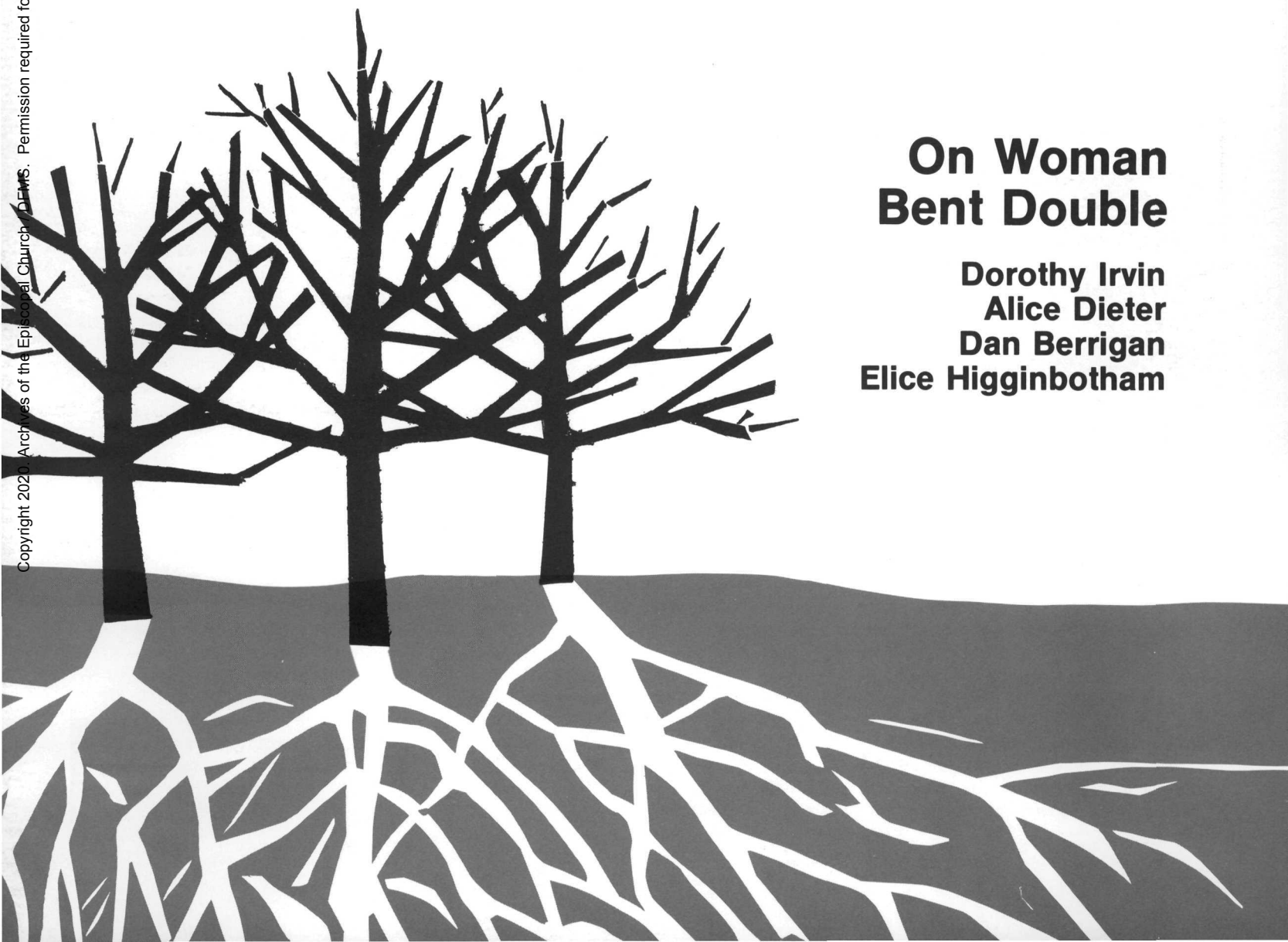


# THE WITNESS

VOL. 63, NO. 2  
FEBRUARY, 1980

## On Woman Bent Double

Dorothy Irvin  
Alice Dieter  
Dan Berrigan  
Elice Higginbotham





## Letters to the Editor

### Abortion Not the Way

In the November WITNESS, Georgia Fuller challenged the "pro-life" Christians to prevent the causes of abortion. My answer is simple: Limit sex to the Judeo-Christian teachings — within marriage.

