

# THE WITNESS

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## A Priest Is a Priest

An article in the June WITNESS ("Women Priests, Good News and Bad News") states that the Rev. Alison Palmer acted in contravention of "the laws of the Church of England." I do not understand how this can be. Was not the Rev. Palmer a priest in good standing in the Diocese of Washington when she celebrated the Eucharist at the invitation of an English parish priest? Are not the Church of England and the Episcopal Church in Communion with each other? If so, how can there be laws in the Church of England that prevent an Episcopal priest from celebrating in an English church at the invitation of its rector?

The fact that the Church of England does not itself ordain women is irrelevant. A priest is a priest. To say otherwise is to impugn the Apostolic Authority of Episcopal bishops. The situation would seem to be comparable to a priest celebrating the Eucharist in an Episcopal diocese where the bishop refuses to ordain women. No bishop has to ordain anyone, male or female, at any time. No bishop is obligated to give any reason for refusal to ordain. On the other hand a bishop must recognize and license a priest coming from another diocese, male or female. (Article III, Canon 20, Sec. 6 & 7) I do not see how the Rev. Palmer can have in any way violated the laws of the Church of England if we and they are in Communion with each other.

The Episcopal Church does not compel the English Church to ordain

women. They should be willing to recognize and accept our doing so. The genius of the Anglican Communion is diversity in unity. Without diversity there can be no unity, only uniformity.

The Rev. Jeannette Piccard  
Minneapolis, Minn.

## Palmer Re Her Ban

I am sure THE WITNESS is fed up with hearing from me about my ban, but I must say that I was appalled at how you handled it. Look, friends, on Feb. 18 Bishop Walker had *his* say by having the statement prohibiting me from preaching and celebrating read publicly at the cathedral. Ever since then I have been trying to have *my* say, at least in the sense of correcting errors, giving a context, etc.

I was hoping that THE WITNESS story might show the injustice (or at least the illogic and irrationality) of what Bishop Walker did. But THE WITNESS gave Walker *his* say again. Without comment, correction, criticism and without giving me any say at all.

Placing the coverage of Canon Mary Simpson next to me only gives the impression that good girls get rewarded by preaching at Westminster and bad girls who break the law (*there is no law involved*) get punished. Is that the message you wanted to convey?

Of course you have the authority to cover any event any way you want, but surely something more than just publishing the bishop's point of view was justified. I know THE WITNESS and Church and Society are deeply involved in the Urban Coalition which Bishop Walker leads, and it might be awkward to get involved in a confrontation with him. But I don't think even he would have been upset had you put in something like:

*Palmer pointed out with regard to her ban that the following issues were at stake:*

*1. If a bishop is concerned about the past, present, or future actions of a priest, shouldn't the bishop afford that priest due process by discussing the problem with the priest before inhibiting*

*that priest from functioning, and shouldn't the bishop himself inform the priest of his decision?*

*2. What are the "policies for the cathedral" to which all people must conform? Shouldn't we have an open cathedral where controversial persons and statements are accepted as a healthy part of the life of the Episcopal Church?*

*3. Should bishops penalize priests for "acts of conscience" when bishops are exempt from penalties if they follow their consciences?*

Bishop Walker voted for the 1977 House of Bishops conscience resolution which allows bishops to reject women priests without penalty. My 'active conscience' in England last October supported women priests by challenging an interpretation of English canon law which said that overseas priests traditionally have been male, and therefore female priests should not be permitted to function in England. The English priests who invited me to celebrate in their parish churches have not been penalized.

Oh, well.

The Rev. Alison Palmer  
Washington, D.C.

## Gay Analysis Challenged

Quoting from Gregory Baum, John M. Gessell writes (February WITNESS) that "human nature as it is at present is not normative . . . What is normative for normal life is the human nature to which we are divinely summoned." This is surely correct. Laying aside whether this view differs significantly from the humanistic Christian view of natural law — which consistently interpreted "nature" as meaning *ideal* human nature rather than actual nature — the important question is how we arrive at an adequate conception of this ideal. Unless we can frame an adequate conception and test it for coherence and consistency, we have no guidance.

Quoting further from the same source, Dr. Gessell says that the ideal human nature to which we are divinely

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# THE WITNESS

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## Analyzing Our Horror

Robert L. DeWitt

It happened in June in Rhodesia. A group of African nationalists descended upon a mission station of the Elim Missions of England, a pentecostal group, and ruthlessly murdered 12 people. A shocked world took note of this, outraged particularly by the fact that among those murdered was a mother and her three-week-old infant. In the century of the holocaust we do well to note such tragedies with horror. May we be delivered from losing our capacity for outrage at the senseless squandering of human life. We can afford to stumble and suffer and endure shifting attitudes and estimates toward many of our traditional values in human society. But not that one. People are made in the image of God. "God" is cognate with "good." Human life is, simply, the highest good we know.

Having said all that, there is something else that is disturbing about the episode in Rhodesia. White, middle class U.S. citizens are beginning to emerge from their age of innocence. They are beginning to become more aware of what Reinhold Niebuhr used to refer to as the tragic and ambiguous factors in the life of human society, and of the ways in which the self interest of nations, of class, of race, can condition our outrage. Many have been helped to this awareness by writers who have pointed out that much of what is reported as "violence" is more accurately described as "counter-violence," a response to a prior violence of which one was the victim. This is, perhaps, a clue to what happened in Rhodesia. We are amply aware of the systematic oppression and exploitation of blacks by a white minority in South Africa.

In a more innocent day, people of good will could simply deplore violence. But our coming of age has meant the necessity of seeing the pervasiveness of violence in the "normal" workings of the political, economic and other institutions of our society. If we are to be outraged, let us be so about what is most outrageous. If we are to note with horror, let us also note what is most horrible.

Is it inordinate to suspect that the lamentable incident in Rhodesia received so much attention from the press and other media because of an unspoken recognition that the victims were people with whom we could identify? They were of European stock, white, and Christian. What we are most easily outraged by is a clue to who we are, where we are positioned in society. If the color of the attackers and victims in Rhodesia were reversed, would we be as horrified?

Can we conceive of a God adequate to the parental task of loving both the oppressor and the oppressed? Both those who hold in their control the institutionalized instruments of violence throughout our society, and also those who resist by lashing out blindly with the bludgeons of counter-violence. The very contemplation of the kind of love which that would require fills one with awe at the magnitude of the love attributed to God. It also moves us to contemplate the investment that God must have in seeing justice on earth, a justice in the affairs of people that would eliminate institutionalized violence, and therefore the inevitability of counter-violence. ■



# What Does a Community Do . . .

by John H. Burt

*All the King's horses and all the King's men,  
couldn't put Humpty together again.*

Or can they? Whether the old nursery rhyme will prove to be true in the steel communities of Ohio's Mahoning Valley is being tested these days by some servants of another King, who have banded together ecumenically to restore the community of Youngstown, badly broken by the avarice of a relatively recent phenomenon on the American economic scene — the corporate conglomerate.

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The Rt. Rev. John H. Burt is Episcopal Bishop of the Diocese of Ohio.

The acute heart attack for Youngstown came last Sept. 19 when high-flying Lykes was forced to close permanently the giant Campbell Works with permanent layoffs for 5,000 wage earners. The ripple effect of that decision directly affected nearly 50,000 men, women and children.

What does a community do when the fortunes of industry milk a town of its life blood and leave it to die? Creative solutions did not come forth in Youngstown from the traditional sources — the industrial diversifiers, entrepreneurs with new technology, the Chamber of Commerce, the politicians.

