

# THE WITNESS

FEBRUARY, 1977

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## Sexism

Pam Chinnis

William Coats

Rosemary Ruether

# Letters to the Editor

## A Calling to Humankind

As one devoted to the issue of women's ordination and who worked for the recent resolution passed at convention, I must confess *jubilant*! In response to your December editorial — while the ordination victory was admittedly token, it was a very important “token” step. Our work has just begun. Legislation should not be mistaken for *implementation*.

There are many unanswered questions. Will bishops ordain? Will women have jobs? Will women be supported by their dioceses? Will women clergy, once ordained and placed, care about the struggle of lay women?

These questions cannot be resolved by the male hierarchy, however supportive and sympathetic. True equality or liberation only becomes a reality through the collective action of the oppressed. No one can free us — not the House of Bishops, not the House of Deputies — no National convention vote. We must now as women unite in our efforts to see that women are admitted to seminaries, that our bishops do ordain, that our women clergy are employed and receive support from their dioceses.

The road that lies before us seems interminably long and unending. It is not enough to accomplish “legislation” for our own sakes. The spirit of Philadelphia goes on.

For some of us it was an awakening, a calling to respond to humankind through the Church. It is not enough for us to care about our sisters who chose the priesthood. We must care for our sisters in the barrios and the ghettos who rock their babies to sleep in cold rooms. We must care for our sisters who held their dead babies in the mud of Vietnam. We must care for our sisters who have been raped and beaten. We must care for our sisters who are exploited and discriminated against by our institutions.

The spirit of Philadelphia was more than an awakening to our individual callings or potential. It was the recognition of our commitment to take our beliefs, founded in the teachings of Christ, and work with persistence, courage, and wisdom to eliminate the suffering of humankind and offer it to the glory of God.

Janis Brack Young  
Pasadena, Cal.

## Cassidy ‘Extraordinary’

Sheila Cassidy's “Prayer Under Duress,” (December WITNESS) is extraordinary, a combination first-person report of tyranny and a spiritually valuable meditation on the passion of our Lord. I would like permission to reprint the entire article in *St. David's Dove*, our parish newsletter. Further, I am trying to establish a chapter of Amnesty International here, and I am certain Dr. Cassidy's article would help in that effort.

Rev. Donald Schell  
Caldwell, Idaho

## Galled by Phrase

I was disappointed by the sour article — “By God, They Did It” — about the vote on women's ordination at General Convention. (November WITNESS)

The phrase, “unauthorized chaos” galled me. Is chaos ever authorized? Chaos and authority aside, we have a whole priesthood. Let's celebrate it.

Heather Huyck  
Minneapolis, Minn.

## Responds to Art Walmsley

Art Walmsley has done a good job of reviewing recent history in his “Random Flight . . .” piece in the November WITNESS. I venture a few thoughts as additions to Art's article.

I think it is at least simplistic to say that the Seattle General Convention in 1967 created the General Convention Special Program because the Joint Urban Program was not dealing with the problems of black people in the cities.

It is more accurate to understand Seattle as a decision by the Church to stop dealing with the *whole* urban problem

*Letters continued on page 15*

## CREDITS

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# THE WITNESS

Robert L. DeWitt, Editor; Mary Lou Suhor, Managing Editor; E. Lawrence Carter, Robert Eckersley, Peggy Case, Susan Small, Lisa K. Whelan, Hugh C. White Jr. Editorial and Business Office: P.O. Box 359, Ambler, Pennsylvania

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## Authority on Trial

Robert L. DeWitt

Today we all question established authority, from wherever it derives. And once this process begins, it is impossible to stop. Our situation is like the winds which had been imprisoned in great bags on Ulysses' ship. Once released, they could no longer be recaptured and contained. They blew where they wished, and great were the storms they blew.

The wind currents in the Episcopal Church following the action of General Convention on the revision of the Prayer Book, and even more on the ordination of women, are illustrative. Yes, we are loyal Episcopalians, but no, we will not conform to the official rulings of the church. So said the proponents of women's ordination before Minneapolis. So say the opponents now.

A veritable flurry of conferences, meetings, pastoral letters from diocesan bishops, parish meetings and individual statements have railed against the actions taken at Minneapolis. Some of these are undoubtedly expressing deep convictions sincerely held. Others are perhaps suspect because of the high decibels of the utterances and the flagrant sexism they express. But both are signs of the times, providing clues to other institutional endeavors such as the fund-raising "Venture in Mission."

If authority has lost its authenticity, then this is an appropriate reaction. Established authority is valid only insofar as it expresses and firms up the truth of justice. This is the proper role of authority — else it becomes romantic, or whimsical, or at worst, tyrannical. Should we be apprehensive about this unpredictable and uncontrollable process which seems to have begun?

The great poet, Milton, wrote an impassioned essay in defense of freedom of the press in 17th century England. "Who ever knew truth bested in free and open encounter?" he asked. Perhaps for us today, our faith in truth, and therefore in God, is being tested. And we should be grateful. We are no longer supinely subject to "the official line." We have come of age.

It remains to be seen if the truth of justice and the truth of the incarnation can prevail in the "free and open encounter" which presently marks the life of this Church. All the institutions of our society will be the legatees of the bane, or blessing, of the outcome. ■

# SEXISM

## What Is It?



by Pam Chinnis

There is no such word as sexism in the dictionary, and purists protest its use, saying it has a vague and rather fuzzy meaning. Technically, perhaps, it should be called gender-based discrimination. However, let's look at some definitions that have been offered for it.

Sexism has been defined as:

- Any system that tends to control and manipulate the destinies of women, rather than to liberate them
- Any attitude, action or institutional structure which systematically subordinates a person or group of persons on the basis of gender
- A belief in the inherent biological superiority of one gender thereby giving it the right to dominate the inferior gender
- Any attitude or action which places different values on the nature of activities of women and men and advocates it is proper to have separate roles and spheres of life for women and men.

