

THE WITNESS

VOL. 62, NO. 12
DECEMBER, 1979

ARCHIVES AND HISTORICAL
COLLECTIONS, EPISCOPAL
CHURCH
AUSTIN, TEXAS

Christian Tactics For the 1980s

Richard W. Gillett

Nuclear Crossroads

Helen Caldicott

Another Time, Another Mary

Robert L. DeWitt



Mrs. Keddy in Error

There are several points in *Mrs. Keddy's* letter to the editor (September WITNESS) to which I would like to respond. For example, her paragraph on the confusion of gender and sex. I presume that *Mrs. Keddy* and I are much of an age. She entered the workforce in the 1920s. I graduated from Bryn Mawr College in 1918 and was always taught that the gender of things (books, tables, whatnot) was neuter. To refer to a machine as *she* was a misuse of the English language. It might be popular usage but it was still wrong.

The important (to me at least) error in *Mrs. Keddy's* argument, however, is her statement "There was nothing in the Prayer Book or the canons to prohibit ordination of women (of course there wasn't) *if they had just considered themselves members of the human race.* Man has *always* referred to males and females." (emphasis mine)

It is not the women who want to be ordained but the men who refuse to ordain them who consider that women are not part of the human race. For over half a century I tried to persuade clergy, especially bishops, that the word "person" (Article III, Canon 2) and the word "man" as subsequently used in the canons on ordination was inclusive of both male and female, but I had to wait for the courageous bishops at the Church of the Advocate in order to be ordained priest in 1976.

It is because the word "man" does not *always* refer to both male and female that it has become offensive and its use objected to.

As a philologist, *Mrs. Keddy* knows that words change their meaning over periods of time. The dictionary still defines "man" as a person whether male or female but it also gives other exclusive definitions. As used in the canons of the Episcopal Church the word "man" was understood to be exclusive until 1976 when it was defined as inclusive.

The word "man" has become offensive simply because its meaning is ambiguous. The word does not *always* but only *sometimes* refer to both male and female and a female never knows which is which. Today when one speaks of clergymen, I know that I am a man (a female man) but does the speaker? Or is the speaker referring to clergymen as distinct from clergywomen? Who knows? Sometimes I wonder if the speaker does.

Jeannette Piccard
Minneapolis, Minn.

Hurrah for Mrs. Keddy

Hurrah for Jane Keddy! Here's one vote against "nonsexist" language. As one of Helen Hokinson's plump females said in *The New Yorker*: "Chairperson always makes me think of an upholsterer."

I wonder what *the girls* are doing about "mankind." Personkind??? Heaven forbid! Good for you, *Mrs. Keddy*!

Georgia Pierce
(*Mrs.*) **E. Taylor Pierce**
Doylestown, Pa.

Language Rules Obsolete

I write in response to the letter from philologist Jane Keddy in the September issue. It doesn't take a philologist to know that language changes with the needs and values of the people who use it. For instance, hardly anyone who speaks and writes English uses Shakespearean idiom any more — though the Bard's usage is still studied and understood.

In the same way, if we and our children after us expect to function in a society increasingly conscious of and respon-

sible about equality of the sexes, we must recognize when the old rules of language no longer apply.

Patricia G. Wood
Southfield, Mich.

Power Corrupts All

I do *love* sexist language at times! Like when they say "man-made disasters." As far as I know there's never yet been what could be labeled a "woman-made disaster," and I sure would like to keep it that way. Glory be — no woman sits with the men planning nuclear power plants, at least not above the peon class, and no woman sits with the heads in the Pentagon — yet. I'd just as soon I, or any woman, *didn't* have equal rights to positions of power in nuclear power or at the Pentagon. And, who knows, other positions of power might not be "plums," even in the church. Certainly not many are in state or corporate circles.

Well, I hope the feminists don't try to get "man-made disasters" changed to "people-made disasters" to include women! And to think there wouldn't be disasters if women had equal rights in the planning is a pipe-dream — for power corrupts women just as it does men. It corrupts people, regardless of sex. Power doesn't discriminate.

Abbie Jane Wells
Juneau, Alaska

Who Gains in Strike?

Re: "Farm Workers, Growers Reap Bitter Harvest" by E. Lawrence Carter in the August WITNESS. Though I am neither a farmer nor a farm worker, I count many of both as my friends, having lived in the Salinas Valley area of California for over 60 years.

The article failed to mention that all taxpayers and consumers have suffered by this wasteful strike. We are now paying increased food prices and will continue to do so while crops are rotting in the fields and wages increase. President Carter, in an effort to control inflation, suggested that wage increases be kept to a 7% maximum. The UFW is

Continued on page 19

THE WITNESS

Robert L. DeWitt, Editor; Mary Lou Suhor, Managing Editor; Kay Atwater, Robert Eckersley, Ann Hunter, Susan Small, Lisa K. Whelan, Hugh C. White, Jr. Editorial and Business Office: P.O. Box 359, Ambler, Pennsylvania 19002. Telephone (215) 643-7067.

Subscription rates: \$9.00 per year; \$1.00 per copy. *The Witness* is published monthly by the Episcopal Church Publishing Company. Board of Directors: Wesley Frensdorff, Steven Guerra, Barbara Harris, Suzanne Hiatt, John E. Hines, Mattie Hopkins, Joan Howarth, James Lewis, H. Coleman McGehee, Joseph A. Pelham, Robert S. Potter, and Helen Seager. Copyright 1979 by the Episcopal Church Publishing Company. Printed in U.S.A.

Another Time, Another Mary

Robert L. DeWitt

There was no room at the inn, so a woman whose time had come for the urgent business of birthing had to lie in at a stable. And out of that rejection, that exclusion, the woman brought into the world the Word of God Incarnate. Quietly and obscurely, she bore a child whose ministry would see him repeatedly including those who had been excluded, accepting those who had been rejected. This is the timeless story of Christmas, when stars hold still, angels sing in chorus, shepherds quake with fear, and wise men are humbled. But the meaning of that birth was, and remains, the mystery of God's accepting and inclusive love. And the "minister" God chose to officiate at that event, she who bore the Word of God, was Mary.

Because of that first Christmas, high drama in the tragic tradition was enacted during the recent visit of Pope John Paul II to this country. Sister Mary Theresa Kane spoke with great grace to the Pope on behalf of all women, requesting that they be allowed access to the ordained ministries of her church. It was dramatic for a woman to address publicly the one imputed to be Christ's vicar on earth. (Yet, ironically, it was a woman, the mother of Jesus, who spoke constantly to him whose vicar the Pope is imputed to be.) But it is tragic that the "successor" to Christ would feel compelled to speak a word of rejection and exclusion to a "successor" of Mary. Mary gave Jesus his first food and prepared food for him for many years thereafter. Yet, were she to have been at the Pope's mass, she would have been barred from any official role — as her

sisters/successors are in fact barred.

Drama, even tragic drama, need not blind us to the pedestrian, prosaic realities under which the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, lives. He is human and he is finite; this creates a heavy responsibility for one who bears the burden of infallibility. The truth of God must be tempered by sound management, maintenance of image and good public relations. But it is dramatic, and tragic, when a spokesperson for Christ enunciates to women the prohibiting words of custom and tradition, doing it in the name of the very one who often said, "You have heard it said of old time ... but I say unto you..." — and then proceeded to utter new words of grace and truth.

Sister Mary Theresa Kane is not the Angel Gabriel, but the words she addressed to Pope John Paul bore the suggestion of an annunciation. Mary did not know at the time of the Annunciation that the birth foretold would be an irregular one, defying expectations as to its place and setting. But when her time had come she had to make do with what was at hand. Ordinations, like birthings, are sometimes unusual and sometimes irregular. Mary's time had come. And today, her sisters who aspire and feel called to an ordained ministry, has their time not also come? As they are told there is no room for them in the established orders of the church, even so was their elder sister, Mary, told there was no room at the inn. For them, as for her, the question is: Where is the stable? It may be that, again, shepherds will quake and wise men will be humbled. ■

Christian Tactics for the 1980s

"The 1970s have passed their zenith. Did they take place — this handful of years — somewhere else, in another land, inside the house, the head? Fatigue and recession, cold winters and expensive heat, resignations and disgrace. Quietism, inner peace, having their turn, as if history were a concert program, some long and some short selections, a few modern and the steady traditional. For young people, it is common to say that things have settled down."