But the religious leaders, both Christian and Jewish, felt the biblical imperative would not allow churches to limit their response to pastoral pabulum for the

## Youngstown Fights Back:

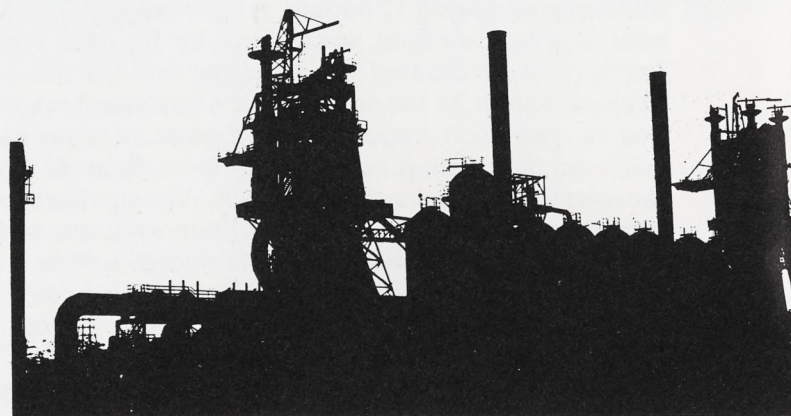
# Coalition Seeks New Model for Ownership

by Brian McNaught

Youngstown, Ohio — today it's a name which means more than a Midwestern industrial town specializing in steel production. "Youngstown" is now thought of in connection with the formation of a dynamic ecumenical coalition of denominational heads who are fighting a David and Goliath showdown with big business and politicians over the closing of a steel mill. Because of that, Youngstown may be considered the beginning of a new era in ecumenical consciousness and endeavors, a turning point in Church history when religious institutions began to grasp the role economics plays in the spiritual lives of working people and the role spiritual values should play in economic decisions.

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Brian McNaught is a Boston-based free-lance writer and frequent contributor to THE WITNESS.



It began in September, 1977 with a quickly-placed phone call by Ohio Episcopal Bishop John Burt to Roman Catholic Bishop James Malone. One of the major plants had just made a last minute announcement. It was closing its doors, and 5,000 people would be jobless. Thousands of others would soon follow. What could they do about it?

Bishop Burt described it as "the largest shutdown of a non-military plant in American history. It seemed to Bishop Malone and me that we ought to do more than wring our hands."

The two men immediately assembled other concerned religious leaders and formed the Ecumenical Coalition of the Mahoning Valley. On its Executive Committee



# When Industry Leaves It to Die?

unemployed. The prophetic demand for justice, Christ's compassionate concern for the victims of man's inhumanity to man, the need for hope laid upon them a sense of responsibility to address the crisis, the human suffering it entailed and the forces which created it. So they forged an Ecumenical Coalition of the Mahoning Valley.

It was not and is not the aim of the clergy themselves to buy and run a steel mill. Rather it is the intention of the Ecumenical Coalition to stimulate the community to get a new sense of confidence that it can take charge of its own destiny — at least to the degree that it need not again be the pawn of industrial decision-makers in some far-off place. •

What the Coalition proposes is a form of "Plymouth

Rock capitalism" in which the people of the Youngstown community and the men and women who work in the mill will have a balance of power in the industrial ownership. Studies show that worker productivity (not so much working harder as working "smarter") will go up as members of the work force themselves have a stake in the quality of the product and its profitability. With modernization and a boost from Uncle Sam by means of government guaranteed loans, the Campbell Works (so say the Coalition's economic advisors) can be bought, reopened and operated to meet the test of the market.

To be sure, the Coalition continues to wrestle with the "principalities and powers," of which St. Paul spoke. The owners of the Campbell plant have shown

were Methodist Bishop James S. Thomas, Presbyterian Executive John Sharick and Rabbi Sidney Berkowitz. In the last nine tumultuous months, the Coalition and steering committee have: Devised a plan to buy back the steel mill facility and put it under community/worker ownership and management; commissioned a study, for which they received a major HUD grant to detail the feasibility of the purchase and the approximate cost; amassed major public awareness of the issue, considerable funds from a variety of sources and the respect from some politicians who originally opposed them; ignited community hope, organized community support, and at least partially offset the predictable sense of despair on the part of the workers.

Beyond the realm of Youngstown, the efforts of the Coalition and the media coverage are prompting other religious leaders to think seriously about the responsibility of the international business world to the people it hires for production.

The Youngstown facility in question is Campbell Works, an operation of Youngstown Sheet and Tube, one of the many large steel companies which fill the Mahoning Valley. Youngstown Sheet and Tube is owned by the Lykes Corporation in New Orleans. Against the advice of the Justice Department in 1969, the financially-troubled Lykes corporation acquired enough stock to merge with the financially secure Sheet and Tube. That was when the future of Campbell Works

was dramatically affected. "It cannot seriously be doubted that Youngstown is slated to be an appendage of Lykes," wrote the Justice Department, "even though this is a case of the tail wagging the dog — and steel-making interests will not be paramount in the new company's conduct." The merger, it said, "jeopardizes Youngstown's competitive viability in terms of finances required for technological improvements and innovations in its steel production facilities."

The Department's prophecy was realized. Lykes began using the Sheet and Tube assets to pay off debts. Originally, the money was earmarked for sorely needed improvements. These were never made. Campbell Works began to show major losses. Second and third generation steel workers watched their factory and their enthusiasm deteriorate. The banks which originally financed Lykes' loan withdrew and invested their money in Japanese steel mills.

Fifteen minutes before the day shift ended on Sept. 19, employees were informed the plant was closing. Management cited low import steel prices, lack of government incentives and other related factors as the cause.

Angered most by the arbitrary manner in which the closing was handled, the Ecumenical Coalition initially collected enough money to investigate the economic implications of the decision and to address the effect it was having on the psychological stability of the



reluctance to sell the shut-down facilities (for competition is not often welcomed even by those who extol the virtues of "free enterprise"). Only proddings from the U.S. Attorney General, who has been pressed by the Coalition, has brought them to the bargaining table.

Civic leaders and politicians, too, have been footdraggers: reluctant to endorse the jeremiad critiques of the system which the Pastoral Letter identified; dubious that anyone else could find ways to make steel profitably in Youngstown if the great corporations cannot do it.

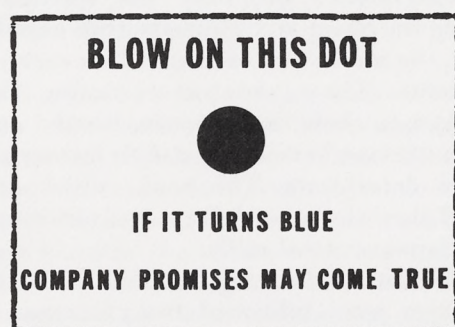
Equally skeptical have been rank and file of church members, many of them so accustomed to thinking of Christianity in the institutional terms of their local church that to see their bishops out in the arena of controversial community issues actually makes them hostile.

But there is a positive side, too: the posture of church and synagogue demonstrating that the religious concern for community is real and not so much pious talk; the revelation that the ache and pain of the unemployed steel workers and their families is as serious a focus of the church's mission as the well-being of the religious institution; the vision of an earlier American dream that workers can feel a closer relation to the purpose of their labor.

Isaiah (in Chapter 58) put the rationale for the Coalition's efforts in powerful words long ago: "Look . . . you oppress all your workers and strike the poor with your fist. Let the oppressed go free and break every yoke. . . Then will your light shine like the dawn and your wound be quickly healed over . . . You will rebuild the ancient ruins, build upon the old foundations. You will be called *Conciliator, restorer of households.*" ■

community. Bishop Burt contacted the Washington-based Institute for Policy Studies, where Dr. Richard Barnet organized political and economic experts for consultation. The Roman Catholic diocese released the Rev. Edward Stanton to work as full-time director of the Coalition.

"We are not experts in steel production or economic matters," the religious leaders said in a pastoral letter. But, ". . . the decision is the result of a way of doing business in this country that too often fails to take into account the human dimensions of economic action . . .



The costs of this decision are overwhelming. The loss of jobs, income and production is enormous. No less clear, on reflection, are the human and community consequences of these losses — the strains on marriage and family life, increased depression, alcoholism and alienation, as well as lost confidence, ambition and selfrespect. . . Behind the statistics and headlines lie

individuals, families and communities left vulnerable and fearful by this decision. This is not in any sense a purely economic problem."