The common denominator in all these definitions is freedom/liberation — or the lack of it. Implicit is stereotyping of persons — the assignment of persons to roles and categories and expected types of behavior which inhibit one's development to one's full potential.

Liberation from sexism is the release of *both* sexes from the boxes of assigned roles. Sexism is just as invidious to men as it is to women. It has, however, been considered primarily a woman's cause. Perhaps this is because on the surface, at least, women have stood to gain more from its eradication, and the women's liberation movement has been the most vocal in fighting the battle.

While one may not agree with all the statements and actions of some persons involved in the women's liberation movement, one should acknowledge that the general tenor of their concern has been to raise the level of participation of women in the total social order and to remove the restrictions which have limited them to a narrow range of roles and activities. The movement has been viewed by some as a group of middle class white women fighting for their individual rights. To the contrary, the liberation of women cannot be separated from the oppression of anyone. Liberation from sexism can remove at least one barrier to the achievement of full humanity for all people.

As women seek this liberation, tension develops because the basic framework of society is still essentially male-oriented and dominated. While it is less so than in the past, the traditional male-oriented societal patterns, customs and thought-forms are still dominant. Sexism runs very deep.

Let us look at a few of the manifestations of sexism in church and society. In truth, it was difficult to select only these few.

**Language:** The attitude of superiority of the man in society is affirmed, often unconsciously, whenever we speak. There are no personal pronouns in the singular which are neuter in gender. When no gender is explicit in a sentence we refer to the masculine form to be inclusive of both sexes. Some persons will try to excuse this by saying, "We are referring to man in the generic sense." But why is the generic term for all of humanity *man*, and not *woman*, or even a neutral word. Language can be very subtle and illustrates both the cause of the underlying problem and the difficulty of attempting to deal with it, using the contemporary language forms available to us.

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**Pam (Mrs. Carter) Chinnis** is presiding officer of the Women's Triennial of the Episcopal Church.



**Curriculum Materials:** Numerous studies have dealt with sexist curriculum materials in both church and secular schools. Models presented in them for “appropriate” masculine and feminine behavior are rigid and traditional. In these materials boys play with trucks, climb trees, and play baseball; girls play house and mother their dolls. In addition to these segregated activities, boys and girls are portrayed with very different mental and emotional orientations and patterns of social interaction. Girls are consistently shown as passive, weak, needing help, timid, alone, sick and unhappy; while boys are shown as active, powerful, working in groups, brave, protective of women, adventurous and shaping their environment.

**Business:** Studies show that, generally, corporate owners and managers, professionals and technical experts, and business middle class executives are predominantly male. Clerical and sales workers and service workers are predominantly female. Men provide the leadership, women provide the care and maintenance. Men are doctors, women are nurses; men are pilots, women are stewardesses; men are business executives, women are secretaries; men are conductors of orchestras, women are harpists; men are university presidents, women are instructors; men are priests, women are on the altar guild.

Start looking at advertising, listening to songs, and reading newspaper articles critically and you’ll be appalled at how men and women are stereotyped and expected to behave in certain socially accepted ways.

**Church:** It is not only curious but paradoxical that an institution such as the Church, which is ordinarily alert to racial prejudice and other social injustices, has seemed so completely unaware of the prejudices operating against women. Indeed where the Church should be leading the way, we find it often lagging far behind the rest of society.

Historically, most women’s activity in the Church has been channeled through separate organizations which grew up during the 19th century because women were excluded from their denominational governing bodies. It has been largely through these segregated organizational structures that women have been able to move into some positions of leadership and influence within the Church. Two outstanding examples of this are two former presiding officers of the Triennial Meeting of the women of the Episcopal Church — Cynthia Wedel, a vice president of the World Council of Churches, and Lueta Bailey, the first woman candidate for president of the House of Deputies.

Many of us have been Episcopal General Convention goers long enough to have seared indelibly in our memories

the arguments used every three years to defeat the seating of women as deputies. It was only six years ago that some 30 women were seated in Houston. Many women felt the millenium had arrived. However, the House of Deputies remains the most exclusive men’s club in the United States — after the House of Bishops. It isn’t hard for a woman to *be* a deputy, but it is hard to *become* one and some men still talk about women deputies with the air of a Christian holding four aces. Only 120 of the 912 deputies named to the 1976 General Convention were women.

Let me give you a few statistics from my own Diocese of Washington which, perhaps, is more enlightened than some, to show you how few women are really involved in making the decisions which affect them and their Church. A 12-member task force, empowered by vote of the diocesan convention and appointed by the bishop to examine the total effect of the church’s institutional policy and practice on the lives of women and girls, came up with these findings:

- The headline-garnering controversy over the ordination of women to the priesthood may be obscuring more critical questions about the role of laywomen in the Church.

- Fewer than 23% of the diocesan-level elective or appointive lay positions are held by women.

- The 34-member Diocesan Council includes only *five* women.

- Women make up just over 23% of the membership of parish vestries; six vestries had no women members.

- In only one of 88 parishes was a woman the senior warden, but well over half the vestries have women secretaries.

- Only 11% of the acolytes were female.

- Within the diocesan headquarters, of the 11 jobs described as professional, three were held by women. Ten of the 11 non-professional jobs were held by women.

The task force concluded that although most congregations it surveyed felt satisfied with their attitudes toward women, there was an enormous tendency to underestimate women, belittle women, and to opt for a superficial understanding of the emerging role of women in modern life. The report blames this on the prevailing social attitudes “so ingrained that rarely do we even see them clearly, much less question them.” This report, I am sure, is not atypical.