However, we all realize that we live in a fallen world and that, even though we are created in the image of God, we are less than perfect — a blurred image. I am one of those "genetically damaged children" about whom Ms. Fuller speaks. I thank God my mother could not have me aborted in those days. Knowing my mother, who is full of love, she would not have done it even if it was legal. And just because abortion is legal doesn't make it right.

I am an Episcopalian and a physician and urge you all, in the spirit of Galatians 3:28, to realize that fetuses are persons, not non-persons, as pro-abortionists would have you believe. One of the best definitions of life that medicine has given us is the ability to produce dying cells. The ovum and sperm cannot do that; the fertilized ovum can. The fertilized ovum has all the necessary raw materials it needs to develop into a viable person. At the time a woman first knows she's pregnant, (approximately 18-21 days after fertilization) the fetus' head and extremities are present, the heart is beating, and the face will grimace if painful stimuli are inflicted.

I fit into Ms. Fuller's "fanatical fringe" but not into her mold. I believe that capital punishment and U.S. military superiority are wrong and that racial, women's, and fetal rights have not advanced far enough. The answer, Ms.

Fuller, is to be more Christ-like, more loving of those in trouble, sorrow, deformity, or even pregnant when they don't want to be. If a woman is so distraught by pregnancy, let her be introduced to Birthright or organizations like it which shower love and care on the pregnant woman.

To prevent unwanted pregnancies, responsible sex within marriage must be taught. To those who are caught in unwanted situations like incest or rape I strongly suggest prayer. No male can sexually molest a woman who is in fervent prayer — witness the story in a Detroit paper a few years ago of how a man was not only unable to rape a praying woman but asked forgiveness and a chance to repent.

**Bradford E. Friedrich, M.D.**  
Red Wing, Minn.

### 'Female Conspiracy'

About 15 years ago, when abortions were not legal in most states, I did a research paper on abortion for an undergraduate class on Psychology of Social Issues. I was about 35 years old, and the very word "abortion" was not used in my polite society.

The main thing I learned, and I remember it to this day, is that an estimated one million illegal abortions were performed every year in the U.S. I read with amazement personal accounts, case studies and statistical reports of women from all walks of life, all age groups, married and unmarried, all racial and ethnic groups, and all religious persuasions. When I had finished, I titled my paper *The Female Conspiracy*, and I came away with a new respect for the strength and determination of women to control their own bodies and their own lives.

Later, I worked to help legalize abortion in my state, so that millions of other women would not have to be alone in their hours of need, would not have to risk infection or pay horrendous amounts of money to unlicensed practitioners, or, worse yet, would have to suffer irreparable damage and even

death from their own self-induction attempts.

That research project proved to me that, as long as there are no simple, guaranteed contraceptives, as long as women have unwanted pregnancies for whatever reasons, women will have abortions—legally or illegally, safely or at risk to themselves, with or without the knowledge and support of their mates, families, friends and religious communities.

**Marie Wells**  
Kentfield, Cal.

### Dr. Fuller Responds

Many thanks to Marie Wells and Bradford E. Friedrich for responding to my article. Ms. Wells documents the pervasive nature of abortion, calling it "The Female Conspiracy." We, as women, have been the principal victims of that conspiracy. The conclusion to draw from Ms. Wells' research is that the only sure way to stop abortion is to stop unwanted pregnancies.

My article suggested that we need to stop "rape, contraceptive failure and incurable genetic disease" in order to eliminate the need for abortion. Mr. Friedrich correctly points out that "incurable genetic disease" was an over-generalization. I was referring to a serious disease or deformity resulting in a very early death or the inability to function. The definition of "early" and "inability" belongs to those who must care for the fetus as it grows, perhaps to childhood. This means the pregnant woman and hopefully, a supportive family.

The answer for unwanted pregnancies is not so simple as "go to Birthright." Neither Birthright nor similar organizations can uniformly deal with the magnitude of the problem. I know that such groups need 10,000 times more support and resources. We have a pastoral obligation to help people make difficult decisions that accompany unwanted pregnancies. Too many support systems begin a speedy withdrawal when the abortion is over or

*Continued on page 18*

# THE WITNESS

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## Co-Creating With Jahweh

Robert L. DeWitt

What do we make of the Bible? Many different things. From some it elicits a profound respect not unlike that accorded the Constitution of the United States — a deep reverence based upon scanty familiarity or understanding. They feel that even though “The Good Book” contains sayings we do not always know how to apply, they are at least wise and good: “With God all things are possible,” or “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you,” or “A soft answer turneth away wrath,” or “No man can serve two masters.”

