, their newborn babies, and their older children. New York has had a nursery at the Bedford Correctional Institution for Women for the past forty years. In 1980-81 the Florida Correctional Institution at Lowell maintained a cottage for 10 mothers and their eleven babies under one year of age. The Federal Correctional Institution at Pleasanton, California has an experimental nursery program. The Tennessee Women's Prison allows children to come into the prison to spend weekends with their mothers.

But it is important not to lose sight of the facts. We are talking primarily about women who have not committed violent crimes. Most are being punished for petty economic offenses. Is this worth the break-up of families? Is this worth the separation of mothers and infants shortly after birth causing untold heartache in the present and unknown problems for mother and child in the future? Or could we not seek out community-based alternatives for these women that would allow them to keep their babies with them?

LaVerne Ford, a former warden of the Georgia Prison for Women, once said that 80 percent of the women in her prison should not be there. It is probably not so different today. There must be a better way. *

(This article first appeared in The Trumpet Dec. 1981, published by the Clearinghouse on Georgia Prisons and Jails)

5 The Pornography of Power

I overheard a conversation in our soup kitchen the other day. It might have been like any other conversation one might hear in a soup kitchen, often just harmless banter designed to pass the time away, except that this one decidedly stuck out in my mind.

The most vocal man in the group was talking about the former President of the United States, Richard Nixon. The reason I know this is because he repeatedly used the words "Tricky Dicky" to describe him. That in itself might have been humorous, but the rest of the conversation was not.

As nearly as I can recall he was saying that Richard Nixon was a great thief because he could steal and get away with it. He went on to say that he wished he knew what this man knew, that is to say - how to do almost anything without getting caught. And the way he talked - and this is what struck me so strongly - I almost felt as if this young black man was holding up perhaps the most corrupt President in our history as some sort of role-model, a person to be emulated.

What did I expect? Why was I so shocked? I don't know, perhaps it would have been balm to this white liberal's heart to hear this young man from the street denounce our former President in the strongest terms possible, even to loathe and despise him. Instead, he praised him as a shrewd and knowledgeable statesman. God almighty, what have we wrought on ourselves in this nation?

After doing this kind of work for several years now I have gotten over much of the starry-eyed idealism I started out with when I decided in 1981 to commit myself full time to the works of peace and justice. I have gotten over much