Evidence of unfairness and discrimination against women is slowly but surely being documented in every aspect of life. Laws and social aids and policies can help but they cannot change deep-rooted ways of thinking and acting overnight. A change in awareness must occur. We must continually be on the lookout for sexism and call it to the attention of all our sisters and brothers.

# SEXISM

## Where Does It Come From?

by Rosemary Ruether



The author with Robert L. DeWitt, left, editor of *THE WITNESS*, and Hugh C. White, of the Church and Society Network.

Basically, sexism comes from the exploitation of female labor, in several senses of that word. Sexism is one of the age-old strategies by which many categories of people — women, slaves, servants, peasants and workers — are confined to the maintenance of the physical bases of life, so that a small group of people — males of the ruling class and race — can enjoy the fruits thereof.

Historically, sexism seems to be the earliest of such exploitative relationships in society. Even in tribal societies, one finds women confined to the work of child raising, gardening, weaving, and cooking, while men monopolize the military and political arenas, as well as the prestigious religious cult that glorifies this political and military activity. Originally this had nothing to do with the exclusion of women from economic work. That is a development of industrialization.

When most of the productive work was related to the home, women either did or managed much of it. But they did so in a dependent relationship to the prestigious political and cultural spheres monopolized by the ruling class males who shaped the legal, social and ideological structures of society. And, of course, the males defined women's work in a subservient relation to their own power.

It is also important to realize that most of the prestigious roles from which women have been excluded have nothing to do with male "superior" physical ability. The relatively larger musculature of men certainly was one of the root causes of female subordination in the earliest social relations. But as society developed, most of the tedious and hard physical work was done by women workers and servants.

**Rosemary Radford Ruether** is a feminist theologian currently on the faculty of Garrett Theological Seminary.

In other words, it has never demanded particularly large muscles to be carried around on a chair to give orders to soldiers or slaves, or to push papers around a table or to throw incense on an altar. Yet it is precisely these roles of military, scribal and priestly power that have been most assiduously kept from women.

The exclusion of women from professional education, from "higher education," has been one of the most basic ways in which women have been excluded from the realm of cultural formation and confined to the unreflective levels of society. One could apply that to other subordinated groups. Remember that it was a crime to teach slaves to read, for example.

It follows, then, that we inherit a religion shaped socially by a patriarchal society which reflects and validates it ideologically. That is to say, the symbol system of religion that makes God male and Creation female; Christ male and the Church female; the priest male and the laity female; the rational and directive energies male, the subservient, recipient and bodily receptacles of this energy female; the symbol system that divides the whole world and heaven into hierarchies of male over female — all that has nothing to do with the nature either of reality or of God. It has to do with the shaping of our perception of reality and of God by a patriarchal culture.

Patriarchy projects its own social structure upon the heavens and sees therein its own reflection, thereby validating its heavenly mandate to rule women and other "inferior" beings.

The male symbol system of our religion must be recognized, not as gospel, but as social ideology. When this social ideology is defended as the essence of the gospel, when it becomes the last line of defense of Christianity and

the Church, then it is not only ideology, but idolatry. God is made in the image of the male, white, ruling class in whose image we then fall down and worship the male, white, ruling class *as God*. This means that we must recognize an ideological, idolatrous, false element in our Church and even in Biblical traditions.

The gospel is a treasure in earthen vessels, and the Church is constantly tempted to worship the earthen vessels and to bury the gospel. The gospel is the message and the power of the risen Spirit of Christ which constantly points us to that future of God where humanity and creation are liberated from every evil and which gives us the insight and power to free ourselves from our social encapsulation, including the way we have encapsulated the gospel itself in the structures of oppressive social orders.

## Prophets Missed Out

The prophets of the Hebrew scripture spoke prophetically about the oppressive social structures which they, from their vantage point, were able to see and recognize. They denounced the oppression of the poor nation by the rich nation, the poor shepherd and farmer by the rich urbanite and landlord. They also noticed that widows and orphans were oppressed. But, by and large, they missed the oppression of subjugated groups within their own familial order; namely, women and slaves. And so the Old Testament and the New Testament come down to us as prophetic documents which condemn certain types of oppression and yet which also enshrine and to an extent, validate the subjugation of women and slaves. ("Wives obey your husbands," "Slaves obey your masters," and so on).

It was not until the latter 19th century that the Churches relinquished the use of the Bible to justify serfdom and slavery, although most of the prophetic work in these areas was done by those marginal to the Church establishments. Only today have the Churches begun to grapple with the sexist ideology of the religious tradition and to recognize that this too is part of the earthen vessel that must be discarded in the light of the gospel.

The gospel is not a safe-deposit box of past culture within which we may enshrine our sexism, capitalism, racism and militarism. The gospel is the liberating spirit of God whose work is not finished until every tear has been wiped away and every evil overcome.

The question before the Churches today is quite simply whether they wish to remain committed to the remnants of the phallic cult of patriarchal society and thus become obsolete to the future of Christ, or whether they wish to continue to proclaim the gospel of repentance and to participate in the future of God for a redeemed humanity. ■