— Elizabeth Hardwick

It is a measure of the unpredictable and eruptive forces of historical change operating in our time that these observations from such an astute social observer as Elizabeth Hardwick (advisory editor of the *New York Review of Books*), written in the spring of 1978, could become so quickly obsolete. At least since Proposition 13's passage in California almost a year and a half ago, global and domestic reports of new crises have tumbled over each other in strident competition for space in the daily newspaper. In the past nine months alone, for instance, we have been in turn bombarded with news about the plight of the so-called "boat people," outraged at the rise of gas prices at the pump (50% in twelve months), scared silly by the nuclear near-catastrophe at Three Mile Island,

and rattled by the ominous onset of another economic recession, one perhaps turning into something greater.

Clearly the period of relative quiet which followed Watergate in this country has ended. 1978, year of the tax revolt, has been followed by 1979, year of the energy crisis. In the rush of crises and growing awareness of their relatedness, perhaps we see the end of labelling particular years as "the year of...." Instead, as the 1980s arrive, there is a sense that we are entering a period which will test whether "the center itself will hold" — whether the economic and social system itself will survive.

There is nothing in the above that perceptive social commentators have not told us before. But there is a notable failure of recognized church and secular

History at a Glance

The Western world, without much doubt, is lurching rightward. European governments, most notably Great Britain with the election of Margaret Thatcher as prime minister, are rejecting more centralized approaches to governing and are proclaiming once again the virtues of the free enterprise system. In the United States for the past three years, Democrats have talked like Republicans and have fallen over each other in their rush to champion fiscal conservatism and decry government intervention. Serious attempts, such as the newly founded American Enterprise Institute, are now being made to give intellectual respectability to this renewed friendship with capitalism and a past which, the claim runs, has been

forgotten.

For example, Ben J. Wattenberg, a former member of the Nixon administration, recently wrote an article in the *New York Times Magazine* titled "It's Time to Stop America's Retreat." Decrying such "retreats" as our abandonment of the Shah of Iran and our decisions to shelve the B-1 bomber and the neutron bomb (his heart ought now to be gladdened by Carter's decision to build the MX missile and his push for a bigger military budget!), he would recall us to what he calls "Old Foundation Politics." He lays down a few principles of old-fashioned politics. "Image counts" is the first one. He quotes his good friend Richard Nixon, who once said that unless the U.S. flexed its muscles occasionally, the world would come to regard us as a

"pitiful, helpless giant." Another principle: "Power counts." The CIA, Wattenberg laments, is much too vulnerable to public inquiry about the legitimacy of its tactics. A third principle: "Dominoes live." Making reference to Southeast Asia, he blames the current situation there upon our failure of nerve in Vietnam, and a monolithic Communist plot we should have stood up to.

I have cited Wattenberg at some length because it is an indication of the influence of the rightward, simplistic trend in our country that such reasoning can appear in print in a major "liberal" magazine under the guise of serious political commentary. One wonders what our country's founders would have said to this "Old Foundation" jingoism masquerading as patriotism,

by Richard W. Gillett

leadership, even when they acknowledge all this, to interpret adequately the meaning of these successive crises and their place on the larger historical canvas; and then to summon us on to a frame of reference, a stance, that is sufficient to survive, act, and celebrate in the midst of tumultuous change.

The reflections that follow are intended to be a call for such a stance, and a contribution toward furthering a dialogue that will take seriously the depth and interrelatedness of the crises we are now moving into at full speed. Herewith, then, some modest observations about our current juncture in history, followed by some considerations of morale, and concluding with suggestions for Christian tactics.



and brazenly advocating image, power, and fear as value constructs upon which to base national policy.

Why has so little reflection surfaced in American commentary upon the meaning to this rightward shift in wider historical perspective? Perhaps the fact that it is in reality a counter-trend to another, stronger one in the non-Western world makes us avoid examining it too deeply. For it appears as a threat to all that we presumably hold dear in our contemporary life and culture. The newer trend began to be visible following World War II and has been gaining momentum for 30 years. Simply put, it is the rise among the more than 2 billion people in Third World nations of a sense of self-worth, dignity, and entitlement to the basic amenities of life.

The dimensions of this trend have been expressed well recently by none other than Zbigniew Brzezinski:

"Between 1950 and the year 2000, (the world) will have grown by an additional 3.5 billion. Most of these people will be living in the Third World. By the end of this century, the Western world will have only about 20% or less of the world's people. Most will be young, most of them will be poor, most of them will be politically awakened, most of them will be concentrated in urban areas, most of them will be susceptible to mass mobilization."

At least since Oswald Spengler 60 years ago, Western historians have been observing and recording the long slow decline of the West — mostly with

lament. It is in this context that rightward trends in North America and Europe must be seen: As the protest of a clinging nostalgia to the passing of one era in history and the incipient birth-pangs of another.

Christians must be clear about where they stand in this shift. Too often we have confused secular historical currents with the Gospel! The passing of the Western way of life should not sadden us. The good things about Western culture and civilization are strong enough to endure its fall: Its great literature, its appreciation for history, its philosophical and scientific spirit of inquiry, its art. The other things about it: The drive to acquisitiveness (born of the capitalist notion), its exploitive domination of nature, its male hierarchical structures, its

glorification of science, its excessive individualism — all these are what many take to be the primary achievements of Western culture. They are not. They deserve to pass into oblivion, and Christians, who possess a different value system, should rejoice at their passing.

For the Old Testament God of history is still God — a God needed more than ever in the late 20th century. In the new cry of oppressed peoples for life, and dignity, and justice, is there not a repeat of the cry of the prophets and a reminder that the God of the Israelites will use the modern counterpart of the Assyrians, and the stranger, and the alien, to chasten his own people if they do not obey him? And is it not in fact a strange rebirth of our own flagging hopes to perceive again the exhilarating truth that “God is not left without witness at any time?”

Raising Morale

So much for an interpretation of history at a glance. Again, it is not as though no one has invited us to consider such an interpretation before. It is rather that we shrink from taking it seriously. The implications for our behavior and way of life seem too drastic. But civilizations do pass, and others do follow them. Economist-historian Robert Heilbroner articulates what a lot of people feel, even if it scares them to dwell upon it: “There seems to be a widespread sense that we are living in a period of historic inflection from one dominant civilization form to another.”

We have to stop babying ourselves about our “unfortunate” plight! We liberals and progressives decry the new narcissism in lamenting the rise of the new Right, or longing for the Camelot of Kennedy, or bemoaning the failure of the liberals in the church. John Gardner (of Common Cause) puts it well:

“It isn’t that people can’t find the path that will save them. They

cry, ‘where is the voice that will tell us the truth,’ and stop their ears. They shout, ‘Show us the way’ and shut their eyes.”

The first step toward raising a new morale for our time, therefore, is to recognize that peoples have been this route before. The collapse of Rome did occur, and civilization did not end. In fact the church survived it well. The collapse of the Middle Ages did occur, and again, the church survived. Furthermore, in the midst of historical turmoil or of the corruption of the church as a whole, movements within it have borne outstanding witness in their times: the Franciscan movement, the Waldensians, the Christian socialists of 19th century England, the worker-priests of postwar France, the Church League for Industrial Democracy in our own country early in this century, the press by women in our time for full participation in ministry and mission, and many other examples.

All this, I believe, calls for a new and much more disciplined look at our heritage. Our Biblical tradition, from Abraham’s call out of a settled life to Mary’s proclamation, in the magnificat, of the divine intention to reorder society in favor of those of low-degree, is filled with the rhythms of a long and disciplined pilgrimage. The themes of exodus-liberation, promised land, exile, return, and “new fire” all acquire new relevance if looked at in contemporary historical context.

But this also means looking at the amazing witness of people and leaders in contemporary secular history, where the Lord of *all* history, if we will but look, can teach us much. Look at the history of the Chinese Communist Party and its gaining of the hearts of the Chinese people over long decades of painstaking and unrelenting work amidst the worst conditions imaginable (see Edgar Snow’s classic, *Red Star Over China*). Examine the writings of Che Guevara — the M.D. born in Argentina who became a revolutionary

— and glimpse there a great humanitarian spirit. Read the history of the United Farmworkers of America and of Cesar Chavez. We do not have to agree totally with these historical examples to gain inspiration from them, to see their incredible tenacity and feel a deep morality at their heart.