by Bill McCormick

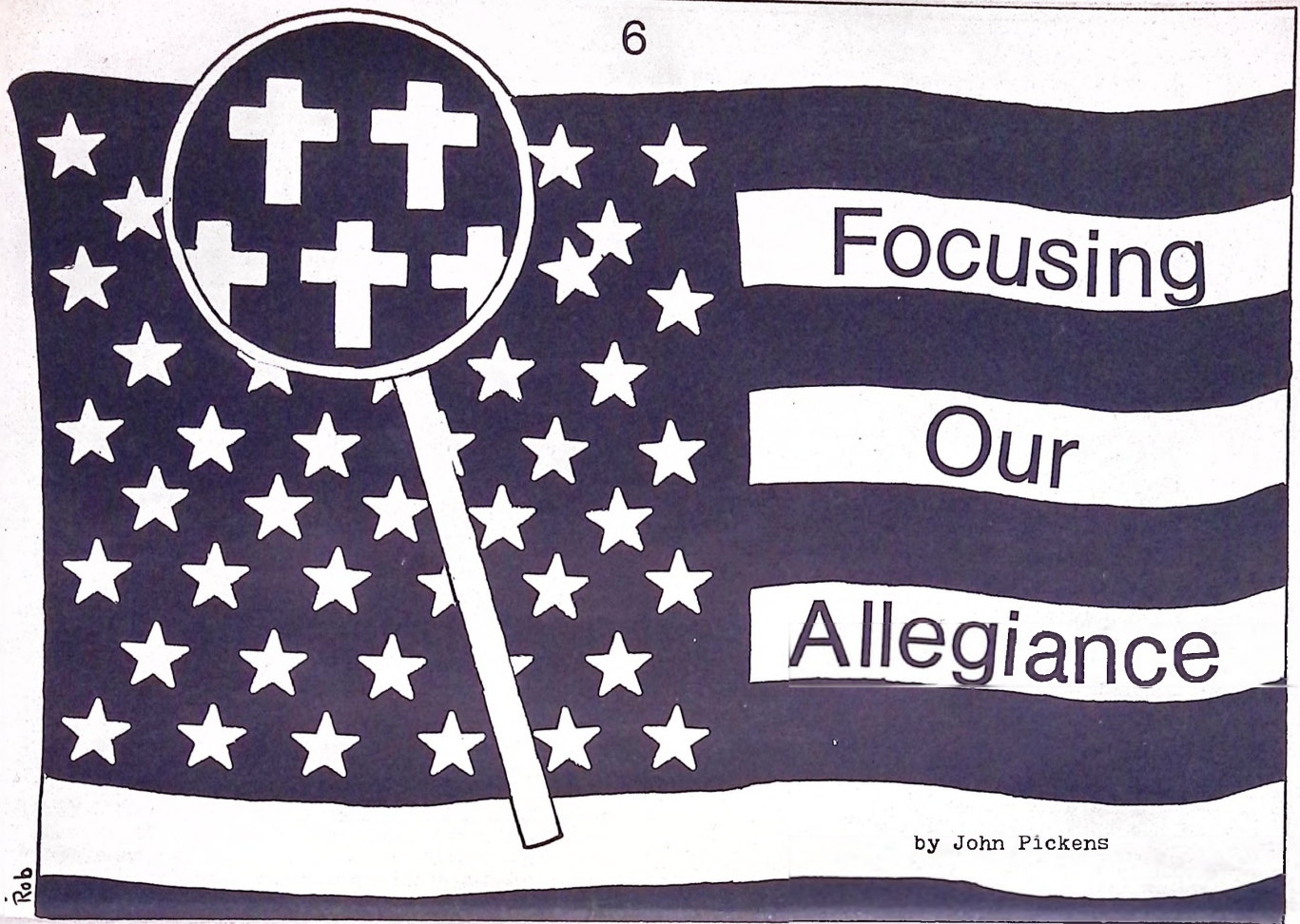
of my romanticism of the poor and their poverty (which certainly is not romantic to them), and I have found that they are really people no better or worse than myself, though decidedly more down on their luck to be sure. I have ceased to be outraged when the poor are not immediately grateful for the soup, clothes, or shelter we give them, although often they are. I have learned the "harsh and dreadful" truth of St. Vincent de Paul's statement: "It is only by your love the poor will forgive you the bread you give them." But to hear a seemingly unemployed person living on the streets praise Richard Nixon... well, this was almost too much for me to bear.

So I have come to the conclusion that there is a direct relationship between what goes on at the top and bottom (and middle) of our society, and that one group cannot be isolated from another. By what double standard do I expect the poor and needy to trip over themselves to express their gratitude to us when I know and they know that the only reason I have always had a nice home and plenty to eat is because of an inherently unjust system that provides for the greed of a small group of people in the northern, industrialized countries at the expense of the needs of the majority of people who are impoverished and often hungry throughout the world. And then I begin to see more clearly why when the U.S. was pursuing a brutally wreckless military adventure in Southeast Asia the black ghettos in this country were in flames, or that native american peoples were demanding that their lives and culture not be snuffed out by

(Continued page 8 - Power)



Photo - Rufus Wysong from Homelessness in America: A Forced March to Nowhere, Mary Ellen Hombs and Mitch Snyder. The Community for Creative Nonviolence. 1982



by John Pickens

In recent weeks several events and readings have made me very aware that as residents of this nation and as disciples of Jesus Christ, we need to proclaim even more publicly and strongly that our ultimate allegiance and loyalty is to God and Jesus Christ, rather than to our nation state called "The United States of America" and all the powers and forces of death which are promoted and valued by our nation and society at large. Such proclamations are necessary to demonstrate our resistance and unwillingness to being conformed to the instruments of death and violence which are so much a part of the actions and words of our nation and our society. Additionally, our allegiance must be so sharply focused to prevent our falling into the trap of equating God's will with America's will and then blindly believing that the actions of our national government both at home and abroad somehow have divine sanction and authority. As used in this article, the word "allegiance" means one's sense of devotion and loyalty to a person, group, nation, religion, etc. that commands a priority in his/her life.