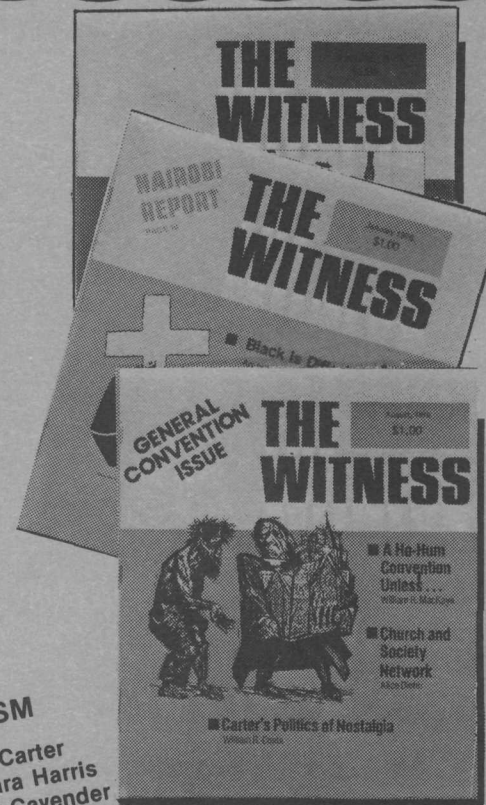
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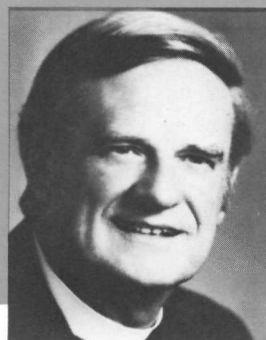
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# The 'Timing' of 'Women's Lib'???



Coleman McGehee

*The preceding articles by Pam Chinnis and Rosemary Ruether and the one by William Coats on page 10 were adapted from the Church and Society/WITNESS panel forums on "Sexism," presided over by Bishop John Walker, coadjutor of Washington, D.C., at General Convention. Following are questions addressed to the women panelists by the Forum respondents: Bishop Coleman McGehee of Michigan and Mrs. Marion Kelleran, chairperson, Anglican Consultative Council.*



Marion Kelleran

**Coleman McGehee:** I wish to identify myself now not as the Bishop of Michigan but as if I were a reporter for the *Detroit Free Press*. I would like to put a question to Pam. Pam, you said that the Women's Liberation Movement has been raising the level of participation of women in the total social order and removing restrictions which have limited them to a narrow range of roles.

Now, consider the increase in the activities of women throughout the country, like the increase of enrollment in various schools and business schools which jumped in 1976 by 14%; and there have been similar gains in law schools, medical schools, the film making industry. As you know, there are some 7,500 lawmakers in the country today of whom 610 are women, compared to some 305 lawmakers in 1969. With these gains and others do you not think that sufficient progress is being made in all areas of our social, political and economic life, and maybe some of the pressure that the Women's Liberation Movement seems to be putting on persons and organizations should be eased?

**Pam Chinnis:** Certainly not. I think when you start from 0 the only way you can go is up. And while from 0 to 1 is a pretty big gain it still isn't very much. It reminds me of the occasion when the head of the Federal Communications Commission was bragging about the number of women who were now involved in the communications field. It was quite impressive until he was pinned down and admitted that he was talking about telephone operators. So I think even though women are beginning to move into some positions of leadership, even in those instances one finds that they are still at the bottom of the leadership hierarchy.

**McGehee:** Let me pursue that. One of the things we confront in all of this, just as in the integration battles in the '50s and '60s, is that people think we are rushing too much. And there are some who seem to express a willingness to be supportive of a cause such as this but don't want to be pressed, and when pressed they are turned off and we lose support which would be beneficial otherwise. Should we have some kind of understanding for such persons? Should we go easy on them? Should we be more compromising in the things that we say?

**Chinnis:** I think that we should pray for them.

**Marion Kelleran:** My question is very like Coleman's, about this business of the timing. It's not only change, but the *rate* of change is speeding up all the time. This question is addressed to Rosemary. Let's take that great historical background you gave, and what is burned into what Martin Buber used to call our organic memory, and Freud would call our subconscious or deeper than that. When we consider these deep attitudes, how on earth can one get at this short of revolution? I'll remove the "short of revolution."

**Rosemary Ruether:** Part of the problem with the church is that it's somewhat behind society. The church is in some sense the last institution of the *ancien regime*, really validating an order whose presuppositions have changed. They haven't changed totally, but they have changed *more* in the rest of society. So the church becomes a validator of attitudes which really are not held to a great extent by people in the rest of their lives but are held onto in this one sphere. I think that's what makes the contradiction particularly intense.

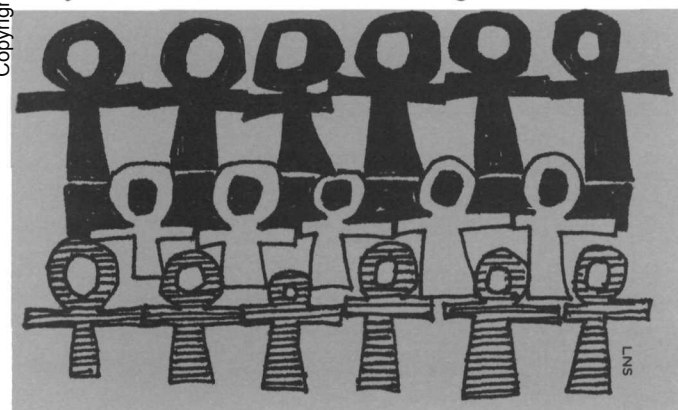


**Kelleran:** Could I follow that up, then. One of the things that some people are saying is that the Women's Lib Movement is terrible but it's that kind of outside pressure that has made us conscious of the Church's need to change. Do you think it is possible for the Church to be influenced by Women's Lib?

**Ruether:** Well I object to the word "Lib" — a diminutive of Liberation — which one uses only for gays and women. I don't think you would ask Bishop Walker about Black Lib. So you see the way society deliberately diminishes and ridicules movements having to do with sexuality and doesn't even dignify them in the same way as other movements.

But what I would like to do with your question is to put it in a somewhat larger framework and to challenge the notion that somehow the Church should operate in a pure realm and not be influenced by "secular society," as if movements from secular society have nothing to do with this kind of pure tube — the Church's message — passing through history. I think that's a typical argument which leads to the conclusion that the Church should not be responding to these questions. Of course, that is absurd.