None of the above should convey the notion that our journey of justice as Christians in a declining civilization should be a somber one. Quite the contrary: our need to celebrate, to sing about what we see and feel and engage in, and to laugh at ourselves as well as others, is an essential part of our journey, as it has been in all the great journeys, both secular and biblical. We need some rousing new songs for the 1980’s, to poke fun at the sagging establishment, to summon us to a new future, to celebrate our great past!

Tactics for the Future

The term “Christian tactics” is probably too imprecise to describe what should follow for us upon a consideration of history’s lessons, and of a morale in the committed Christian community that is adequate for the times. What I mean is that we should work toward a witness in our time that is a combination of a style of living and a strategy of action, that is both faithful to the Gospel and faithful to the historical reality heretofore described. Although the metaphor may be faulted for its use of the imagery of warfare, there is a certain usefulness in thinking of our tactics as guerrilla tactics. For we are in a historical situation somewhat analogous to that of a guerrilla movement: the powers of repression are entrenched and do not seem likely to be soon changed or removed. Our tactics are, roughly, threefold: heavy on the theory and the training, timely and well-planned engagements with the centers of repression, and a careful search for and collaboration with allies who may be working incognito, as it were, in the

establishment.

To this broad strategy must be added a basic consideration that is not tactical but behavioral. Those of us who are middle-class progressives must begin to move more and more towards a "ministry of displacement." The displacement is that of moving ourselves with increasing consistency out of our customary places of privilege in social life and into greater physical and spiritual identification with the displaced, the oppressed, of society. No serious religious and social movement can sustain itself over the long haul without such grounding. The consequent lift in our morale, resulting from the discovery that an incredible spirit of hope and life frequently burns brightest among the displaced themselves, will kindle the passion and the moral outrage necessary for the long march to justice.

Regarding the first tactic, I believe we must take with increased seriousness the need to study and understand the extant social and economic forces, and to interpret their meaning in the light of historical reality and the gospel. The theology of liberation is engaged in precisely this task, and it is time we took seriously the charge by liberation theologians that our European and American-based theological constructs may be jaded and irrelevant to the gospel imperatives of the late 20th century. After all, must there not be some corresponding theological response to the kind of world that Brzezinski describes will be ours by the year 2000?

Serious and disciplined study-action groups should, therefore, begin to proliferate in this country, much as the *comunidades de base* (base communities) in Latin America. Study-

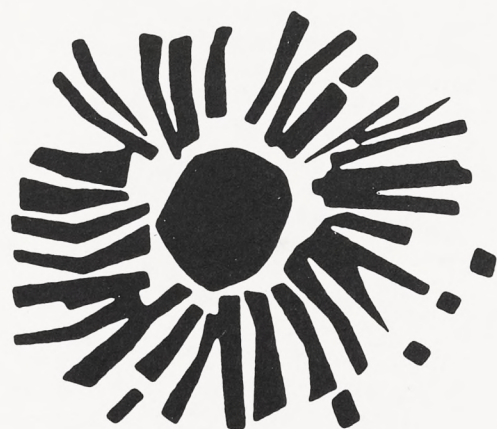
action guides such as *Must We Choose Sides?*, just issued by the Inter-Religious Task Force for Social Analysis, are excellent tools and more must be written.

As part of the new seriousness with social and theological analysis, we must establish new training opportunities. These may vary greatly, ranging from comprehensive urban training programs to concentrated efforts surrounding a single issue, to "on-the-job" training in neighborhood organizing.

The second tactic, of engagement with the centers of repression, involves that of addressing specific manifestations of that repression. In the selection of targets, clusters of committed Christians and their allies, in Church and Society chapters or similar groups, ought to focus around the principal issues which, plumbed to their roots, reveal the basic systemic malaise afflicting the total society. Such issues are the arms race and nuclear power, unemployment, the oppression of women, increasing racism, land use, global hunger, and urban economics, among others. Each of these reveals at its heart a corporate system whose primary goal is the accumulation of capital and the consequent exploitation of any and every group or institution standing in its way. The engagement of our activist groups with one or another of these issues must provide the opportunity to confront the particular aggression, and to reflect upon its meaning in the total societal struggle.

The third tactic or focus is to collaborate whenever possible with our allies who are working in the establishment — a classification, obviously, which would include many readers of this magazine. Within the church, it is important to recognize that there are in fact many bishops and clergy, not to mention lay people, whose perception of what is happening in both

Continued on page 18



Third World Sermon Notes

Considerable stir was created in church world circles a few years ago by a call from a group of African Church leaders for a "moratorium on missionaries." The point they were making was that Africans can preach the Gospel to Africans, but that there is a great need for "missionaries" from Europe and North America to preach the Gospel to their own people, because of the great harm those sections of the world are wreaking on the Third World.

Walter L. Owensby felt called to this task following his service as a Presbyterian missionary in Mexico and then in Colombia. With a Catholic lay theologian from the U.S., Daniel Dolesh, he developed a program which focused on the foreign community in Colombia, that is to say, Europeans and North Americans. It became ever clearer to them that they and the people they were serving were much more part of the problem than they were the solutions. So they aimed increasingly at interpreting the Colombian reality to the foreign community there, raising questions of how the decisions being made in the First and Second World were shaping or mis-shaping lives in that part of the Third World. It became obvious that if one is really concerned about what is happening to peoples' lives in Latin America because of decisions that are made abroad, then one must do some missionary work on *that* side of the equation.

It was circumstance, however, not a "moratorium on missionaries," which brought Owensby

back to the United States. He left Colombia, but the concerns he had found there made him ask, How could he be a missionary to his own people? Located in Madison, Wisc. he developed a program called Inter-American Designs for Economic Awareness — a program of workshops, consulting and speaking, all focused on educating church bodies on international economic issues.

It was out of this effort that the idea of Third World Sermon Notes first took form. This time an Episcopal priest, Arthur Lloyd, helped Owensby to launch the project.



As Owensby puts it: "The prime time the Christian community gathers in any locale is for worship on Sunday. The minister has a vital opportunity then, because people come expecting to hear a sermon about moral issues, how the Word relates to their lives and what is happening around them. Yet it was obvious to me that at least we in the Presbyterian Church were not doing very much to address issues of justice in that context. We were pretty good at publishing weighty tomes and lengthy bibliographies, but not very good at trying to say things in a way that would be immediately helpful to clergy, who are under tremendous time pressures. Every minute they have is bid for by 40 different things. So the interest in Third World Sermon Notes was to sift the literature and concerns into a context that would be immediately useful to them."

The result was a program which started as a service to three local synods of the United Presbyterian Church; but the interest generated was such that now some 3500 people are receiving it, including several hundred Lutheran pastors in California.

Each 1400-word issue focuses on the lections for one Sunday in each month. A sample appears in this issue of THE WITNESS. Two dollars a year bring the subscriber 12 issues. The address: Third World Sermon Notes, 1121 University Avenue, Madison, Wisc. 53715.

Despite, or because of the missionary moratorium, the mission is gaining momentum!

— Robert L. DeWitt

Third World Sermon Notes

Pattern for Prophets

8th Sunday after Pentecost
Lections: Amos 7:7-15
Ephesians 1:3-10
Mark 6:7-13

While these three texts are very different in theme, they are nevertheless united in that each one provides an important insight about doing God's prophetic ministry. That involves: 1) Knowing the plan, 2) Getting the vision, and 3) Answering the call.

I. Knowing the Plan

A recent article in *Relay*, An American Friends Service Committee publication, carried these troubling observations:

"In a Gallup Poll, 50% did not know the U.S. must import any petroleum at all. A national assessment of high school seniors showed that 40% thought Israel was an Arab nation, and only somewhat fewer thought Golda Meir was president of Egypt. Only a bare 5% of all the nation's teachers have had any exposure whatever to international studies and training. Only 1% of college students are enrolled in any studies dealing with international affairs or foreign peoples and cultures. Enrollment in foreign language studies continues to drop to the point of 'national embarrassment.' In a recent UNESCO study of 30,000 ten- and

fourteen-year-olds in nine countries, American students ranked next to the bottom in their comprehension of foreign cultures.

"At a time when our need for knowledge and understanding of the new realities of our world are greatest, we Americans seem to have turned inward, understanding less and less the new circumstances of our world."