I will now describe the recent events and readings which have stimulated my thoughts on this topic. Several weeks ago I attended the bi-annual gathering of four southeastern Christian communities held at Koinonia Partners in Americus, Georgia. During this gathering, I had occasion to talk with one of the Koinonia partners who for years now has worked to achieve quality education for the black, school age population in and around Americus. His efforts have constituted a force of resistance against the all-white county school board. He related to me how all the school board members profess to be pillars of their local churches; yet, as the body controlling education in that county,

their actions continue to create oppression, injustice and racism. He then told me about the school board's practice of starting every meeting with a prayer, immediately followed by the Pledge of Allegiance (to the United States of America), or vice versa, the pledge first and then the prayer. Whatever the order, it is immaterial - one followed by the other has the definite tendency, at least in my mind, of fusing one's allegiance to God and country to such an extent that allegiance to God and Christ Jesus is, in practice, subordinated to allegiance to the nation state. Hearing my friend's tales of his struggles over the years against this local institution made up of professing Christians which has created great oppression in and around Americus made it clear to me that the allegiance of the school board had strayed gravely away from God and Jesus Christ.

On returning from Koinonia, I kept thinking of the ramifications of this practice of combining prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance and the tendency nowadays to merge religion and government while fanning the flames of patriotism. One alarming example of this tendency is the drive by some of our national leadership to pass a constitutional amendment to permit prayer in the public schools. This drive is alarming not only for its substance, but more so because the leadership of our national government is sponsoring and pushing its passage. To me this seems to be a part of a growing tendency to fuse our allegiance to God and country. This tendency is even more alarming when I see it developing when I see it developing at a time of growing emphasis on patriotism and nationalism. For example, the return of our "PEACEKEEPING - LIBERTY" troops from Lebanon and Granada was accom-

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Allegiance (Cont. from page 6)

plished with such fanfare as to create an aura of heroism and patriotism, when in truth, the American troops were neither keeping the peace nor protecting liberty in Lebanon or Granada. Then, with the 1984 Olympics coming up this summer in Los Angeles, the competition among nations begins again on another plane. The recent Soviet bloc withdrawal from the Olympics has only fueled the nationalistic and political nature of the Olympics. The flames of American nationalism and patriotism associated with the Olympics have been fanned for months now, particularly over the television airways with practically every major commercial marketer being an official sponsor (no doubt for a price), of the '84 Olympics, such as McDonald's, Canon, and Coca Cola, to mention just a few. As a former athlete, I can appreciate and value athletic competition as a tool for individual growth and development for young people, but it distresses me greatly when athletics are used to promote interests larger than the individual, particularly when that interest is a nation state. Unfortunately, the Olympics for America has become, like much else in this country, simply big business as usual and its commercialization has joined hands with the fires of patriotism, for the commercial marketability of the patriotic concept.

The coming of the '84 Olympics also brings to my mind how in America today big time athletics (college and professional sports mainly) has captured the attention and allegiance of so many Americans. The intensity of this allegiance, whether it be for the Georgia Bulldogs, Atlanta Falcons, or Atlanta Braves, reaches such fervor and commitment as to become almost like a religion to many - a commitment that demands one's total allegiance. From my viewpoint such commitment and allegiance is misplaced and promotes and encourages the violence, greed, exaggerated competition and materialism now an integral part of big time athletics. It is my belief that if one-fifth the number of Georgians loved and gave their allegiance to Jesus rather than the Bulldogs, Falcons or Braves, we would have no more soup-lines, night shelters or clothes closets. However, in Georgia, athletics are more important than Christian living and discipleship.