The problem is somewhat different. The church has always responded to society and it was precisely the Church and the religious spectrum which was once the validating culture for the *entire* society. The problem today is that most of the culture has moved outside of the Church leaving it in a kind of obsolete corner — something that people "do" on Sunday. This is partly because the Church refused to really move with new prophetic movements, refused to see these movements for the liberation of society as the message of the gospel, and became stuck with the old social order. And so the rest of society secularized itself — I would say precisely to move with the gospel — and the Church stays in a corner. Therefore it's the marginal people outside the Church and to some extent those on the edges that now bring this message to the Church. But that is not to say that this is not in fact the message of God.



**McGehee:** I have a question for Pam since she is president of the Triennial. Each panelist has made reference to the fact that the Church has diminished the role of women and kept them back. Doesn't this have something to do with the number of separate women's organizations which are active in the Church, such as the Episcopal Church Women? Why, for instance, do the women have a Triennial Meeting made up of some 500 delegates while the General Convention is going on?

**Chinnis:** That's a good question. In 1970 when women were permitted to be seated as deputies, the women in Triennial really called into question whether they could in good conscience continue a separate meeting, although in fact the Triennial meeting had been open, long before the General Convention, to both sexes. It's called the Triennial Meeting of the women but we *do* have men in the meeting. Not many, I'll grant you. Our members considered this very carefully and decided it was going to be a long time before women were represented on any equitable basis in General Convention. Therefore, it's really kind of stupid for us to give up our power base.

**McGehee:** I agree it's stupid to give up your power base. But I wonder if giving up that power base right now might not expedite things? There were 30 women deputies in Houston. There are 120 in this convention. That is certainly a significant increase. But my point is that by continuing to meet, and apparently you are going to do it next Triennial also, does this not detract from the progress that might be made for the integration of women into all aspects of the work of the Church.

**Ruether:** Maybe I could put this in the framework of the problem of integration and separation in general. I think that blacks have also explored this. Whenever you have a group that has been excluded and is trying to integrate an institution, all of whose presuppositions are on the side of the group that has dominated it, you get a problem. If individual women go into an organization not only whose membership but whose entire organizational structure is dominated by men, they in effect are integrated in such a way as to be lost.

I think that any group that has this problem really has to go on two tracks. One is to integrate the larger institution as much as possible and try to change its presuppositions, but also to keep a consciousness — a sense of being a group.

You really have to do both of these things at the same time and it's always fatal to go so much with integration that you precisely allow yourself to disappear in the dominant group. ■

# A Whole Priesthood

by William Coats

Let me say why I think that getting women priests ordained legally, even in a way which is acceptable only to a part of the Church, is important.

I will give you an analogy. Suppose that the Episcopal Church had 1,000 clergy and their I.Q.'s were 80. (Some of you may not think that is an analogy.) Just suppose that there were 150 people of whom only 50 would somehow get in to be priests, and this group all had I.Q.'s of 160. Now even though of this 150 only 50 could get in, nonetheless I would maintain — and the analogy is going to be imperfect — the entrance of 50 people with I.Q.'s of 160 would significantly alter the nature of the priesthood which heretofore had only been composed of people with I.Q.'s of 80.

You will see what I am getting at. I am suggesting that in terms of the nature of the priesthood of this church, I think it is important that we get women priests, *period*. And in any number we can get. I think and believe dearly that the entrance of women into the priesthood means that we will be assuring that women's culture will now be part of the religious leadership of the Church. This has far more significance than women gaining their civil rights in yet another area, although indeed, that's important. But what I mean is something far more fundamental.

I can say personally from working with a large number of women deacons on our Board of National Coalition, there is something — and I don't know what language to use — something *new* brought to this coalition and I think to the church, by the way in which women relate to one another and try to force men to relate to one another. A new dimension is added — and I don't mean "we all know that women are different tee-hee-hee," but something is being introduced of inestimable value.

I don't know how, and I am not sure many other men know how, to put it into words, but we feel it and we see it when it happens. The first thing we know, if we're honest — or at least the first thing I know — is that I'm scared of it because I can't quite act the way in which I was brought up to act; namely, as a powerful macho male.

Something has been impressed upon me by the women deacons. I am not leaving out women priests. I simply don't

**William R. Coats** is Episcopal chaplain at the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee.



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know many. I do know women deacons. Something is at work within me which first scares me but too gives me a gleam of hope for the possibility of my own liberation, which I find thrilling. You may say that's a male point of view, and that's all I can speak out of and whatever women say about themselves I glorify it and quite support it. I speak as a male, but I can do no other, and I can only celebrate what I think the entrance of women's culture into the religious leadership of the church will do.

It will *transform* this church. I'm not making saints out of women, but there is something about women's culture, the absence of which at the level of leadership is not only hurting men, but I believe slowly killing the Church. ■

## Woman's Work Never Done

The Rev. Alison Palmer was quoted in an AP release during a visit to London recently as saying that since her ordination in 1974 she has received mostly encouragement but also some hostility.

"I had a letter from one American priest who said that I was a witch, a Lesbian, a prostitute and a Communist — now that's a pretty busy schedule," she observed.

# Chalice Not a Shaving Mug

by Eleanor McLaughlin

The words of prayer and praise which we hear and use are not mere disturbances of the air — they point towards realities, human and divine. But in the last analysis all is God's. Words are sacred.

Our words can never fully encompass these realities, either the creature or the Creator. We are especially aware that the River which is God cannot be held in the teacup of our turns of phrase. But at the human end of things, if we would all be enabled to drink from that Cup, it must not be a shaving mug, turning away the one half of humanity who cannot use it. When sisters are denied personhood which is the same as being denied God, the image of God in all humanity, male and female, is darkened. And we all thirst.