Others see it as the telling of the long story of God’s self-revelation, culminating in the coming of Christ. Indeed, some see that as the only justification for the entire Bible. Said a twice-born Episcopal priest: “We are not governed by the teachings of the Old Testament prophets because we are the people of the new covenant in Christ.” (If one has a new covenant, why bother with the old?)

There are still others in this secular age who find the Bible sufficiently vindicated solely on the basis of its unmatched excellence as literature (the King James version, please). And of course there is an impressive number of people — and a suggestion that their ranks are growing — who view the Bible as the literal Word of God, divinely inspired and intended to be taken at face value.

The biblical quandary for many of us is that we fall neatly into no one of the above groups. We give nodding assent to fragments of each. We agree it is a very considerable book, but we do not know how to consider it. Roman Catholics are perhaps not so vulnerable as most. They revere the Bible, true, but for them it is filtered through sacrament, dogma and tradition. The church interprets the Bible for them. Most Protestant groups do not have it that easy. They

have put most of their eggs in the biblical basket, and the texture of the weaving of that basket is such that they are not quite sure what it holds, or whether it holds.

It is important, therefore, for all “People of the Book” — Jews and Christians alike — to know that there are insights arising from biblical studies, particularly in this century, which are deeply provocative. Informed by archeological discoveries and by sociological methodology, some of these studies are making a strong bid to lift the veil of mystification and superstition which enshrouds so much of biblical history.

The recently published *The Tribes of Jahweh* by Norman Gottwald, for example, finds new and persuasive evidence that the people of Israel, prior to the establishment of the kingdom by David, were an insurgent people. The picture begins to emerge of a people coming out of bondage in Egypt into the land of Canaan, a land dominated by tightly organized city-states. In that feudal culture, the former slaves of Egypt, over a period of many generations, made common cause with other groups who were also resisting the oppression in Canaan and they jointly became the “People of Jahweh.” Their common resistance to the hierarchical structure and oppression of the Canaanite feudal cities both shaped and was shaped by a developing understanding of a deity who was concerned deeply and irrevocably with justice and equality.

This emerging picture of the Bible, and the faith it bespeaks, is both old and new. It is old, because those of us with even the most casual acquaintance with the Bible know that it reveals a God who is concerned with

*Continued on page 8*



Bishop Theodora

# Archaeology Supports Women's Ordination

by Dorothy Irvin

The Vatican "Declaration on the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood," like most statements coming from Rome, has served the valuable purpose of letting us know what points the controversy will hinge on. Issued in the spring of 1977, its formal purpose was to squelch definitively any thoughts that women might have in that direction. But its actual impact has been to set debate (which it certainly has aroused) on the footing of now-we-know-where-we-stand.

Whether this is the conscious intent of Roman statements I cannot say, although a glance backward at "Humanae Vitae" and others lead me to believe that this is the curiously involuted Roman way of taking a step forward, while meeting the needs of both conservatives and liberals at the same time.

Once the parameters of debate had been established, Arlene and Leonard Swidler took the next step of organizing the opposition in the form of a volume of essays commenting on individual phrases of the Statement (*Women Priests: A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration*, Paulist Press). Subsequently, the Women's Ordination Conference took up its "Second Argument Project," collecting signatures and theological material to

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counter the Statement's argument that priests must necessarily be males in order to project the image of Jesus as a male. The difficulty of dealing with this argument begins, I think, with our inability to maintain a straight face and sober credulity upon hearing it, thus losing us several points in the opening round.

A more "respectable" issue is the Statement's contention that to ordain women would be against the tradition of the church: "*The Catholic Church has never felt that priestly or episcopal ordination can be validly conferred on women. . . by calling only men to the priestly order and ministry in its true sense the Church intends to remain faithful to the type of ordained ministry willed by the Lord Jesus Christ and carefully maintained by the Apostles. . .*"

This assertion has been countered so far by the weak argument that tradition should not be permitted to be normative on this point, which is a simple and inadequate appeal to justice by the have-nots against the haves, a technique seldom effective in any realm — certainly not among Christians.

And it would be a shame to abandon tradition here, for all along our suspicions should have been alerted by the Statement's use of words such as "never" and "only." Behind such absolutes are sure to lie motives which narrow the interpretation of our history to what is desirable for those in power. The scope of Christian tradition should not be gauged by the wishfulness of the present clergy.