Such an "ignorance is bliss" approach to life is certainly not in keeping with the Ephesian text. Paul speaks of God's grand design to achieve a universal harmony under Christ. (1:10)

Nor did Amos harbor anything of a parochial spirit. His prophetic word touched the bare nerve of every surrounding nation before focusing in upon Israel. (Amos 1 and 2) When Amaziah the priest tried to make Israel out-of-bounds for this Judean prophet, Amos would not budge (7:12-14). Notice how often we respond like Amaziah when addressed by the prophetic word. In the South of the 1960s, the cry was heard that "if outsiders will just go home, we will take care of our racial problem." In the 1970s, the people of South Boston said the same. And in today's church, we often echo like sentiments in dismissing liberation theologians of Third World countries who dare to criticize our cherished institutions.

Amos, like Paul, saw the threads of

nations woven together in the plan of God. We cannot do otherwise.

II. Getting the Vision

If there is to be a truly prophetic ministry, it must begin with an understanding of what God's Word is for the particular time and circumstance.

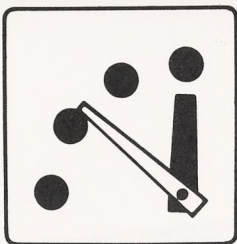
Amos sees a plumbline that God has set in the midst of the *people*, Israel. The collective is important here. In a society characterized by injustice, there may be many righteous persons. It is the nation and its errant system of relationships that God promises to judge in this instance (Amos 2:6,7a).

God's plumbline measures our social and economic systems as well. Consider this illustration — reported by a group of church visitors — of how we are related to the people of the Philippines.

"Castle and Cooke Corporation, the parent company of Dole, moved from Hawaii to the Philippines in 1963 for cheaper labor and land . . .

"Most of the workers live in a crowded heap of shanties near the cannery. We talked with Nina Scarlan, mother of four, in front of her one-room bamboo hut. Her husband Alix has worked at Dole for 11 years loading fruit and fertilizer trucks. Alix makes about \$1.50 per day, approximately the cost of two cans of pineapple juice in a North American supermarket. With Alix's monthly wage of less

Continued on page 17



At the Crossroads of Time

Nuclear power frequently carries such doomsday connotations that people are paralyzed into inaction for want of "getting a handle" on its consequences on their daily lives. Dr. Helen Caldicott, a 38-year-old pediatrician and mother of three, has perhaps more than any other, de-mystified and explained in simple terms the medical and ecological effects of nuclear power and weaponry, initiating public outcry and action. Dr. Caldicott currently works with victims of cystic fibrosis at Boston Children's Hospital. The following is excerpted from a speech she gave for the Mobilization for Survival.



Helen Caldicott

I approach nuclear weapons from a medical point of view. When I did first-year medicine in 1956, we had a very good genetics lecturer, who taught us what radiation does to genes and how it can both damage future generations and produce cancer. As I studied for exams at the end of the year, I used to go out every day to get the newspaper. And every day on the front page there would be a big mushroom cloud, with a sort of "Hurray, the Americans have tested another bomb on the Bikini Atoll" or "The Russians have tested another bomb" — it was that era when each country was testing bombs all the time. And I remember being frightened, because I realized what the fallout meant. I used to speak of it at the university, and nobody took any notice. They thought I was a fanatical nut.

So I stopped talking about it. I just watched, with horror, the gradual escalation and buildup of nuclear weapon forces in the United States, and

in England, and in the Soviet Union. And, like everybody else, I felt too impotent, as one individual, to do anything about it. Yet I felt, "It's my world as much as that of any politician." And when I decided to have children, I felt I was probably wicked to bring children into this world; yet, for selfish reasons, I did. I felt that they probably couldn't have a normal lifespan, or that if they did, their children would not.

Then in 1972 I returned to Australia having been in the United States for three years and learned a little bit how to be political.

The French were testing bombs in the Pacific, and we got a high fallout in Adelaide, where I lived. They tend to collect rainwater in tanks in Adelaide because there isn't very much water in Australia. It was after a drought, and the tanks were empty, so the tanks filled up with relatively radioactive water.

I happened to be invited by a television producer to speak about

acupuncture or something, so I did. And afterwards he said, "Why don't you come and talk about the French testing bombs? We've been trying for months to get a doctor to comment about fallout." I said, "Sure." So I went and I talked about radioactive iodine, and strontium 90, and cancer and leukemia in children. "You all know," I said, "how, when the fallout was occurring in the Northern Hemisphere and your milk was contaminated with radioactive iodine and strontium 90 in the early sixties, that helped to bring about the international test ban treaty."

Every time the French tested another bomb, I was invited back to talk on the television about fallout. People gradually learned that it wasn't safe for their children and their babies.

Then I went on an Australian delegation to visit French government officials, and they said, "Our bombs are perfectly safe." So we said, "If they're safe, why don't you test them in the Mediterranean?" And they said, "Oh, *mon dieu*, there are too many people living near the Mediterranean!" So we knew they were wicked, and they knew they were wicked, and for the first time in my life I knew I was sitting opposite wicked politicians who knew they would probably be killing people, and they didn't give a damn. Anyway, as a result of this, we took France to the world court, and now it tests underground.

Then I started to read about nuclear power. And the more I read, the more my hair literally stood on end. It is millions of times more dangerous than fallout from bomb testing.

So again I went to the media and the press. They had always been very interested in what I had had to say. But this time they said, "That's not important. We're not interested." And I was very perplexed until I found out that the media had large shares in

uranium mines. Australia has 30% of the Free World's uranium.

So this time I wrote to the unions in Australia and asked if I could talk to them about the dangers of mining uranium. They said, "You can talk to us, but you'll never convince us, 'cause we need the jobs." So I went and talked to them, and in ten minutes they were saying, "I don't want my kids growing up in a world like that!" and they sent a telegram to the prime minister.

And gradually — just by going out at lunchtime, talking to people in factories, and teaching them about basic genetics and radiation and nuclear weapons — I taught the unions of Australia that it was dangerous to mine uranium.

I want to talk a little bit about basic medicine and genetics so that you'll understand why it's dangerous. Let's start with nuclear power plants, because this is a step toward understanding what nuclear weapons mean and why we absolutely have to get rid of every single nuclear weapon on earth, if we're to survive. Each step of the nuclear fuel cycle is dangerous. When you mine uranium, it gives off a gas called radon. When miners breathe it into their lungs, they can get lung cancer, because it irradiates the cells in the lungs. In years past, 20 to 50 % of uranium miners died of lung cancer.

Then, when the uranium is milled and enriched, a lot of the ore is discarded and lies around in big heaps called tailings. They give off radon gas too, for tens of thousands of years. Now, they don't give off radon if they are buried under the ground, but it's too costly to do that. In Grand Junction, Col., people didn't know these tailings were dangerous, so they used them to build schools and hospitals and houses and roads. There's an increased incidence of congenital deformities among the babies born in those houses. And people still live there, because it's economically not feasible to pull them down and build new ones.

After the uranium is enriched, it's placed in fuel rods and put in a nuclear reactor. Inside the reactor is the reactor core, and inside the core, are hundreds and hundreds of long thin fuel rods, all packed with uranium, and it's all covered up with water. At a certain point, the uranium reaches critical mass. It doesn't explode, but it becomes extremely hot, and what it does is, it boils the water. This is a very sophisticated way to boil water! The water produces steam. The steam turns the turbine, which produces electricity. That's all there is to it.

What happens to the uranium when it starts fission? Well, it turns into hundreds of very poisonous radioactive elements. I will just take four as an example: iodine 131, strontium 90, cesium 137, and plutonium. The first three elements are what are called beta emitters, and plutonium is an alpha emitter.

The alpha emitter plutonium emits a helium nucleus, which is a very large particle—and it is of dense matter and doesn't travel very far, less than a beta particle. But if it hits a cell, it will

probably kill it, and if it doesn't kill it, it will definitely damage it. That's why alpha emitters — and plutonium, in particular — are the most carcinogenic or cancer-producing substances we have ever known. And plutonium is man-made. It didn't exist before we fissioned uranium. It is appropriately named after Pluto, the god of Hell.

Plutonium is an interesting metal. If it is exposed to air, it ignites spontaneously, forming tiny aerosolized particles which can be breathed into the lung, and can give you lung cancer.