The words and metaphors which point us toward God, which mediate God to us, must reflect the breadth and depth, the mosaic of Revelation; that is, our human experience of God, in the particularity of maleness and femaleness as well as the universality of rationality, laughter, sorrow, pain, hope. While relearning and rediscovering in the manhood of Jesus Christ a Brother, a Father, a Fellow pilgrim and workman, we need also to rediscover in the person of Jesus, God as Mother and Sister who nurtures and feeds and holds and restores us: *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that murders the prophets and stones the messengers sent to her. How often have I longed to gather your children, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings; but you would not let me."* (Matt. 23:27)

At the very least we need to reflect in our language of prayer what the Creed teaches, that God became a human being.

In our references to the People of God we must be vigilant to use words which reflect the fact that God created women and men — women are not included in words such as Brethren, Laymen, or Sons and Heirs.



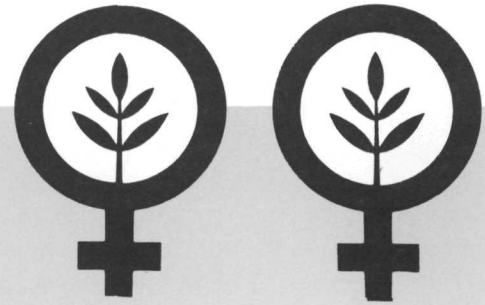
Sexual stereotypes are as destructive of male personhood as they are of female wholeness. The unacceptability of tears in the presence of strong emotion whether of sorrow or joy which is virtually absolute for the WASP male and relatively absolute for any woman who wishes to be taken seriously is an example of a humanly destructive conditioning from which the Gospel should free us, both men and women. Jesus wept.

To eliminate sexism from language is but the tip of the iceberg. We must cease teaching from pulpit and by example the rationalist, dualistic, androcentric theology and anthropology which turns us all, women and men into a human confected 18th century utopia in which the human being is the Rationalist Machine, wound up by a Clock Maker God, abandoned to tick on in furious competition with its fellow gadgets, without tears or love or laughter or play or dance or hope until the gears wear out.

The meaninglessness and hopelessness and loneliness of the White Capitalist rat race is intimately connected with the sexist, hierarchical male power trip in which women are the connivers as often as the victims. The Gospel calls this Sin and offers Life. ■

# Litany for Sisterhood

*Ms. Marilyn Clement of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization, [IFCO] National Council of Churches, offered the following prayer at an Ecumenical service sponsored by the July 4 Coalition at the Church of the Advocate in Philadelphia.*



Much of the history of women has been lost to us or stolen, as the history of all oppressed people has been lost to them, through benign or malignant neglect. But some of the voices have been heard, and we have selected a few for the prayers of the faithful:

For women like Sojourner Truth, Mother Jones, Rosa Luxembourg, Julia Ward Howe, Florence Nightingale, Susan B. Anthony, Rosa Parks, and countless others who are nameless to us but provided the direction we could take to find ourselves,

*we pray to the Lord;*

For our beautiful dead songbirds — Bessie Smith, Dinah Washington, Billie Holiday,

*we pray to the Lord;*

For the environmentalist Rachel Carson, about whom we once laughed and now have lived to weep over,

*we pray to the Lord;*

For Maggie Kuhn, foundress of the senior citizens militant group, the Gray Panthers,

*we pray to the Lord;*

For our women underground,

*we pray to the Lord;*

For our sisters in prison: Ann Sheppard Turner, Kamook Banks and her baby daughter named Iron Door Woman because she was born in prison; and Joanne Little,

*we pray to the Lord;*

For the ordained Episcopal priests, for their courage,  
*we pray to the Lord;*

For the unordained priests and all women who choose to be ministers,

*we pray to the Lord;*

For Mary Daly, Lucy Benson, Bella Abzug, Barbara Jordan, Shirley Chisholm, Florence Kennedy, Elaine Noble, Doris Bunte and other less outspoken women,

*we pray to the Lord;*

For courageous women like Mother Teresa of Calcutta and Dorothy Day of New York,

*we pray to the Lord;*

For battered mothers and the mothers of battered children,

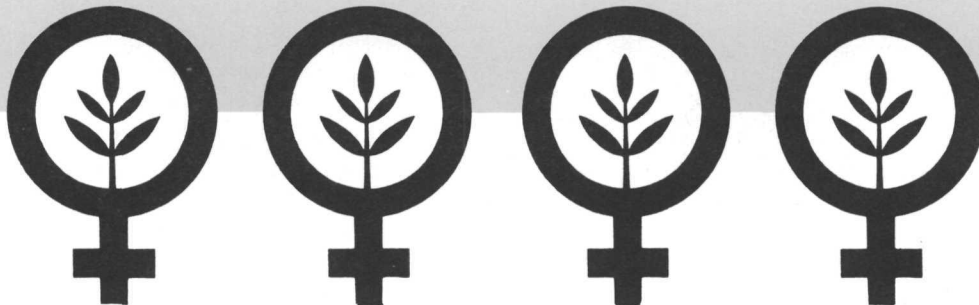
*we pray to the Lord;*

For victims of madness, for women in jails, for women in the stables of pimps, for victims of rape, victims of landlords, victims of unfulfilled men; for old, unattractive women, for women heads of households, for women who somehow go on caring, when they are no longer cared for,

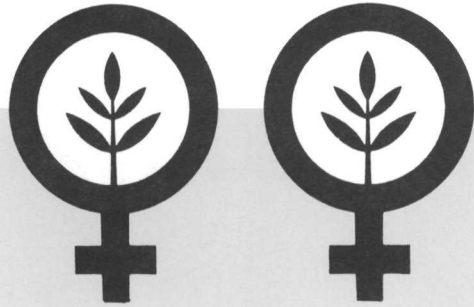
*we pray to the Lord;*

For middle class urban and suburban women who feel unfulfilled without knowing why because everyone is always telling them they were to be happy being consumers,