Within weeks of the closing, Bishop Burt, Father Stanton, Presbyterian minister Charles Rawlings (an aide to Burt) and Gerald Dickey, editor of the local steel workers union newspaper, flew to Washington to meet with the Institute for Policy Studies. There they met Dr. Gar Alperovitz of the Exploratory Project on Economic Alternatives. At that meeting, Dickey suggested the plant be bought by the workers and the community. The idea caught fire and received major support from Alperovitz, who saw change as coming from the bottom up. To effect this, he said, there would have to be a "powerful mobilization of community, national religious and other sentiment." Otherwise, private investors would be unwilling to buy and reopen the plant and "very little is likely to occur."

The Ohio delegation left Washington with a "Save Our Valley" campaign plan. They would seek the cooperation of banks in establishing "no risk" accounts for people wanting to pledge "earnest money"; solicit the cooperation of all area clergy in an effort to bring the message to the people; conduct a major study on the feasibility of purchasing the Campbell Works; raise money from the various denominations and make Youngstown a national media event.

Members of the Coalition's Executive Board each put up \$10,000. After hearing from a HUD-financed study



team that the total package would be \$535 million, substantial sums were raised by national and state denominational headquarters. The Ohio Baptist Convention contributed \$10,000; the American Baptist National Ministries gave \$25,000. The Presbyterian Board of Pensions provided \$200,000 with an additional \$500,000 speculated. Episcopalians at a New York Coalition meeting pledged \$60,000 and Riverside Church earmarked \$100,000.

Breakdown on expenses includes: Purchase, \$120 million; renewing the plant, \$65 million; cost reduction improvements, \$40 million; replacement of major facilities (including coke plant and blast furnaces), \$160 million; environmental protection measures, \$40 million.

On June 21, U.S. Attorney General Griffin Bell approved the merger of Lykes Corporation and LTV Corporation, despite the recommendations of his antitrust division and the request by the Coalition that any merger carry the stipulation that the new corporation cooperate with efforts to buy the Campbell Works. Bell approved the merger without stipulation.

LTV owns Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation, the seventh-largest producer in the country. Sheet and Tube is the eighth largest. Both companies are financially troubled, and observers indicated the merger would mean more closings in the Youngstown area.

Bell said his department's study of the merger "led me to conclude that Lykes faced a grave probability of a business failure in the near future and that the prospects for turning the situation around, absent of the proposed merger, were highly speculative."

In response to the merger, Father Stanton said that either LTV will bargain with the Coalition or public pressure would be mounted to force them to do so. "The pressure of public opinion would crucify them," he said.

Public opinion plays a major role in the Coalition's ability to be successful. According to one source on the Coalition's steering committee, the situation in Youngstown has gotten to the stage of "push and shove." Area union leaders have assured the Coalition that if the Campbell Works were reopened, rank and file members would eliminate much of the goldbricking and stealing that takes place in steel mills, thereby increasing worker productivity by at least 15 percent. An estimated 200 clergy are working in support of the Coalition. Yet, reports the steering committee source, there is an attempt by some politicians and business people to undermine the necessity of reopening the Campbell Works. They are saying other industry is being invited into the Valley and that the religious leaders are out of

their field of expertise. The situation is frequently testy and the cutting edge on the future will be, according to the source, whether or not the "religious leaders have the gumption" to stick with it. Even more vulnerable, he said, are the clergy. "In the midst of this political struggle," he queried, will the clergy hang tough?"

"The ultimate goal of purchasing Campbell Works is to put the jobless back to work and to give the local community greater control of its economic destiny. It also hopes to be a model for other communities that want to fight back when giant companies close their plants and abandon their workers.

"We believe that industrial investment decisions ought to take into account the needs and desires of employees and the community at large," the pastoral letter declared. "... Our traditional teaching points out that economic decisions ought not to be left to the judgment of a few persons with economic power, but should be shared with the larger community which is affected by the decisions."

In the proposal for support from national denominations, the Coalition stated their desire to "encourage consultations within the U.S. Catholic Conference, the National Council of Churches and its member denominations . . . and the appropriate national Jewish structures, concerning how the focus on Youngstown can be used as a national strategy to develop effective responses and solutions to the increasingly pervasive crisis of escaping capital and rising unemployment." These consultations would provide coordination of the resources of the religious community in support of Youngstown and national policy; provide a national interfaith presentation to President Carter and Congress on concerns for the need of public policy support of the Youngstown and other similar struggles; consider with more urgency the need for a National Interfaith Commission which would focus on the plight of the cities and the crisis caused by the flight of capital and jobs.

As THE WITNESS goes to press, representatives of the Coalition will be meeting with Vice President Mondale in an effort to solicit interest and support. Ultimately they hope to meet with President Carter, who, according to Bishop Burt, "must be persuaded that the Youngstown situation is a kind of showcase of communities which must be run by community people, not the multinational conglomerates. This town has been shocked and disheartened about its financial future. It's a matter of helping a community to have faith in itself." ■



# Maria, Raisa Receive \$38,000

The sum of approximately \$38,000 was received from the Episcopal Church last month by Maria Cueto and Raisa Nemikin, the two former staffers on the National Commission for Hispanic Affairs who spent more than 10 months in prison for refusing to testify before a Grand Jury.

The women had hoped that their salaries and legal fees would have been covered — a hope also shared by a commission from the National Council of Churches which voiced it in an appeal to Presiding Bishop John Allin.

"But our salaries alone would have amounted to some \$28,000-\$29,000," said Maria Cueto. "We will have to try to divide the sum in an equitable way to pay our lawyers."

"People may think that we gave up too quickly," Maria added. "But when we saw the humiliating way that Bob Potter was treated at the last Executive Council meeting, we felt that nobody should be put through the mill like that just for the sake of money. (See Diocesan Press Story, July WITNESS).

"And if you read or heard about what went on in the Council, it was all centered around dollars and cents. The deeper issues concerning the jeopardizing of the Hispanic ministry through Grand Jury abuse were totally lost. Raisa and I felt that it was wrong to drag out the debate in those terms. It was weighing too much on us."

The settlement, made on condition that the women sign release papers, came in a check for \$35,000 labeled the Suffragan Bishops Discretionary Fund. It was sent by Bishop Quintin Primo, chairman of the Division for Church and Society, who mediated the negotiations. Checks totaling a little more than \$3,000 were also received by the two women from the Domestic and Foreign Mission Society as severance pay.

Concerning the final settlement, Attorney Robert Potter commented, "I regret that the full costs of the women's defense were not borne by the National Church, and that general releases

running to the National Church were required of them before payment. I do believe that the latter is not the usual procedure on termination of employment either by the church or any other organization."

The financial settlement ended a long saga that began at the end of 1976 when FBI agents queried Ms. Cueto and Ms. Nemikin during an investigation around the FALN, a militant Puerto Rican group which has claimed responsibility for a number of bombings. During the course of the investigation, the two women and seven others — all somehow connected with the National Commission on Hispanic Affairs — were jailed for refusing to testify before Grand Juries in Chicago and New York, claiming that the investigation was being used to harass Hispanics and to destroy the Puerto Rican Independence movement in the United States.

An attorney close to the investigation from its inception — Linda Backiel of the Grand Jury Project — traced the history of the affair in poetry:

## For Raisa, For Maria *with all due respect*

The man in black robes  
finds himself addressing  
a simple case: "If there were  
a murder in the cathedral  
and I asked the priest . . .  
it would be a simple case."

With all due respect,  
I must dissent  
with your Honor  
as to whether the subject  
is murder in the cathedral  
or justice  
in the city halls.  
Let me propose to you another  
equally hypothetical case.

Let us imagine  
we are someplace  
safely long ago and far  
away  
in a nation ripped with strife  
and inequality. On the one side  
is a small minority of people  
recently transplanted from a warm island  
to the tin and cardboard boxes of this city;  
they are for the most part poor. Unemployed.  
They do not have university educations.  
The women of this people  
have been made sterile. They speak  
a different language.

A small but growing minority  
within this minority



---

has been raising its voice  
now and again raising the standard of freedom  
and justice for all.  
From time to time incendiary devices  
are planted, bearing this message and from time  
to time priests climb into the pulpit  
bearing this message.