How does radiation produce cancer? Your body is composed of millions and billions of cells — there are hair cells, eye cells, liver cells, heart cells. Inside each cell is a nucleus, and inside the nucleus are long string things, and arranged on the strings are the genes — the DNA. These DNA molecules are the very essence of life: they control every single thing about us. Everything is passed down from generation to generation.

In every cell in the body, there's a regulatory gene which controls the rate at which that cell divides. And if you have an atom of plutonium sitting next to a cell, giving off its alpha particle, and the particle hits the regulatory gene, it will damage it, but the cell will survive. The cell will sit dormant for about 15 years. (We don't know why this happens.) And then one day, instead of just producing two daughter cells when it divides, as a cell normally does, it goes berserk and produces millions and billions of cells. That is a cancer.

So if you inhale one atom of plutonium into your lung and it emits one alpha particle, which damages *one cell* and *one gene*, that can kill you because that produces millions of cells, which is a cancerous tumor. Then one cell will break off and go up to your brain and produce another tumor. Another cell will break off and go into the blood to your liver and produce another tumor, a secondary tumor.



Now, plutonium is so toxic that people who've worked with it say they can't find a low enough dose which won't give lung cancer to every dog they put it into. That's not normal in medicine. Usually there's a threshold in a drug, below which it does no harm and above which it does have an action. It is generally accepted that a millionth of a gram of plutonium will give you cancer. A gram is a minute amount; a millionth of a gram is something you can't even see. Now, by extrapolation — and this is hypothetical — if you could take a pound of plutonium and put a little piece into every single person's lung on earth, you'd kill every man, woman, and child with a lung cancer. That's how dangerous it is.

Each nuclear reactor makes 400-500 pounds of plutonium every year. By the year 2020, in this country, they will have made 30,000 tons of it. It only takes 10 pounds to make an atomic bomb. That means that, theoretically, any country that has a nuclear reactor could make forty atomic bombs every year if they could extract the plutonium. By the year 2020 there will be 100,000 shipments of plutonium transported along the highways of this country annually. Now, plutonium is worth more than heroin on the black market, because it's raw material for atomic bombs. And already trucks with valuable cargoes disappear.

Let me describe the half-lives of radioactive substances. Radioactive iodine 131, for example, has a half-life of eight days. That means that if you start off with a pound of it, in eight days you will have $\frac{1}{2}$ pound; in eight more days you will have $\frac{1}{4}$ pound; in eight more days you will have $\frac{1}{8}$; etc. . . . It decays like that. So radioactive iodine is dangerous for a couple of weeks. That's why, after fallout, if you store milk or dry milk for a couple of weeks, it's safe from radioactive iodine contamination.

Strontium 90 has a half-life of 28 years. That means it's dangerous for

several hundred years. Cesium has a half-life of 33 years—about the same as strontium. Plutonium has a half-life of 24,400 years. That means it's not safe for half a million years. It is not biodegradable, and scientists don't know where to put it; they haven't solved the waste storage problem. But they say, "We're scientists. We'll find the answer. Have faith in us." That's like my saying to a patient, "I'm sorry, I've just diagnosed that you have cancer of the pancreas. You'll probably live for six months but have faith in me. I'm a doctor, and in 20 years' time I may have found a cure." That's insane!

We're talking about a substance that is so incredibly toxic that everybody who comes in contact with it and gets it

"If you have a nuclear reactor in your city, your enemy doesn't need a nuclear bomb; all they need to do is drop a conventional weapon on your nuclear reactor."

into their lungs will die of a lung cancer. You don't know you've breathed it into your lungs. You can't smell it, you can't taste it, and you can't see it. Nor can I, as a doctor, determine that you've got plutonium in your lungs. When a cancer develops, it doesn't have a little flag saying, "Hey, I was made by plutonium." And you'll feel healthy for 15 to 20 to 30 years while you're carrying around that plutonium in your lung, till one day you get a lung cancer. It's a very insidious thing. It takes a long time to get the cancer. If I die of a lung cancer produced by plutonium, and I'm cremated, the smoke goes out of the chimney with the plutonium, to be breathed into somebody else's lungs — ad infinitum for half a million years.

When uranium is fissioned, every year about a third of the radioactive rods are removed from the nuclear reactor core. And they're very hot, thermally and radioactively. Each rod is so radioactive that if you put a single rod on the ground and you drove past it on a motorbike at 90 miles an hour, it would kill you by intense radiation emission. They're being stored in big ponds beside the nuclear power plants. The ponds are getting full. They have to be packed set apart, because if they get too close, they could melt down — melt right through the bottom of the container and into the earth.

If there is a melt-down in the nuclear reactor, if the cooling stops working, the whole reactor core melts right down through the bottom of the reactor, half a mile into the earth. That's called "the China syndrome." But inside each nuclear reactor is as much radiation as in a thousand Hiroshima-type bombs. And if there's a melt-down, a tremendous amount of steam will be liberated. It will blow the reactor container vessel apart, and that radiation will escape. So it's like having a thousand Hiroshima-type bombs around if you live near a reactor.

There are two reactors near New York, called Indian Point No. 1 and No. 2, which are terribly dangerous. If one of them burst open and there was a meltdown (and that's a possibility), thousands of people would die instantly. Two weeks later, thousands more would die from what's called acute radiation illness, where all the rapidly dividing cells of the body die. It was described after the Hiroshima bomb dropped: the hair falls out, the skin sloughs off in big ulcers, you get vomiting and diarrhea, and your blood cells die. So you die of infection and/or bleeding — as when you have leukemia. Five years later there would be an epidemic of leukemia. Fifteen to 40 years later, there would be an epidemic of cancers — breast, lung, bowel, etc.

Generations hence, there would almost certainly be increased incidences of genetic and inherited diseases.

That's the sort of thing they're putting in each city around this country. If you've got a nuclear reactor in your city, your enemy doesn't need a nuclear bomb anymore; all they need to do is drop a conventional weapon on your nuclear reactor. Had Europe been populated with nuclear reactors in the Second World War, it would still be uninhabitable right now. That's the scenario we're setting up.

Now, the reactor rods are taken, and melted down in nitric acid in a reprocessing plant. And what they plan to do, if they go ahead with breeder reactors, is to remove the plutonium in pure form from the nitric acid and leave all the other 200 or so elements inside the nitric acid. They've got quite a lot of big containment vessels with this material scattered round the country from the weapons program, when they removed the plutonium. That's how they got the plutonium to make the nuclear bombs, and they've left all this other stuff behind, and it's leaking.

In Hanford, Wash., two years ago, they lost 115,000 gallons of highly radioactive waste containing all these elements. It's a couple of hundred feet above the Columbia River, which supplies the water to a lot of the cities there. What happens when it gets into the water? Well, all of these things are concentrated in the food chain. They're concentrated thousands of times in fish, and fish swim thousands of miles.

In San Francisco Bay, at Fellon Islands, they have discovered that there are 45,000 - 55 gallon drums containing plutonium and other stuff, which were dumped there by the military, and a third to a half of them are ruptured and leaking. And that's where they catch the fish for San Francisco.

There's another area in West Valley, N.Y. with 600,000 gallons of high-level waste where a plant was run very

cheaply. Because they didn't have really good stainless steel to contain the stuff, they turned the nitric acid into a base by adding salt. All the radioactive elements precipitated to the bottom, where they're lying in a big sludge. The company went bankrupt and handed the facility over to New York state, saying, "We can't look after it anymore." The state can't look after it either, and they're very frightened that that stuff will go critical.

Time and time again there will be a report of a leakage or a spill in the *New York Times* and they'll say, "Don't worry, it's perfectly safe." They don't explain that it gets into the food chain. They don't explain that it takes 15 years to develop cancer. They don't explain

"Had Europe been populated with nuclear reactors in the Second World War, it would still be uninhabitable right now. That's the scenario we're setting up."

that babies and children are terribly sensitive to the effects. They just say, "Don't worry, it's safe."