With all this within my consciousness, I had occasion to read again Jim Wallis' (of the Sojourners Community in Washington, D.C.) book; Agenda for Biblical People. In the section of his book outlining the status of the established church in this country, Jim Wallis advocates for the church to disassociate itself from the pattern and practices and values of the world at large and instead return to a more biblically-oriented community rooted in the allegiance to God and Jesus Christ. This matter of allegiance jumped out at me from this comment by Jim Wallis:

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"(The church) must proclaim the great refusal to be squeezed into the world's pattern and must pledge allegiance to the coming reign of God."

As I thought of the need for a greater allegiance to God, as Jim Wallis points out, my thoughts went back to my friend's experience in Americus with the Pledge of Allegiance and prayer and how our allegiance should and must be only to the God of the Bible - for as Peter proclaimed; We shall obey God rather than men. (1 Peter 1:21) I then started playing around with the wording of the national Pledge of Allegiance and I came up with what I call "The Pledge of Allegiance to God," which to me expresses to whom our total allegiance should be:

"I pledge allegiance
To the Kingdom of God
And all God's children
Who make up that Kingdom.
A Kingdom Community,
Under God and Jesus Christ,
Indivisible and uncompromising,
With liberty and justice and love
For all."

As Americans living in this country, let us be under no illusion that such singleness of allegiance to God and Jesus Christ will be an easy task. To the contrary, many forces work against such an allegiance on a daily basis - some of which are obvious and direct, others more subtle. But let us not forget that it is Jesus himself that calls us to such allegiance and that our task in the world of today - a world filled with violence, greed and oppression - is to strive with all our will and might to be faithful and obedient to the call of God revealed through Jesus Christ. Such daily faithfulness and obedience is the best assurance that our allegiance will always be with God and Jesus Christ.



Rita Corbin

Open Door Schedule

* We need volunteer help on Wed. Thurs. & Sat. suppers 4:45 - 7:30 pm.

WE ARE OPEN....

Monday through Saturday, telephones are answered from 7:30a.m. until 6:30 p.m. and from 7:15 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The building is open from 9:00 a.m. until 8:30 p.m. those days. Please call in advance if you need to arrange to come at other times. On Sunday we are closed until 5:15 p.m. Then our phones and door are answered from 5:15 until 8:30 p.m.

OUR MINISTRY....

SOUP KITCHEN - Mon.-Sat. 11-12 noon; Sunday 5:15-5:30pm. BUTLER ST. CME BREAKFAST Mon-Fri. 8-8:30am

SHOWERS & CHANGE OF CLOTHING - Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday 9:00am-11:00am.

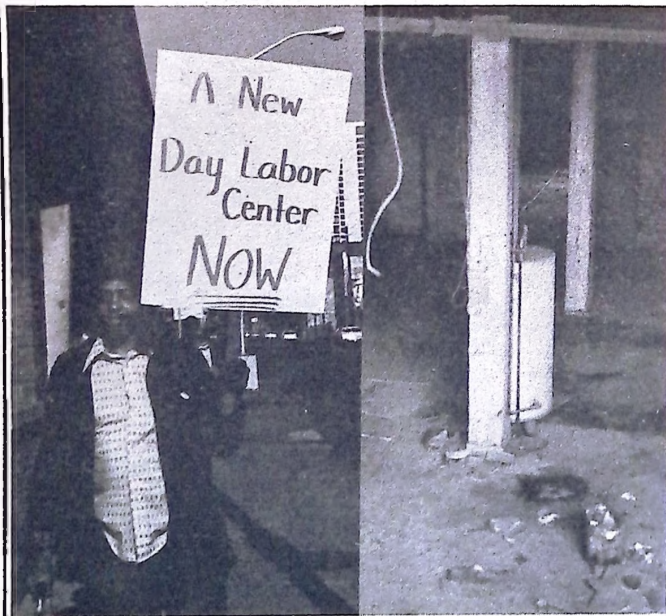
USE OF PHONE - Mon.-Sat. 9:00a.m.-4p.m. SHELTER REQUESTS - Mon.-Sat. 9:00a.m. - Noon