Few people listen to the priests  
but they are pulled out of the pulpits.  
The priest continues to preach; she preaches  
to schoolchildren and to women washing clothes  
she teaches songs bright with the promise  
of freedom, and justice for all  
but the bombs speak louder; the lords  
and their masters listen; even judges  
can hear the bombs  
and they remember the words  
of the priest they silenced.

They call her back to a room full of faces;  
Inquisitors. They speak  
a different language. They are armed  
with the power of the majority.  
They do not need bombs.  
One is a jailer with keys to the open door  
and the steeltrap in his boyish pockets.  
"You must answer our questions," he begins.  
"This will be painless, if you are anaesthetized  
to the cries of women  
for freedom and justice  
for their children.

"This will be painless.  
I will administer the anaesthetic.  
You will feel  
nothing  
from now on;  
the operation is painless  
and perfectly legal.  
You will answer all our questions  
and your dreams  
will bear no promises; no flowers  
of freedom equality justice  
and liberty.

Now.  
You must answer all our questions  
in the language WE understand;  
the clearcut simple truths  
of those who are pleased  
with the platitudes; butter our wonder-  
bread with the simple truths  
of things as they are;

give us the smooth easy words  
of those who wear the overcoat  
of confidence in the majority.  
Just fulfill these, our simple requests  
and you will go free."

Did they guarantee  
a job? Food for the table? A place to sleep? Peace  
of mind? A free  
spirit?  
Did they promise not to rob her  
of her children?  
Can they guarantee  
her liberty?  
They are not interested in these questions.  
They are accustomed to easy answers  
served quickly with their scrambled eggs.  
"This man, this picture of a man the prosecutor  
is showing you now. Do you know his face  
his habits his children his wife is he  
hiding under your bed does he build  
dreams at night? Believe  
in freedom justice for all  
equality?

"We have information  
and reason to believe  
those dreams are in fact a sinister disguise  
under which he is hiding the bombs  
that disturb us so.  
We have information  
and reason to believe you know. And we know  
only the guilty  
keep silent.  
You must have something to hide.  
Is he under your bed does he  
wear a disguise is he wearing the dress  
of freedom equality and fraternity?

We have reason to suspect  
you are not telling all that you know.  
Do I seem to detect  
some hostility in your reply?  
You do not trust us to protect  
your children your dreams your lives?

"We are being very patient.  
We will give you one more chance.  
You must answer all our questions:  
Feel nothing, answer  
directly now  
or be put to the test:  
and the witches  
always  
drown."

— Linda Backiel

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Maggie Kuhn, Founder  
Gray Panthers

"I'd like to think the Christian Church does indeed affirm life as a continuum, not just in little segments," says Margaret E. Kuhn, 73, founder of the Gray Panthers. "But the church is just as age-segregated and as ageist as any other group in society. It thinks in ageist terms."

Eight years ago, Maggie, as she prefers to be called, was a victim of ageism — society's segregation of and discrimination against people because of their age. The United Presbyterian Church forced her to retire. The implication was that she was too old to be a productive, creative worker in its Office of Church and Society.

Today Maggie views that decision as a reflection of attitudes in the broader society, where aging itself is largely a dehumanizing affair. An automobile graveyard is Maggie's favorite image of the treatment of old people in the United States: "Get what you can from 'em, and once they have no more utility, put 'em in a heap with the others and let 'em rust." She believes that as long as a person's worth is measured solely in economic terms, this country will continue to cast aside the aged, and people will continue to fear the aging process.

But growing old has not deterred Maggie Kuhn. Since her "retirement" she has become the personification of the 10,000 member Gray Panther organization. It's her voice most often heard denouncing ageism. She travels about 100,000 miles a year speaking to various groups, including Congressional Committees. But she's not content to complain about what is. Maggie also has ideas about what might be.

"I think of aging as a universal force, because it happens to all of us," Maggie says. "I believe very profoundly that it's a celebration of life. Aging is the one fact

## Growing Old Also



of life human beings enjoy that relates us to the whole created order. Every living thing ages and dies. And when you get that view of it, age is no longer something to be feared."

Maggie believes the church and the rest of society need old peoples' insight and experience as the United States faces an enormous increase in old age population in the next 50 years. She calls this future population distribution the "new demography."

The postwar baby boom is behind the new demography. It's represented by a bulge on the population curve that is slowly moving toward the older age groups. The Senate Committee on Aging says one of every nine (23 million) Americans is 65 years or older now. By 2030, the ratio is expected to drop to one in five (52 million), with numbers distributed fairly evenly among all age groups.

Because of the new demography, Maggie thinks society must adjust to allow old people to participate. She calls on the church to do some self-examination.

"The denominations should look at the structure and governance of their 'protective care' institutions: nursing and retirement homes, retirement communities and hospitals. This is the age of self-determination. How democratic are they? My observation is they're run by the judicatory in a very high-handed, paternalistic fashion without much input from the people who live there."

Maggie suggests, as an example, that Pacific Homes — seven Methodist-related retirement communities with about 1,850 members — may not have gone bankrupt if the residents had been more in control.

"If the residents had been serving on the board, if those homes had been

operating on a cooperative basis, they might have saved a lot of heartaches. The residents would have been making decisions on how the money was to be spent. And perhaps agreeing along the line that something could be cut back, or some other funding could be found."

Nevertheless, Maggie believes the whole idea of age-segregated housing has questionable sociological value.

"The new programs the churches are now dreaming up should not go that old route," she says. "We have found that 'ghettoizing' people on the basis of income does not work. And, I think we will find in the next 20 years that 'ghettoizing' on the basis of age is also a failure."

As one alternative, she proposes the churches open the dormitories of their colleges and seminaries to old people. By 1992, the number of 18 year olds will decrease 26 percent. Many schools will close if they don't adapt the use of their facilities and their educational programs to include older people.

"There are waiting lists to get into retirement homes, so why not use that dormitory space?" she asks. "It's projected that hundreds of liberal arts colleges are going to be bankrupt by the end of the century because of population changes. The wise ones are going to attract old and middle-aged students."

Maggie calls this programming and use of facilities "cross-generational." The Gray Panthers are, in fact, a cross-generational group. Their slogan is "*Age and Youth in Action*." The coalition is based on similar need — affordable housing, for example — usually arising from low incomes.

According to the Senate Committee on Aging, a typical family head 65 or older earns only \$6,292, or less than half the income of a family head younger

than 65. Unemployment rates of young people are among the highest in the country. Old people and youth have little to lose and much to gain by being allied activists.

"The middle age group is oppressed," Maggie says, "because they are locked into a system they can't change or escape from."

Cross-generational programming is the direction Maggie thinks education should go. She questions the assumption of Western education that students learn best with their peer group. Education, including religious education, needs to be more integrative by age.

"Age segregation starts at nursery school. I think the learning process is enhanced when people of different ages are learning together — when you've got learners of all ages being a part of the teaching-learning situation, and alternating roles."

Professional education could be expanded to include not only cross-generational learning, but also interdisciplinary study. Maggie believes this two-pronged innovation is particularly important for seminaries.

"There ought to be discussions in the seminaries among retired clergy and seminarians in their early 20's," she says. "For clergy in continuing education and seminarians, I'd like to see seminaries develop some interdisciplinary courses with medical, law and nursing schools, and schools of social work."

Maggie points to seminarians she has taught who work in nursing homes. They've been "appalled" by the conditions of the homes and the treatment of the old people. But they've had little support, if any, from their schools.

"Seminarians need to be advocates within the nursing homes, to know how

# Along With Maggie Kuhn

by Lockwood Hoehl



to complain, to be aware of abuse and neglect, and to be aware of the standards that ought to be enforced. Those ministers-in-training ought not to be captive to the system. They ought to be changing that system."

She adds that in private nursing homes especially it is imperative that a seminarian have counsel — through interdisciplinary courses — so that the student knows the law and what his or her rights are as an advocate for the residents.