If a baby drinks milk with radioactive iodine in it, it gets absorbed through the gut, goes up to the thyroid gland in the neck, where it concentrates, and it irradiates just a few cells, and one day that child may get a thyroid cancer. Strontium 90 works like calcium and is absorbed in the gut, goes to the bone, where it can produce an osteogenic sarcoma—like Teddy Kennedy's son had. They're very lethal. It also produces leukemia, because the white blood cells are made in the bone marrow. A white blood cell, irradiated by strontium 90, may divide uncontrollably some years later, and

produce cancer of the white blood cells — leukemia. Cesium concentrates in muscle, and muscle is all over the body.

Now, plutonium is not absorbed from the gut, except—ironically—in the first four weeks of life, because then the gut is, so immature, it can't prevent the plutonium getting through. However, by breathing, it is absorbed through the lungs and will concentrate in the liver, producing liver cancer. It will go to the bone and produce, again, an osteogenic sarcoma, and/or leukemia.

The body handles plutonium like iron. Thinking plutonium is iron, it combines it with the iron-transporting proteins, so that it crosses the placenta, the organ that supplies the blood to the developing fetus. All of the fetus's organs are formed in the first three months after conception; after the first three months, the baby just grows in size. So if a piece of plutonium lodges in that fetus and kills the cell that is going to make the right half of the brain, the baby will be born deformed. Or if it kills the cell that will make the septum of the heart, the baby will have a hole in its heart.

We had a bumper sticker in Australia that said, *Uranium is Thalidomide Forever*. Remember that drug that women took for morning sickness, and the babies were born very deformed? They had hands sticking out of their shoulders, etc. That's what plutonium can do. But, worst of all, it's concentrated in the testicles and the ovaries, where it can damage the eggs and the sperm, and hence the genes. If a gene is damaged by plutonium, in a dominant mutation, the baby may be born deformed. If the gene is damaged in a weak way, the baby will look OK, because its normal gene is the strong one, but it will carry an abnormal gene.

We all carry abnormal genes. For example, cystic fibrosis, the most common inherited disease of childhood, is controlled by a weak or recessive

gene. One in 20 people carries that gene. We all carry several hundred nasty genes, and we don't know we carry them until we marry someone with the same gene, and the two genes get together to produce a child with that disease.

Now doctors can keep people with bad mutations (like diabetes and other diseases) alive to reproduce—because we believe in life. But to have an industry that is going to increase the incidence of genetic diseases and deformed babies by producing plutonium seems to me *wicked*.

Geneticists say that we won't live to see these effects, because these things are all so carcinogenic or cancer-producing that we'll all probably die of cancer before then. Scientists predict epidemics of cancer and leukemia in young people. We may have to get used to living only 20 or 30 years instead of 70 or 80 years. I'm scared stiff that we probably won't survive to the year 2000.

Some of the greatest brains at Harvard say our chances of surviving to the year 2000 are less than 50 percent, because this country has enough weapons to overkill Russia 40 times, and Russia has enough weapons to overkill this country 20 times. And if a nuclear war occurred, the whole of the human race would not survive. There's no way we could survive a nuclear war. Even if there were a few survivors, the water and air would be so contaminated, they'd get leukemia and cancer later.

Nuclear plants are synonymous with nuclear weapons. Nuclear power plants are becoming unpopular in this country for obvious reasons. People are saying, "I don't want one in my city," But GE and Westinghouse keep making them. So they're saying to the Third World countries, "Say, would you like to buy a nice nuclear power plant?" And they say, "Well, we don't have enough money." And the companies say, "We'll lend you the money." The more countries that get nuclear power plants,

the greater chance that there will be a limited nuclear war somewhere in the world, and that could precipitate a global confrontation.

I would contend that nuclear power is not medically indicated; neither is nuclear war. I'm here to save people's lives, not to kill them. I can't understand the psychology of a government saying, "Oh, we'll have a limited nuclear war." Or the psychology of the people who build these things.



What these people seem not to realize is that they won't live either. Most of us, I think, don't like to think about our own death, because it's too scary. We sort of deny that we'll ever die. I think particularly of those politicians who have probably never even seen a person die. They've never seen children, age twelve, coming into a hospital, looking slightly pale, with a few bruises, to have a blood picture done, and they've got leukemia, and they're put in an isolated ward all by themselves. They have some strange drugs which make them feel funny. They live in a state of abject terror and ignorance for two weeks, and suddenly they die from a hemorrhage from their nose or mouth. These politicians have never seen the grief of the parents. Because if they had, they wouldn't be doing this.

Unless we get rid of all these nuclear weapons, we probably won't survive. It seems such a pity. It's taken billions of years for us to evolve, and we're capable of such love and fantastic relationships and great creativity and fantastic art. We're a *magnificent* species. Yet we've learned how to wipe out the whole of life on earth. And we seem to be heading in that direction, like lemmings.

We're at the crossroads of time, right now. If nuclear power plants proliferate in this country and throughout the world, so will nuclear weapons. If we don't get rid of nuclear weapons, we won't survive. Neither will the animals and plants, because what radiation does to us, it does to them: it gives them cancers and produces deformities.

So you see, it is imperative that we rise up, each one of us, and take the load on our own shoulders — and not just with money (which is important). That's not enough. We must say, "I have to take this responsibility."

We've got to teach people the facts. I find that once people understand what is happening to their world, they decide to act. It's no use immunizing our kids, giving them a good education, loving them, when they probably haven't got a future. It's our total responsibility, as parents and grandparents, to allow our children and our grandchildren and our descendants to have the potential of a fruitful and full life. ■

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For those wishing another resource on this subject: Nuclear Madness, What You Can Do! by Dr. Helen Caldicott, available from Autumn Press, 25 Dwight St., Brookline, Mass. 02146, \$3.95.

Four Principles for Power

by John M. Gessell

It is inevitable that discussions on energy use and policy flicker ominously across the land, and that with increasing frequency these discussions engender turbulent and stormy demonstrations and confrontations. Where basic resources become scarce, problems of policy and justice appear, together with accompanying storms of debate and aggressively greedy behavior.

How shall Christians think clearly and coherently about these issues? Engendering emotion does little to clarify the terms of discussion and the orderly processes of policy formation for maintaining a relatively just society. I believe that it would help if we could establish a few general principles to guide reflection.

We might begin by affirming that God is the creator of all that is, and that God created men and women in God's image, endowing them with freedom, memory, reason, and skill to exercise responsibility over the creation. Responsibility implies dominion, not domination; that is, it implies respect based on reverence and awe for what God does and will do. It also implies that the development of new technologies, together with their results, are part of God's creative grace but also subject to human responsibility and direction. This is to say that technology and technological processes are morally neutral *in se*, the legitimacy of their application subject to human reflection and decision. It does not mean that technology is autonomous, taking on a life of its own, determining subsequent values and decisions.

From these affirmations flow some principles to guide our decision-making and policy formation for the production and distribution of limited energy resources.

1. Justice in access to scarce energy resources demands a new look at distribution.

Acquisition of energy to sustain life cannot be based either on merit or on the ability to buy it. The issue

here is survival on at least a minimal level in a human community in which the presence of extreme disparities indicate unacceptable living and health conditions for some people. This principle implies the lowering of certain living standards in some parts of the world in favor of those regions and those persons where energy resources are at present below minimal standards.

2. Public participation in decision-making implies local control plus central planning.

The issue here is social versus private control of energy resources and distribution. Local option to determine the location of power plants must be qualified by rational planning and development for a coherent national energy strategy. This implies the creation of a central planning agency, for which there is no tradition in the United States. Such a central planning agency should be broadly representative of competing interests. This also implies the end of private utility monopolies, and the nationalization of critical energy resources, permitting adequate data-gathering on present supplies and potential future reserves for systematic planning and allocation.

3. Ecological considerations have priority over the values of a consumer-oriented culture which encourages the values of acquisitiveness and self-indulgence.

This principle suggests that major restraints will be required on personal and group acquisitiveness, exploitation, and aggression in responding to the problem of dwindling energy supplies. In other words, broad ecological considerations concerning the limits, the preservation, and the stability of the environment are of greater value than local or regional demands of wealth and power. And ecological considerations will require lower standards of living for the privileged.