*we pray to the Lord;*







# Another Nominee for ‘New Adam’

by Abbie Jane Wells

*In Juneau, Alaska, there lives a woman named Abbie Jane Wells. A letter from her appeared in a recent WITNESS, in which she questioned the unquestioned authority of St. Paul for the church. She read Dr. Paul van Buren's response to her letter [December WITNESS] and it prompted her to write again. We feel there is more here than just another charge of sexism being leveled at St. Paul.*

My first reaction in response to Paul Van Buren's letter is to quote the title of Snoopy's book of theology, *Has It Ever Occurred to You That You Might Be Wrong?*

For 19 centuries Christians have been using and relying on first century thinking as the basis for their thinking. Well, I happen to think that it is time for us to interpret for ourselves what Jesus meant — for we do not live in the first century — nor is our knowledge limited to that or to what St. Paul says.

Paul said Jesus was the “new Adam,” but there were two at creation and Paul makes no mention of the “new Eve” — and that is where the male-oriented and male-dominated church has been content to leave it.

Were I to develop a concept of the “new Adam,” I would have to include a “new Eve”.

## Non-Violent Cain

For that, I think no one can beat Mary. And since Adam was not the son of Eve, I would have to choose Joseph for my “new Adam” and Jesus would be the “new Cain,” the non-violent Cain, the Cain with his head screwed on *right*.

Just recently I was thinking of God between the Conception and the Nativity, with Mary seven months pregnant, having to leave her care up to Joseph. And I would imagine God did a fair share of worrying, knowing all the things that can happen to a pregnant woman and to her child *in utero* — things that certainly aren't the will of God but are mishappenings of nature, or accidents.

And I can just see inexperienced Joseph — not a midwife and certainly not an obstetrician — in charge of things. At Christmas I picture him, eyes raised to heaven, holding in his hands the afterbirth, saying “Oh God, what do I do with *this?*” Joseph not only took care of the birth, he was also in

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or low-income and no-income women, for women in religious communities who have become lackeys of the Lord instead of the ministers they might be and could have been,

*we pray to the Lord;*

or the women in all of the back wards of the world — hospitals, prisons, or their own homes,

*we pray to the Lord;*

or all the unborn women, that their world might be a better place,

*we pray to the Lord;*

or all the women who have made and are making us question our own womanhood,

*we pray to the Lord;*

or the women of Wars — Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Korea, Latin America, Africa, Ireland, North America, Asia — who have given up their sons and their husbands to the war machinery of man,

*we pray to the Lord;*

or the men who have played a role in the lives of the women we have just named,

*we pray to the Lord;*

and lastly, for the billions of nameless women through the ages, who have borne, nurtured, raised, fed, healed and buried their children in thanksgiving and love.

*we pray to the Lord.*

Lord, Lord, hear our prayer.



charge of the clean-up detail. And he got to cook the Christmas dinner, too, whatever it was.

Much is made of Paul's supporting himself at tent and sail making. Well, Joseph supported himself and two others besides.

I prefer seeing Jesus through the eyes and words of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John rather than through the eyes and words of Paul.

When I write my book of "theology" I think I will title it: "*And I Could Be Wrong!*" I'm not sure I see things rightly, only that I see things differently. What woman doesn't? And men aren't going to like the way I see things. At least, most aren't.

I am a displaced Southerner — born and raised in South Texas around the Houston area. We came to Juneau in 1943 when Alaska was a war zone. My son was born in Alaska in 1946, on Advent Sunday, with the morning star so bright in the Southern sky the nursing nun and I both thought it was almost as bright as the Star of Bethlehem.

I haven't been "outside" as we Alaskans say about going south, in over 15 years. I sometimes dream about making a trip to meet all the lovely people I have come to know by mail, and my family and Texas friends, too. But I doubt if I will any time soon. Right now I am "doing" the years in Egypt with Mary and Joseph — and I have to stick it out here as long as they did in Egypt, I think.

You know, Mary and Joseph were the first liberated male and female. Mary said her "yes" without first running to ask Joseph's permission, or the rabbi's permission. She said "yes" all by herself, without input from any man, not even Joseph. She thought for herself, all by herself.

And Joseph, too, thought for himself all by himself. He didn't run to ask the rabbi what "tradition" said he should do about this pregnant woman for he knew damn well what tradition said. But Joseph didn't feel bound, and did what he thought was right for him to do, which I doubt got him any accolades from the religious establishment of his day.

## Willing to Go It Alone

I have wondered for a long time if God picked the couple Mary and Joseph as much because of the quality of Joseph as for the quality of Mary. Joseph was an uncommonly fine man, willing to believe when there was nothing to see to believe in, willing to go it alone with no community of support.

Of course, I have learned something from Paul — not much that I can use in the 20th century — but I've learned a lot about first century men. The domineering kind. The converted stone-throwers. And I've learned a lot from

Joseph — most of which I can use in the 20th century. Joseph wasn't a stone-thrower. He bucked the "tradition" of stoning the wife whose extra-curricular activities left her pregnant.

The sign mounted on the side of my refrigerator in front of where I write would have been a perfect sign for Mary and Joseph:

*There are no rules  
about leaping into  
the new because  
nobody has ever  
been there.*

We have things to deal with today that Paul and his crew never heard of, things even the early 20th century thinkers and theologians never heard of, things that Jesus didn't have to deal with, even if he knew about them.

First and foremost is that damnable split atom we have to live with and try to control, and the nuclear arms race. In the garden Jesus said that one sword was enough. He wasn't starting an arms race with Caesar. Caesar's arms races dealt with swords; today Caesar's arms race deals with a nuclear stockpile.