A spin-off of such education would be the sensitizing of attorneys, doctors, nurses, and social workers to the special needs and problems of old people. Maggie is encouraged by the American Medical Students Association which established last March a task force on geriatric medicine. She's less pleased with lawyers.

"Few lawyers recognize that justice is the right of the people, and not just the privilege of rich clients and large corporations," she says. "The laws old people encounter are technical. We don't know what our rights are, and the law mystifies the whole system.

"The attorneys, after you've got them, are not aware of the intricacies of the law as it pertains to pensions, Social Security benefits, guardianships, trusteeships, and the question of being admitted to an institution in the case of incompetency. All these matters are extraordinarily complex.

"And a corporation or constitutional lawyer doesn't know anything about that. He isn't an advocate. We old people would like to see a lot less lawyering."

One thing they are glad to see is a study conducted by the American Bar Association of 38 countries where there are alternatives to the courts for resolving legal conflicts. In many of the countries old people make the judgments.

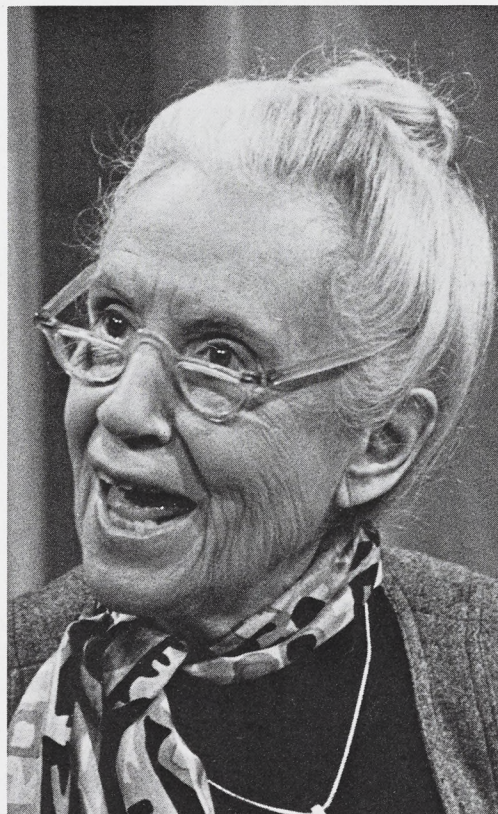
"That's the way it is in China," Maggie says. "There's a peoples' tribunal system. This is being done in only a small way in the United States."

One way old people can get legal assistance from qualified and sympathetic attorneys is through the

Senior Citizens Law Center in California, a clearing house for about 3,000 public interest lawyers.

Helping old people with legal problems, such as drafting a simple will, is just one of the many services Maggie suggests parishes could provide for them.

"A lot of people die without wills," she says. "And they are scared of lawyers,



***"I think of aging as a universal force because it happens to all of us. I believe very profoundly that it's a celebration of life."***

scared of lawyers' fees. But you don't need to have a lawyer. A group of people within a congregation could get together with a person who has a paralegal background."

She'd like to see local churches become neighborhood centers serving old peoples' needs, such as health care, housing, and companionship.

"The congregation itself could constitute an extended family and bring people together — not just couples and

families — on the basis of common interest, a common concern, and a common love of Jesus Christ. The churches must get off that family fixation."

The emphasis put on families and couples by parishes in worship, study, and social activities excludes single old people, like Maggie, for instance. A minister of a Presbyterian Church in Columbus, Ohio told Maggie there were 50 widows in his congregation. Each of them lived alone.

"All of them were lonely. Many were afraid. And many of them were having a hard time maintaining their homes. But none of them considered sharing. They hadn't thought about it! Now, the church could enable that to occur."

"Enabling" is the important word for Maggie. Programs that congregations develop can be established and continued by laypersons.

A young Methodist minister in Philadelphia started, almost inadvertently, a team ministry of laywomen to widows. There were three women in his congregation whose husbands died about the same time. He called on them and buried their husbands. But he felt more was needed, so he decided to get them together.

"They now have an outreach that involves about 60 women of all ages who have been widowed," Maggie says. "It even includes other congregations. And *the women* have done it. The core group look to the minister for technical assistance, so to speak, but it's *their* ministry."

Often widows are left without help to make the adjustment to life as a single, and without models other than those Maggie calls "professional widows" perpetually in mourning.

Widows and other single old women are a minority within a minority requiring special attention. Many have never worked outside their homes, confronted bureaucracies, or had to make their way on their own. They are among the poorest of the poor. According to New York City's Department of the Aging, in 1975 the median income of women older than 65



was \$2,642. Typically, women receive the minimum Social Security payments.

Low income is frequently a barrier to old peoples' receiving adequate health care. Maggie's ideal health program would emphasize prevention of illness and disease, and aim at what she calls "holistic health" — physical, mental, spiritual, and environmental well-being. As she sees it, new programs, local and national, need to be established.

Churches fit into her vision of neighborhood health care called the "Healthy Block."

"A church could enable self-help groups set up a good-health center using church facilities," she says. "Good-health means people who are healthy come in to stay healthy. A Lutheran minister in Springfield, Ohio has established a good-health center that has been run very successfully by the congregation, the minister, a nurse, and a general practitioner. It's open every day to the neighborhood. And the doctor makes house calls."

Neighborhood health care is the core of the Gray Panther supported National Health Service (NHS). This program has been proposed to Congress by Rep. Ronald V. Dellums of California. According to the Gray Panthers quarterly newspaper NETWORK, "National Health Service. stresses government responsibility for health care as a public service."

The Dellums bill calls for the NHS to be an independent agency reporting to the President and a National Health Board. NETWORK says the NHS will provide "health education, diagnosis and treatment of illness and injury, prevention measures, rehabilitation programs, and drugs, supplies and appliances." Supplemental services like child care, ambulance, and home health care are included.

"Basic Health Rights" are a revolutionary part of the Dellums legislation. These rights would guarantee "paid leave to workers to receive health services, no treatment without prior written consent, and the right to death with dignity, including the right to die at home."



As head of the 10,000-member Gray Panther organization, Maggie travels some 100,000 miles a year to speak to various groups, including Congressional Committees.

Death and dying are, of course, important issues for old people. Maggie wants the churches to get the issues into the open to help people prepare for their own and others' deaths.

"The churches need to be working with their members on the idea of grieving," she says, "and making it possible for people to cry and to comfort each other. Men need that particularly."

She suggests churches could get parishioners to write "living wills." These documents instruct a person's family, clergy, physician, and attorney not to use extraordinary measures to prolong her or his own life. In many states living wills are not yet legally binding. Lobbying in support of them could be an ongoing church project.

Maggie thinks churches also could organize memorial societies in their communities as an alternative to the \$4 billion funeral business.

"A memorial society is a group of people concerned about the exploitation of death. They want to memorialize life — celebrate life — rather than to exploit grief and pretty up the corpse. We support efforts to take the exorbitant profits out of the funeral

industry. Who needs a \$4,000 casket? Not the corpse!"

Preparation for death can go a long way toward avoiding the exploitation of grief. The hospice movement, started in England, stresses compassionate care for the dying and terminally ill. Medical treatment is mostly limited to comforting the dying person physically. Drugs may be used to relieve pain. There are no machines to prolong life. Psychologists and social workers help the dying and the family share the dying process.