4. People, human survival, and posterity have priority over the needs of the power-producing industries.

This principle requires the reassessment of what is "acceptable" in terms of risk to health, safety, and to economic survival. The risk-benefit ratio of nuclear

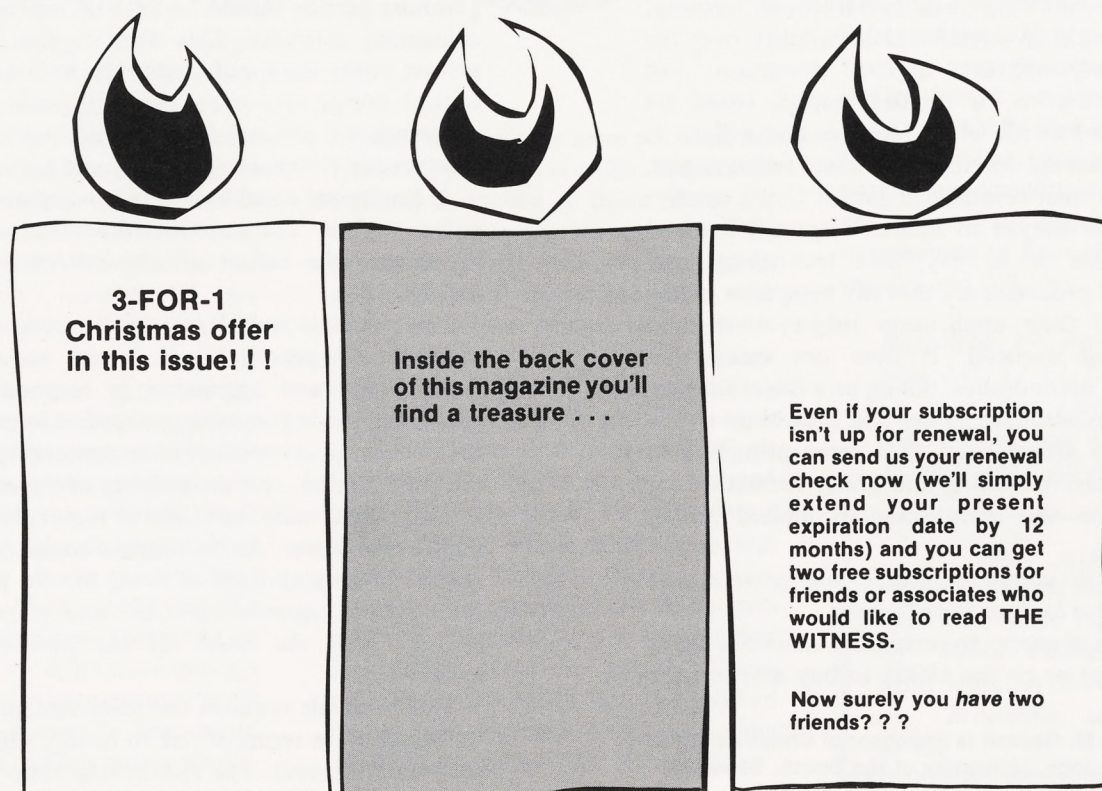
The Rev. John M. Gessell is professor of Christian ethics School of Theology, University of the South, Sewanee.

power may be higher than that of alternative power sources. It seems unnecessary to argue this point following the Three Mile Island accident, the Court decision in the Karen Silkwood case, the repudiation of the Rasmussen report by the NRC, and recent publication in the field of energy futures. Plutonium technology for energy production is risky; there appears to be no way to overcome the inherent material problems associated with zirconium alloys employed in connection with water-cooled nuclear reactors, and at the present time, no solution to the problem of disposal of radioactive nuclear waste.

Development of the nuclear power industry is not essential to provide future energy needs. As Tom Wicker pointed out in the *New York Times* recently, the demand for electricity has been declining. Nuclear power plants provide only electricity, and only about 10% of the nation's end-use energy at the present time. We also use electricity when other forms of energy would be more efficient. Replacing with nuclear power all oil and gas now used for electricity production would reduce oil consumption by only about 12% and the electricity provided would be far more costly.

Further, the present costs of nuclear energy may now exceed those of alternative and renewable resources, and are climbing rapidly. Development of the nuclear power industry benefits relatively few persons (i.e., the owners and the metallurgical and petro-chemical industries). It has remained competitive, despite rapidly and uncontrollable escalating costs for plant investment, because the industry is heavily subsidized by the federal government which provided research and development funds of \$1.26 billion in 1979 alone, and has underwritten insurance coverage for nuclear accidents. Government subsidies to the nuclear power industry already exceed \$6 billion, and no one has attempted to cost-out the dismantling of generating plants at the end of their life-cycle.

Thus, the social costs of nuclear energy may be higher than the benefits accrued. This risk/benefit analysis must be made as well in light of the fact that the nuclear power industry cannot be extricated from the development of nuclear weaponry and the escalating possibilities of the loss of political control leading to a devastating nuclear conflict. ■



Continued from page 9

than \$50 Nina has to purchase food, clothes, medicines and household items and pay the rent. The National Economic Development Authority here estimates that a family of six requires \$180 per month to live. The Scarlans receive less than one-third the minimum requirement.

"I have debts at all the little grocery stores in town," says Nina. "I know prices are cheaper in the next town but bus fare is expensive and traveling in a hot crowded bus with four small children is almost impossible." She shrugs hopelessly.

"We visited the housing estate provided for Dole executives, many of whom are North Americans. Huge suburban homes, beautifully manicured lawns, a swimming pool, tennis courts, a golf course and country club restaurant are provided at subsidized rates. Water and electricity are free.

"I mentioned the problem of the high prices of groceries to one executive wife who responded, 'Oh, that's no problem. Dole provides the executives' families with a free shopping bus to go to the next town.'

"The dealings of a large corporation may seem remote from our everyday concerns, but whether we like it or not we are intertwined in their affairs. In our global village we connect with Nina Scarlan when we eat the pineapples her husband has helped produce in the Philippines."¹

When God's plumbline is dropped into such a human circumstance, it is not only the managers of a corporation who are measured but the whole economic system which gives comfort and pleasure to the few wrung from the lives of peasants and miners and workers the world over.

Prophecy involves getting the vision right — the vision of God and of the real

world. Hope and good news can only come from a sober assessment of what is and the understanding that God will not abide injustice forever.

III. Answering the Call

Who speaks for the Lord? The biblical candidates often seem unlikely. Jesus sent his disciples out with nothing that would give them either security or ostentation. Amos would not even allow himself to be identified as a prophet in the traditional sense. "I am only a shepherd and a fruitpicker," he said. But however humble, he spoke God's authentic word for the time. That made him a true prophet.

Today's prophets are often as unexpected and hard to recognize. There was an example of this in Bolivia a few months ago. Four women and fourteen children set out to change a brutal and unjust government policy. These people were families of tin mine workers. The life of a miner there is hard. Pay at that time was about \$1.50 per day. Of course, the company also provided housing — one room for whole families measuring just a bit over 12 feet by 15 feet. Children could attend school and the company store provided subsidized food and credit to buy.

All this, however, depends upon the worker staying in the good graces of the company and keeping his job. For if he loses it, the family must move, the children must leave school, and the store will no longer extend credit.

Life in the mines is not only hard, it is usually short. Life expectancy is just 35 years, and most miners can expect to die of silicosis. Meanwhile, a small business and military elite and a few foreign companies continue to enrich themselves.

It is little wonder then that some workers began trying to organize to improve their situation. But the government took a firm stand. Labor unions and political parties were outlawed, and dissidents became victims of arrest, exile, torture and disappearance.

It was in that situation that the four women came forth. Their resources were few — little education, no

experience in "taking on" the government. But they were aware politically, had a deep religious faith, and were convinced that the government and the wealthy elites were wrong.

Their weapon was that of the weak — a hunger strike. It was carried out in the home of the archbishop only 200 yards from the presidential palace. The strike began with the four women and their 14 children. Many people criticized them for allowing the children to fast. Wisely the mothers agreed that the children could eat when adults volunteered to take their place.

The strike grew. First dozens, then scores, then hundreds of women and men joined. At the end, more than 1,380 people were fasting — including a former president of Bolivia.

The struggle finally ended 21 days after the fast began. Some of the women were too weak to stand, but their inner strength and their prophetic witness prevailed. The government was forced to grant virtually all of their demands — amnesty for 19,000 political prisoners and exiles, jobs for some of the poor, and the right to have labor unions.²

It was a small victory from the world's point of view, and it may not last forever. But it was a testimony to the power of the prophetic act and of the unexpected prophet.