SUNDAY WORSHIP - 7:30p.m. BIBLE STUDY - Wednesday 7:30 - 9:30p.m. (Currently on Luke)



The Atlanta Advocates for the Homeless (see the April/May HOSPITALITY insert) have been very busy in recent weeks...in utter frustration with the 15 month lack of business by those responsible for constructing the new Downtown Labor Center. City officials from Mayor Andrew Young down had "promised" that the red tape would be completed by May. After countless meetings and phone calls with those holding up services desperately needed for the unemployed, AAH began picketing the Edgewood Avenue construction site.

On Friday June 8, 13 people took their voices to Mayor Young's staff. Refusing to leave until a promised contract for construction was signed, three AAH members, Willie Coleman, Ed Loring, and Dick Stewart were arrested. Ed chose to stay in jail over the weekend until the Monday afternoon municipal court hearing. Happily, a court room filled with street friends and other supporters saw the charges dismissed. Unhappily, the contract that was signed contained several conditions that assure further delays. Please call the Atlanta Advocates for the Homeless (at the Open Door Community number) for a current update.



Meanwhile, at 910 we need

Disposable Razors
Deodorant
Socks
Wash cloths
Underwear
Ceiling fans
Money (see letter insert)
Volunteers

8 Power (Cont. from page 5)

the same machine, which in a word might be called Racism. And what right do I have to expect a perfectly disciplined non-violent response from poor, working people in Latin America who have lived under inhuman conditions all their lives while I am enjoying the benefits of a lifestyle that is bought only at the expense of those people's blood? It seems to me that I must remove the plank from my own eye before I complain about the speck in my sister or brother's eye.

In Washington D.C., on one of the streets facing the F.B.I. building is a row of pornography shops. When I lived in that city it seemed ironic to me that these two phenomenon - seemingly so remote from one another - could exist side by side. Then it began to dawn on me that they were not so remote after all, that there is a direct connection between what goes on inside those shops and inside the minds of some of the highest members of our government. Biblically, we might refer to it as "spiritual wickedness in high places." (Eph. 6:12) More simply, I might call it the pornography of power. But whatever we call it, religious teachers of all ages have warned us to be on guard against it.

There was a Taoist writer named Chuang Tzu that lived in China around the 3rd century B.C. Thomas Merton wrote a book about him he liked him so much. This is a passage from "The Way of Chuang Tzu," as interpreted by Thomas Merton:

"For security against robbers, who snatch purses, rifle luggage, and crack safes. One must fasten all property with ropes, lock it up with locks, bolt it with bolts. This (for property owners) is elementary good sense. But when a strong thief comes along they pick up the whole lot, Put it on their back, and go on their way with only one fear: That ropes, locks, and bolts may give way. Thus what the world calls good business is only a way To gather up the loot, pack it, make it secure In one convenient load for the more enterprising thieves. Who is there, among those called smart, Who does not spend their time amassing loot For a bigger robber than themselves?...

"The invention Of weights and measures Makes robbery easier. Signing contracts, setting seals, Makes robbery more sure. Teaching love and duty Provides a fitting language With which to prove that robbery Is really for the general good. A poor(person) must swing For stealing a belt buckle, But if a rich(person) steals a whole state They are acclaimed As dignitary of the year.

"Hence if you want to hear the very best speeches On love, duty, justice, etc; Listen to the dignitaries." *

* Newspaper Requests If you or a friend would like to receive HOSPITALITY, please fill in this form and mail to Ed Loring.

Name _____
Street Address _____
City, State, Zip _____