"What is important is surrounding the dying and the family with comfort, compassionate care, with an opportunity to review life and to prepare for leaving this world in a dignified way," Maggie says. "Many things can be learned in that process. And the goal is to have people die at home. The death that occurs in a hospital is not a good death. It's violent, and it's largely a lonely, dehumanizing affair. We need to rob death of its terror." ■

**Lockwood Hoehl** is a free-lance writer and photographer who lives in Pittsburgh, Pa.



# Resources for and About Old People

(From NETWORK, Spring, 1978)

Gray Panther National Office  
Edith Glese, Coordinator  
Jean Hopper, Librarian  
3700 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Chairperson, National Steering Committee  
Alice Adler  
2834 Birchwood  
Wilmette, IL 60091

National Task Force on a New Economic Order  
S. Shubert Frye  
Hortonville, NY 12745

National Task Force on Health  
Frances Klafter  
1734 P Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20036

or  
Glen Gersmehl  
525 E. 5th Street  
New York, NY 10009

National Task Force on Minority Outreach  
Irving Wiesenfeld  
609 Columbus Avenue, #6Q  
New York, NY 10024

National Task Force on Older Women  
Rita Wreck  
c/o National Office

National Task Force on Youth  
Sarah Luria  
c/o National Office  
or  
Steve Wayne  
912 Lido Nord  
Newport Beach, CA 92663

Media Watch (detects and publicizes stereotyping of old people in media)  
Lydia Bragger  
475 Riverside Drive, Room 861  
New York, NY 10027

National Senior Citizens Law Center  
1709 W. 8th Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90017  
or  
1200 15th Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20005

Gray Panther NETWORK  
Chuck Preston, Editor  
411 Lakeview Drive  
York, PA 17403

Subscriptions: \$3 individuals; \$6 for institutions/libraries and foreign address.

Continental Association of Funeral and Memorial Societies  
Elizabeth Clemmer, Executive Director  
1828 L Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20036

The Honorable Ronald V. Dellums  
House of Representatives  
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Claude Pepper  
Chairman, House Select Committee on Aging  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Senate Committee on Aging  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

## BOOKS

*Maggie Kuhn on Aging: A Dialogue*, edited by Dieter Hessel (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1977). Available from Gray Panther National Office, \$4.45, including postage.

*Nursing Homes: A Citizens' Action Guide* by Linda Horn and Elma Griesel. Available from Gray Panther National Office, \$4.20, including postage.

*A Healthy State* by Victor W. Sidel and Ruth Sidel (Pantheon Books, New York). International perspective on success and failure of American Medical System.

*Love and Sex in the Sixties* by Robert N. Butler.

*The Disabling Professions*, essays by Ivan Illich and others on how the professions make and keep us powerless and dependent on them.

## Of Youth & Old Age

A sermon preached recently at St. Stephen and the Incarnation, Washington, D.C. by William MacKaye, who identifies himself as "a veteran Episcopalian" and former religion editor of the Washington Post, was built around a Hasidic story. The story goes like this:

Once there was a very old, very wise rabbi, who was famous in his part of the world for his ability to answer difficult questions.

One day there came to him a troubled young man, who said to him, "Rabbi, Scripture teaches us that God is a good and loving creator. How can this be, when all around me I see sickness and cruelty and destruction?"

The rabbi replied, "Young man, I listen to you, and I think I hear you saying that you believe that maybe you could make a better creation than God."

The young man thought about this a bit, then confessed, "Yes, I do think so."

The rabbi said, "So begin."

— Quoted in *Bread* 6/25/78

Coming up in

## THE WITNESS

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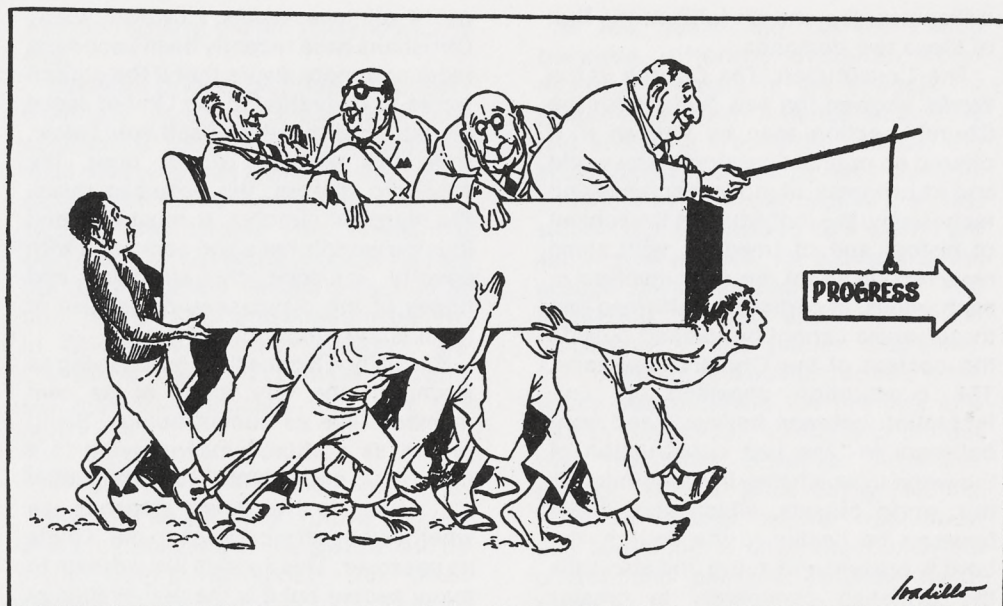
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# The Gospel According to the Poor

by Gustavo Gutierrez

The Rev. Gustavo Gutierrez, author of "A Theology of Liberation," is part Quechuan Indian, and exercises his ministry in Lima, Peru. This article is reprinted from *Concilium*, Volume 104, edited by N. Greinacher/A. Muller, The Seabury Press.



I should make the point at the beginning that the church is not involved in the question of poverty by the fact that it is present in a poor country. It is involved primarily and fundamentally by the God of the Bible to whom it wants to, and must, be faithful. The fact that the church is present in a poor country can indeed provide the whole church with the opportunity better to understand its responsibility to be a community bearing witness to God, who became poor in Jesus Christ. This leads to a second point. The expression "poor countries" is ambiguous. Strictly speaking I mean countries where the great majority of the population live in poverty caused by an unjust social order. This means that the question of the poor in the church involves not only the God we believe in but the social conflict we live in.

Bearing this in mind I'd like to suggest some of the thoughts which have arisen in the course of our life experiences and discussions in Peru. These lead to the conclusion that the poor today rather than being regarded merely as a "problem for the church" raise the question of what "being the church" really means.

For most of its history, the church has been working out how it sees itself. From

within, so to speak. Supernatural salvation is an absolute value of which the church is the sole guardian. Western Christianity is constructed pastorally and theologically in relation to the believer, the Christian. In order to understand itself the church looks inwards. This has been called ecclesiocentrism.

The historical reasons for this attitude are obvious. When new countries were discovered the task of incorporating them into the church was seen as a mission of salvation. The church was historically bound up with Western culture, the white race and the ruling class of European society and its extension throughout the world was in these Western terms. The missionaries followed in the tracks of the colonialists. Ecclesiocentrism savored of Westernization.

It is a cliché to say that Vatican II put an end to the "Christendom" mentality. The time has come for dialogue and service to the world. This world is hostile to the church, existed centuries before it, and is proud of its own values. Pope John XXIII gave the Council the task of opening the church to the world, finding an appropriate theological language, and bearing witness to a church for the poor. After it had overcome its initial



difficulties, the church fulfilled the first of these two demands.

The Constitution, *The Church in the World*, showed the new horizon for the Church's action seen by Vatican II. It offered an optimistic vision of the world and its progress, of modern science and technology, the individual as the subject of history and of freedom, with some reservations about the risks involved in such values. In particular it affirmed that these values cannot be fulfilled outside the context of the Christian message. The constitution appealed for collaboration between believers and non-believers in "the just construction of the world in which they live together." In this world outside, which should not however be hostile to the church, the Lord is present and active and also calls the Christian community to greater loyalty to the Gospel. In this world the church must fulfill its mission as a sign, a universal sacrament of salvation.

The great claims of the modern world are recognized, but with due moderation. On the other hand social conflicts are only mentioned in general terms of the existence of poverty and injustice in the world, and the necessity for the development of the poor countries. The individualistic root of bourgeois society is also maintained to a certain extent.

There is no serious criticism of the effects of domination by monopolistic capitalism on the working classes, particularly in the poor countries. Nor is there any clear realization of the new forms of oppression and exploitation perpetrated in the name of these modern world values. The Council is concerned with something else: the time has come for dialogue between the church and modern society. That this society is not homogeneous, but divided into conflicting social classes does not come within the scope of Vatican II. The world to which it is "opening up" is bourgeois society.