The role of the prophet — speaking and acting for God's justice — is not so much to be admired as emulated. It is for the many, not just for the few. After all, we know God's plan to unite all things in Christ. We have seen the vision of a just society. And a thousand things which keep that vision from becoming reality surely can be recognized as God's call to a prophetic faith. We, like the Bolivian women, need only find the way to live out the witness which challenges injustice.



¹ "Pineapples & Social Justice," *MCC Contact*, Vol. 2, No. 7, July-August, 1978.

² This experience is recounted in detail by Wilson T. Boots, "Miracle in Bolivia: Four Women Confront a Nation," *Christianity & Crisis*, May 1, 1978, pp. 101-107.

Continued from page 7

church and society is deeply disturbing to them and contrary to their understanding of the Gospel. And they long to find allies. Certain aspects of the churches' current concern with world and domestic hunger and the Episcopal Church's own renewed interest in the cities, as seen in the emerging Episcopal Urban Caucus, are but two places where collaboration with parts of the ecclesiastical establishment seems possible at the moment.

Likewise there are many allies in the secular establishment. The flame of social indignation still flickers, and longing for a just and compassionate society is still present in the breast of many a business-person, corporate lawyer, establishment housewife or government bureaucrat. It is incredible, and very humbling, to discover that some of them still look to the churches



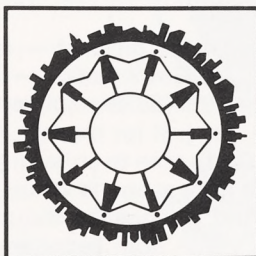
as a place from which justice may yet be proclaimed. Moreover, the organizational capabilities, money, and connections to other such people are frequently in scarce or non-existent supply in "movement" circles, and are sorely needed.

Finally, in this discussion of tactics and of history's direction in our time, we must be careful not to slip into an exclusivist self-righteous mentality that could result in the fostering of a new elitism. No single movement or grouping is sole claimant upon the truth, a fact which should keep all progressive Christians humble.

Yet the Lord of all history, and the Servant-Messiah of the Gospels, call us — particularly those living in a

decaying Western culture — to interpret faithfully what God is doing in the history of our times. And if the insights gained from the prophets of the Old Testament and from the life, death and resurrection of the Servant-Messiah in the New Testament are any guide at all, they show the bias of God towards the poor and the dispossessed, and reveal with relentless clarity the perils facing the wealthy. In the context of the great disparities present and increasing between peoples and nations in the late 20th century world, there can be no doubt of the mandate laid upon Christians everywhere for a radical break with the past and a welcoming of the leadership of the servant-Lord of history into a new future. ■

1980



NEW 1980 CALENDAR

A 1980 calendar measuring 9 by 11 inches, opening to twice that size on a spiral binding, is available from the Urban Bishops Coalition. Stark photos of the city and its people are punctuated with memorable quotes about the urban reality. To order send \$3 to the Urban Bishops Coalition, 4800 Woodward Ave., Detroit, MI 48201.

"My experiences while taking these pictures have been like a slap to my face, waking me from an inhuman indifference. Perhaps these pictures will make others alert also."

— Kristin Vonnegut
1980 Calendar photographer

"For those who are close to their roots, there exists a certain debt to their kind. As a Puerto Rican photographer, I relate very strongly to this debt. These photos do not capture the total picture of the many ethnic lives in the cities, but can illustrate some of their conditions."

— Juan Sanchez
1980 Calendar photographer

1300 New Readers

During the last two months some 1300 people have joined THE WITNESS readership. We welcome these new readers from the Diocese of Western Kansas, Nevada, Minnesota and Utah.

CREDITS

Cover, Sue Rheiner; graphics, pp. 5, 7 *Network Quarterly*, Washington, D.C.; p. 8, *Heraldo Cristiano*, publication of the Presbyterian Reformed Church in Cuba; p. 10, photo by Bonnie Freer; p. 10 graphic, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*; p. 11, Mobilization for Survival; p. 14, Julie Baxendell, *The Church Woman*; p. 18, Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy.

Continued from page 2

currently negotiating wage increases in the 75% range. This is bound to create upward inflation spirals as all trades seek comparable increases.

In this area alone, over \$500,000 has been expended by the Monterey County Sheriff's Department in an effort to control the violence due to the strike. Cesar Chavez cannot convince us the UFW strikers are "peaceful." A vacant lot on a busy corner in Salinas is bitter testimony to the violence and property damage incurred by Sun Harvest. Approximately 10 vehicles have been rolled, battered and burned by the UFW. Many workers have suffered personal injuries as well.

An editorial in the *Salinas Californian* stated "blood was shed in the Salinas Valley fields in the worst display of violence to date . . . the UFW strikers rushed struck fields by the hundreds."

One can see windows on the labor buses traveling U.S. Highway 101 boarded up with wood and steel bars to protect the occupants. Can this be America? Who is really free to work without fear?

If everyone is losing from this strike then who is gaining? This appears to be a radical social reform by those who would totally disrupt our democracy as we know it today. This is much more than a union strike. What better way to control our country than to begin a revolution in agriculture?

**Ms. E. Handley
Gonzales, Cal.**

Carter Responds

To answer Ms. Handley's letter is like discussing the Civil War after the defeat of the Confederacy. The strike is over and Chavez has won another victory in his long struggle to give the farm workers in California their share of the agribiz pie.

It should be noted, however, that Ms. Handley refers to the 7% Carter guideline, but fails to mention the fact that the growers' price for their product escalated over 100% in the past year.

In respect to the \$500,000 spent by the

Monterey Sheriff's Department, perhaps this should be paid by the growers. It was the sheriff who "protected" the scabs who worked in the fields during the strike.

**E. Lawrence Carter
Santa Monica, Cal.**

Activists Need Holy Spirit

The Episcopal Church is not dead! I share William Stringfellow's concern over the superstructure, but I sense a real renewal at the grass roots level — it is alive with awareness of God's present work in the world at this time. Admittedly some elements are over-preoccupied with eschatology (not unusual in such uncertain times). But for myself, my newer awareness of the Spirit (complete with prayer language) is a joyful and powerful enrichment of a faith of 35 years which was steadfast but not enthusiastic. If, as the charismatic movement matures it does not bear fruit in the social concern which THE WITNESS has always spearheaded, it will remain less than fully responsive to God's call. On the other hand, without really plugging into the ultimate source of power, the Social Gospel will dissipate into humanism (or worse, cults; e.g., Guyana).

The two need each other — at least in full acceptance and recognition. Though the emphasis of each of our primary thrusts may differ, both are parts of the Lord's work, through the Holy Spirit, to turn the world into the Kingdom.

**Margaret R. Lane, M.D.
Scottsdale, Ariz.**

Seeks Global Issues

THE WITNESS is a bright spot in the rather dull world of religious publications, and I look forward to each issue. It helps keep me in touch with some of the forward thinking being done in the Episcopal Church.

As I reflect on the ongoing role that THE WITNESS might play in the life of the American church, I hope that you

will give some consideration to more articles dealing with global justice and world development issues. The kind of new international economic, social and political order which is necessary to deal with global problems today, must rest upon some shared perception of those common global problems and their best solutions. This means an intensive educational program among the people of this country. I think the church has a role to play in that endeavor. What we are talking about is not just a matter of more education about economic, political and social matters; but values, beliefs, attitudes and basic lifestyles.

In this respect, there is an obvious job for the churches to do. It involves raising people's consciousness of world poverty, of our relationships to the poor, and what the Gospel has to say to those relationships. I think the leadership that THE WITNESS has already provided on domestic and institutional issues can be extended to provide that same kind of thoughtful leadership in issues of a more global nature.

**Ronald E. Stenning
Church World Service
New York, N.Y.**

No Point in Ramblings

No, we would not like to renew our subscription to THE WITNESS. For six months I've diligently plowed through issue after issue. I must be the stupidest person in the world, but I was totally lost in each article and could find no point in the authors' ramblings. It must take a more scholarly person than I am to make sense of these writings.

**Mrs. Terry M. Diehl
Bedford, Pa.**

Have Mercy

I've always had difficulty in believing in the devil, but after reading your publication I am convinced that he lives and is hard at work in your group. May God have mercy on your souls.

**Regina Kenworthy
Pelham, N.Y.**

The Episcopal Church Publishing Company
P.O. Box 359
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