## Welcome to 20th Century

And I could go on and on. The Church is living in the 20th century just like the rest of us are, and has to deal with 20th century problems — using the precepts of Jesus to base its actions on. But it seems more content to try to make Paul's theories work today as they may have worked in the first century.

Jesus never said anything about homosexuality being a no-no; so today we have the church still debating the subject because Paul was against it. Paul may not have "preached another gospel than that of the apostolic communities" but I think he preached a different one from Jesus. I guess this argument could go on forever and probably will.

The first letter I ever got from a priest taking me to task said: "As I read your long and rambling letter in which you touched on so many things about which you are so ignorant, I could only think Juneau must be a very lonely place indeed."

I guess that should have cut me down to size, but it didn't. I continue to "read, mark, and inwardly digest — and say what the scriptures say to *me*." ■

Letters continued from page 2

and to shift its urban priority to *one* urgent issue: the empowerment of blacks whether related to the survival of *either* black or white churches in the cities or not. This is key.

And I believe it explains why the GCSP was ultimately rejected. As Arthur reports, even the black churches in the cities had to go through a fight to receive grants from the GCSP which was basically not Church-related in its orientation. Nor was it ever intended to deal with the lessons taught by "Metabagdad" — that the Metropolis is an utterly interdependent entity and that any church program which does not take this into account may be a laudable witness in a crisis, as when the urban riots were occurring, but it will ultimately have little effect.

Also, it was learned that national church programs which do not take the institutional church seriously, with all its faults, will sooner than later be terminated by that same institutional church.

What I hope for the future is: First, we must recover our embryonic understanding of the interdependence of the metropolis and relate everything about the urban church to that interdependence. For example, as I write in my Trinity office 24 floors above the streets, I am in one diocese (New York), and two others (Newark and Long Island) are within sight and one subway stop. The lights of a single great metropolis stretch to the horizon in both directions on this clear, cold night. But *radical ecumenism* would consist of those three dioceses developing and implementing any strategy of mission *together*. And the prospects are not bright that this will happen.

Second, it is time once again for a coalition within the Episcopal Church to lobby, cajole, pressure, fight if necessary, to raise up the urban crisis as at least one of the top priorities. Currently there are no riots, no dramatic signs (outside the financial disaster of New York City) which signal in unmistakable terms an urban crisis. But there is a growing crisis nevertheless and both the prophetic word and the effective involvement of the Church are past due.

Our Episcopal Church has little urban consciousness. Most people think "urban" is the antonym of "suburban" — that it means "inner city" rather than being an accurately descriptive term for 80% of our culture. With most of our National Church staff leaders already living outside New York's city limits, the rumors continue to fly about plans to move "815" out of New York — whose

bishop has already spoken God's judgment on those corporations which seek similarly to flee.

It is time to fight for a more worthy urban sophistication in our Church.

Rev. G. H. Jack Woodard  
Rector's Deputy, Trinity Church  
New York, N.Y.

Walmsley's Reply

## More Passion, Not Less

Jack Woodard has put his finger on the nub of the matter by calling for a coalition within the Episcopal Church "to lobby, cajole, pressure, fight if necessary to raise up the urban crisis as at least one of the top priorities of this Church." Hurrah for all those folks — the Church and City Conference, the Church and Society network, and the ad hoc group of bishops pulled together in Minneapolis — concerned for this agenda. Working at problems of the city church can be a lonely business these days.

My piece wasn't written as a general article, but as a paper to be read at the beginning of last January's Church and City Conference, the theme of which was the building of a new urban coalition. It was intended to jog the memories of those present about some of the main developments in the Episcopal Church's relationship to the city. I had no fears that if in any respect the paper mis-read the record, those estimable tigers would set it straight. I was pleased that THE WITNESS found it worth sharing with a wider population.

If a coalition is to be put together, it will depend on a joining together of people such as Bob DeWitt, Paul Moore, Jack Woodard and myself who remember the old days, and a brand new crowd who have never heard of them. It is true that we often struggled over directions, but in fact we were on the same side of the issues, and time has given perspective to whatever we did.

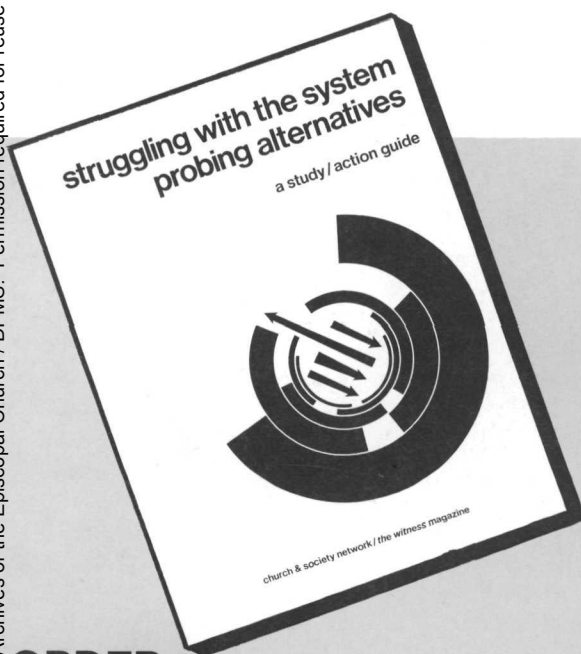
In the meantime, we have to do our little bit from wherever we are. I seriously suspect the Episcopal Church is incapable of an "urban sophistication," at least in its strategies and staffing at national and diocesan levels. But I hope that those who have a memory of the '60s will join together to keep alive some recollection of both the achievements and the mistakes. We deserve better than to repeat the past; we have little time and less money. There *are* some steps to be taken. And on those I suspect we are more in agreement than controversy.

Rev. Arthur E. Walmsley  
Rector, St. Paul's  
New Haven, Conn.

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