The third task given by John XXIII to the Council barely appears in its texts. The theme of poverty, "Schema 14" as it was called in the Council corridors, knocked on the Council's door but only

got a glimpse inside. However, many Christians have recently been becoming more and more aware that if the church wants to be faithful to the God of Jesus Christ, it has to rethink itself *from below*, from the position of the poor, the exploited classes, the despised races, the marginal cultures. It must descend into the world's hells and commune with poverty, injustice, the struggles and hopes of the dispossessed because of them is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Basically it means the church living as a church the way many of its own members live as human beings. Being reborn as a church means dying to a history of oppression and complicity. Its power to live anew depends on whether it has the courage to die. This is its passover. This sounds like a dream to many people but it is the real challenge confronting the Christian community today. The time will come when any other way of talking by the church will sound hollow and meaningless.

There are now many people working along these lines, in various and perhaps modest ways (the political dimension of the Gospel, involvement in the struggle of the poor, defense of human rights, Africanization of the Christian faith, breaking with the colonial past, and so on). The aim is to be faithful to the Gospel and the constant renewal of God's call. Gradually people are realizing that in the last resort it is not a question of the church being poor, but of the poor of this world being the People of God, the disturbing witness to the God who sets free.

### Viewpoint of Underdogs

Human history is where we encounter the God of Jesus Christ. And in Jesus Christ we proclaim God's love for all human beings. As we have already mentioned, this history is a history of conflict, but we cannot leave it at that. We must also insist that history (in which God is revealed and proclaimed) must be *re-read from the viewpoint of the poor*. Human history has been written, as a Brazilian theologian has put it, "with a white hand." The point of view of the "underdogs" of history is quite different.

History must be re-read from this viewpoint of their struggles, resistances and hopes.

Great efforts have been made to blot out the memory of the oppressed. This deprives them of a source of energy, historical will and rebellion. Today the humiliated nations are trying to understand their past in order to build their present on solid bases. The history of Christianity has also been written with a white, western, bourgeois hand. We must recall to mind the "scourged Christs of the Indies," as Bartolome de las Casas called the Indians of the American continent, and with them all the other poor people who have been victims of the lords of this world. Their memory still lives in cultural expressions, popular religion and the resistance to impositions by the church bureaucracy. The memory of Christ is present in every hungry, thirsty, oppressed and humiliated person, in the despised races and the exploited classes.

### Re-Making History

But the phrase "re-reading history" I have used might sound like a mere intellectual exercise if I did not mean it as a *re-making of history*. It is not possible to re-read history unless we enter into the successes and failures of the fight for freedom. Re-making history means subverting it, that is to say, "turning it upside down, and seeing it from below instead of from above. The established order has taught us to think of subversion as something bad, because it threatens it. But contrariwise it is bad to be and perhaps go on being a "super-verse," supporting the ruling power and seeing history from the standpoint of the great of this world.

This subversive history involves a new experience of faith, a new spirituality and a new proclamation of the gospel. Understanding the faith in terms of the historical praxis of liberation leads to the proclamation of the Gospel as the very heart of this praxis. This proclamation is a watchguard, an active involvement and solidarity with the interests and struggles of the working classes, the



word which becomes effective in action, defines attitudes and is celebrated in thanksgiving.

The Gospel proclaims liberation in Jesus Christ, liberation which uproots all injustice and exploitation and brings friendship and love. I do not mean a liberation which could be interpreted "spiritually," still so dear to certain Christian circles. Hunger and injustice are not merely economic and social problems but human ones and they challenge the very basis on which we live our Christian faith. As Berdyaev put it, reinterpreting terms frequently used in such circles, "If I'm hungry, it's a material problem, but if someone else is hungry it's a spiritual problem."

Love and sin are historical realities which take place in real situations. That is why the Bible speaks of liberation and justice as opposed to the slavery and humiliation of the poor in history. The *gift of sonship* is accomplished in history. By accepting others as our brothers and sisters we accept this free gift not in word but in deed. This is living God's love and bearing witness to it. The proclamation of a God who loves all human beings equally must be embodied in history, become history. Proclaiming this liberating love in a society ruled by injustice and the exploitation of one social class by another, turns this "becoming history" into an appeal and a conflict.

Within a society where social classes conflict we are true to God when we side with the poor, the working classes, the despised races, the marginal cultures. This is the position whence to live and proclaim the Gospel. Proclaiming it to the oppressed of this world will show them that their situation is against God's will which is enacted in liberating events. This will help them realize the vile injustice of their situation.

The Gospel read from the point of view of the poor and the exploited and militant in their struggles for freedom requires a people's church: a church which arises from the people, a people who wrest the Gospel from the hands of the great ones of this world and thus prevent it being used to justify a

situation against the will of the liberating God.

When the poor expropriate the gospel from the hands of those who now consider it their private property, we shall have what has recently begun to be called "the social appreciation of the Gospel." The Gospel tells us that the sign of the arrival of the Kingdom is that the poor have the Gospel preached to them. It is the poor who hope and believe in Christ, or, strictly speaking, are Christians. Can we turn this around and say that the Christians today are the poor?

### Poor Must Preach

Perhaps we should go further and say that the preaching of the Gospel will be truly liberating when the poor themselves are the preachers. Then of course the proclamation of the Gospel will be a stumbling block, it will be a Gospel "unacceptable to society" and expressed in the vernacular. Thus the Lord will speak to us. Only by listening to this voice will we recognize our saviour. This voice speaks "in ecclesia" with a different tone.

Thus the poor of this world are working out their "historical credo," telling themselves and others why they believe in the Lord who sets free. Because they believe in him in communion with a whole historical past, in the social conditions in which they are living now. In various places many attempts have been made and continue to be made in this direction. It is a mistake to think that Latin America today is totally submerged under repression and fascism. Moreover, for the people of the subcontinent, suffering is not something new; it has always been there, but so too have hope and the will to rebel.

For a long time these people have been exiles in their own land, but also making the exodus to regain it. The workers' power of resistance and creativity are incomprehensible to the defenders of the established order, and also disconcerting to those who have recently regarded themselves as their spokesmen.

A few years ago communication between different Christian communities engaged in the struggle for liberation in Latin America was active and enriching. Today the political and ecclesiastical conditions have changed and the lines have been broken to a great extent. But everywhere new efforts are starting: let us think, for example, of the groups being formed in Brazil. The increasing hunger and exploitation (especially in the poorer countries), imprisonment (the political arrests in the whole subcontinent, the bishops who met in Riobamba), torture and murder (the Honduran peasants, Argentine priests), are the price being paid for rebelling against secular oppression and beginning to understand what the church and being a Christian mean today.

But these lives and this bloodshed are a radical challenge to the whole church, not just the church in Latin America, requiring more than mere analysis. Its response to this challenge will decide how faithful it is to its own authentic tradition and thus to the God who "establishes justice and right."

How can I sing to God in a foreign land, asked the psalmist in exile. There can be no Christian life without "songs" to God, celebrations of his liberating love. But how can we sing to God in a world full of oppression and repression? This is a painful question for the Christian, involving the whole basis of his faith, requiring something like a new covenant "with us who are all of us here alive this day" (Deut. 5:3), breaking the historical covenant made with the ruling culture, race and class.

It requires a covenant with the poor of this world, a new kind of universality. This creates a feeling of panic in some; others lose their old securities, but many feel a disturbing sense of hope. As Jose Maria Arguedas puts it, it is a journey in which "we feel little knowledge but great hope." ■

### CREDITS

Cover, Ben Grim; p. 4, *The Virginia Churchman*; photos pp. 10, 12, and 13, Lockwood Hoehl; p. 15, *Akwesasne Notes*.



# Letters to the Editor

Continued from page 2

summoned "is defined in terms of mutuality," observing that this is an attempt to move "beyond the theological pitfalls" involved in appeals to authority or nature. But he seems to have exchanged one set of pitfalls for a deeper one. Mutuality, which characterizes human *relationships* of various types rather than human nature, is notably ambivalent. If mutuality is added to any of the destructive potentialities of human nature, such as fear, distrust, envy or malice, the resultant evils are not cured but increased.

On the other hand, if we take mutuality to imply or presuppose relations of love and affection, there are still types of mutuality which are generally regarded as undesirable, as, for example, in cases of incest or adultery. Again, in the kind of love exemplified in the parable of the good Samaritan, mutuality (in the sense of reciprocity) is irrelevant. Indeed, if we bear in mind the fact that some kinds of love are exclusive while others are universal, we may note that mutual affection can sometimes generate what Erich Fromm has called *egotism a deux*. Hence, despite current loose talk about the significance of "mutuality," it cannot possibly define the ideal.

Dr. Gessell also claims that no theological judgment must ever have the consequence of "de-personalization" or of rendering anybody "less than fully human." If he means that only *favorable* judgments about human conduct are allowable, lest unfavorable judgments should lessen the agent's sense of self-worth, the result would be to eliminate theological ethics entirely, since it would be idle to talk about norms of behavior if we could never take note of

their violation or register disapproval. It looks as if Dr. Gessell has overlooked the distinction between judgments concerning (a) proper norms of conduct and their violation, (b) the imputation of responsibility when violations occur, and (c) the imposition of sanctions or penalties. Sanctions or penalties can be regarded as dehumanizing or depersonalizing where they are cruel (as in the case of torture or mutilation) or vengefully severe (as in the case of imprisonment for dissent.) Also, an imputation of responsibility for a wholly involuntary action or condition might be so characterized. But a judgment that certain kinds of voluntary conduct are not exemplary for Christians cannot, in itself, be depersonalizing or dehumanizing — though it might be wrong on other grounds — since such a judgment necessarily *affirms* the full human personality of the agent or agents judged. This follows from the simple fact, recognized since Aristotle, that moral judgments of approval or disapproval apply only to the voluntary acts or dispositions of human beings. If imposing or maintaining norms of exemplary behavior could be depersonalizing or dehumanizing, there could be no norms at all.

In this connection it is especially important to recognize the difference between homosexual *orientation* and homosexual *conduct*. Because of the Christian doctrine that all persons, as human beings, are of equal worth in the sight of God, it is required that nobody be penalized or disqualified by reason of orientation alone. The considerations here are the same as those forbidding discrimination against racial minorities or women. But actual behavior is a different matter. There is no principal that all *conduct* is alike in the sight of God.

Hence, if homosexual *conduct* is to be protected, it must be on the grounds taken in the British Wolfenden Report, — i.e., that *private* sexual conduct between consenting adults is not a matter of *public* concern. This position can be universalized and rests on strong legal and moral ground; I strongly

support it. But if one departs from this position by demanding public approval or endorsement of homosexual practices or life-styles, one thereby accepts the view of such figures as Lord Devlin who, arguing against the Wolfenden recommendation, claimed that private homosexual conduct *is* a matter of public concern and thus properly subject to regulation or prohibition in case the public is so minded. This happened last year in Florida. To recognize this aspect of the problem poses no "theological snarl," as Dr. Gessell says, but should help to remove one.

We must also bear in mind, as Abraham Maslow points out, that the ethical perspective, from which conduct is judged acceptable or unacceptable, is different from the perspective of the rapist or pastor, the functions being distinct. Now it might conceivably be argued that the church should engage *only* in pastoral or therapeutic functions for the benefit of particular individuals and should avoid moral judgments altogether. But to take such a position would mean an end to theological ethics and an end to any concern for social justice or social renewal. I don't think Dr. Gessell fully grasps this aspect of the problem. In short, while Dr. Gessell's "perplexity" is made plain, it seems to be largely self-induced, or at least to reflect some rather serious misconceptions both as to the issues and as to the implications of his own views. I venture these comments because I consider that questions of theological ethics call for the best analysis we can give them, since otherwise there is only the destructive mutuality of misunderstanding and recrimination.

Philip H. Rhinelander  
Stanford University  
Stanford, Cal.

## John Gessell Responds

As a careful reading will show, I am of course not arguing for the substitution of pastoral or therapeutic functions for moral judgments. I welcome Dr. Rhinelander's response, but I think that



it is important to point out that in moral discourse *all* criteria are ambivalent because historically conditioned, including those of classical natural law theory. However, the term "mutuality" is defined as Baum uses it as that covenant relationship which exists between God and his people. The term purposefully leaves the future open, since one of the sources for ethical reflection is the eschatological, which brings all present and partial judgments under question.

With reference to my claim that theological judgments suffering from cognitive dissonance must be called into question if such judgment has as its consequence the "depersonalization" of a *class of people*, I do not think that Dr. Rhinelander has grasped my point. Perhaps I should have used the word "oppressive" to describe the consequence of such a judgment. I am speaking here, of course, not to the question of the norms of conduct and the sanctions and penalties for wrongdoing, but a *priori* judgments about a class of people defined by their behavior. These judgments have the effect of denying them participation in decisions about themselves and about their future. Such decisions are by definition unjust.

I do not believe that the difference between "orientation" and "conduct" is a meaningful distinction. It tends toward that fatal split between act and being. It assumes that sin is in the act and is defined by the physical or biological structure of the act. This is, of course, what is under debate in the field of ethics at this time. I reject the classical view that defines sin as in the biological or physical act. It reduces human action to animal behavior, a naturalistic fallacy. We know that persons are more than a bundle of animal acts. The holistic and integrative view of persons requires us to deal with human reason and imagination, with human experience and reflection on that experience, if we are to determine what is constitutive of moral behavior. The earliest Christian revision of the classical view was that of Jesus, who transferred the locus of moral reflection from the external act to

the inner intention and disposition.

Finally, it is important to name the source of the differences in the current ethical debate. This is the disagreement about the status of absolute behavioral norms, about the possibility of exceptionless moral norms in which moral action is described in terms of external acts. I contend that this view makes sin more a thing than a relationship, and that acts, out of the context of human relationships, are too ambiguous to give helpful moral guidance.

John M. Gessell  
University of the South  
Sewanee, Tenn.

## Issues Open Invitation

(In June, 1977, *THE WITNESS* published an appeal for funds to help relocate the Rev. George and the Rev. Katrina Swanson to the Diocese of Newark, since Katrina's bishop would not recognize her priesthood in the Diocese of Kansas. With this move, she was able to be licensed, and was recently appointed rector of St. John's, Union City. She asked *THE WITNESS* to publish the following as a Letter to the Editor.)

Dear Friends,

Just about a year after you helped us move from our mid-western ministry to our new work in the Diocese of Newark, I accepted a call to become rector of St. John's Parish, Union City.

George will continue to serve as rector of Ascension Parish, Jersey City only one mile from St. John's and we will continue to live at 555 Palisade Ave. in Jersey City.

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The Swanson family remains continually grateful for the prayerful and financial support given by many people (known and unknown to us) over the

past years in our struggle to find a place in which we could both minister.

The Rev. Katrina Martha Swanson  
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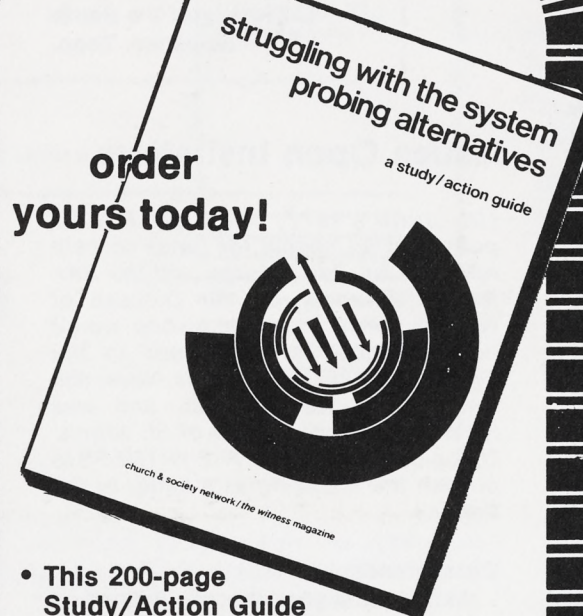
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