For several years before the appearance of the Statement, I had been trying to ascertain the breadth of Christian tradition in the matter of the ministry of women in the early Church. Given a first impetus by Joan Morris' scholarly history of women in high ecclesiastical office through the centuries, *The Lady Was a Bishop* (Macmillan, 1972) I put my background in ancient Near Eastern archaeology and iconography to work in the area of early Christian archaeology.

I was photographer for the Biblical Archaeological Institute at Tübingen for several years, and among my many photos are frescoes, mosaics, and inscriptions which, when interpreted in the light of the legal and sociological ambience of their times, provide proof that women functioned as priests and bishops in the early church. Although it is not perfectly clear what constituted ordination at different times and places in the early centuries of the church, archaeological evidence shows women as receiving ordination and exercising ministry on a par with men. The archaeological material is confirmed by written sources. I have presented this material in the form of slide lectures in England and the United States, and the first question is always, "Why haven't we heard this before?" Joan Morris provided a clue when asked why *The Lady Was a Bishop* carried no photographs of the subjects she wrote about. She said that the publishers were unwilling to go to the expense, and this answer contains, in microcosm, all the

elements of the larger problem.

But before probing that further, let me describe the types of archaeological material here:

- Inscriptions from the Roman period, from tombstones or for legal-financial purposes, which name women who bore the titles *archisynagogos*, (ruler of the synagogue), “mother of the synagogue,” and *presbitera* (the feminine of presbyter). These titles were used by Jewish, Jewish-Christian, and Christian communities. We have inscriptions of the same type giving men these titles, in the masculine form. We also have burial inscriptions of the wives of men who have such titles. These have a different form from that in which the woman herself bears the title.

- A fresco, dating to the end of the first century, in a Roman catacomb, which depicts a group of seven women celebrating a Eucharist. Several similar scenes from a later date depict groups of seven men.

- A fourth century catacomb fresco, also in Rome, showing a woman being ordained by a bishop. I do not know of any scenes of the ordination of a man, although all agree that men were ordained at this period!

- Many frescoes of women (as well as men) dressed in liturgical vestments and standing in attitudes of liturgical leadership.

- A mosaic, dating between the fifth and ninth centuries, showing a female head, with superscription, also in mosaic, *Episcopa Theodo(ra)* “bishop (feminine) Theodora.” She wears a coif, indicating that she is not married.

- Tombstone inscriptions of women bishops, for example (*hono*)*rabilis femina episcopa*, “honorable woman bishop.”

The orthodoxy of these sources, so far as I am aware, has never been questioned. That is, they have never been identified as Gnostic or Montanist records, i.e., from groups of heretics or schismatics.

In view of the unpolemical nature of the sources mentioned above, in contrast, for example, to texts which oppose the ordination of women, these sources must be taken seriously.

Although this is not the place for penetrating study of the attempts to interpret, or sometimes, interpret away, this archaeological evidence, one reason why we haven’t heard of it before is closely related to the comparatively brief time it has been “rediscovered.” Most of this material has been known for only about 100 years or less, with the exception of the Bishop Theodora mosaic, which as far as I know, has always been visible in the Church of St. Praxedis in Rome since it was first made. We haven’t heard about the inscriptional material — the tombstones and votive

inscriptions — because they are published in scholarly books and journals, hidden away in seldom-visited basements of libraries, often not even photographed. Sometimes the original stone has disappeared or been lost, and we have only a copy made many years ago. A well-photographed collection of the tomb inscriptions of women presbyters from the catacombs of Rome would do much to raise our morale, and would remind us of how we have been deprived of our history.

In some cases the reason we haven’t heard of a piece of evidence is intriguing, in a somewhat Machiavellian way. The fresco of the women celebrating a Eucharist in the Catacomb of Priscilla in Rome was uncovered and cleaned in 1893/94 by Wilpert, working under the direction of de Rossi, and is today visible to tourists, who can buy postcards and slides of it. Those who see it, however, are frequently unaware that they have seen a group of women celebrating. This faulty perception is due in part to a copy of the fresco, made into a mosaic and displayed in the chapel above. Changes that have been made in the chapel version are clearly identifiable when postcards of both are projected simultaneously. When I present them in slide shows, they evoke roars of laughter from my audiences, because most of the women have been changed to men, in particular the figure at the left of the group, early identified as the principal celebrant (with some of the others as possible concelebrants). Although this figure’s ankle-length skirt has been retained (men at this period wore knee-length skirts) a beard has been incongruously added by the makers of the chapel mosaic.

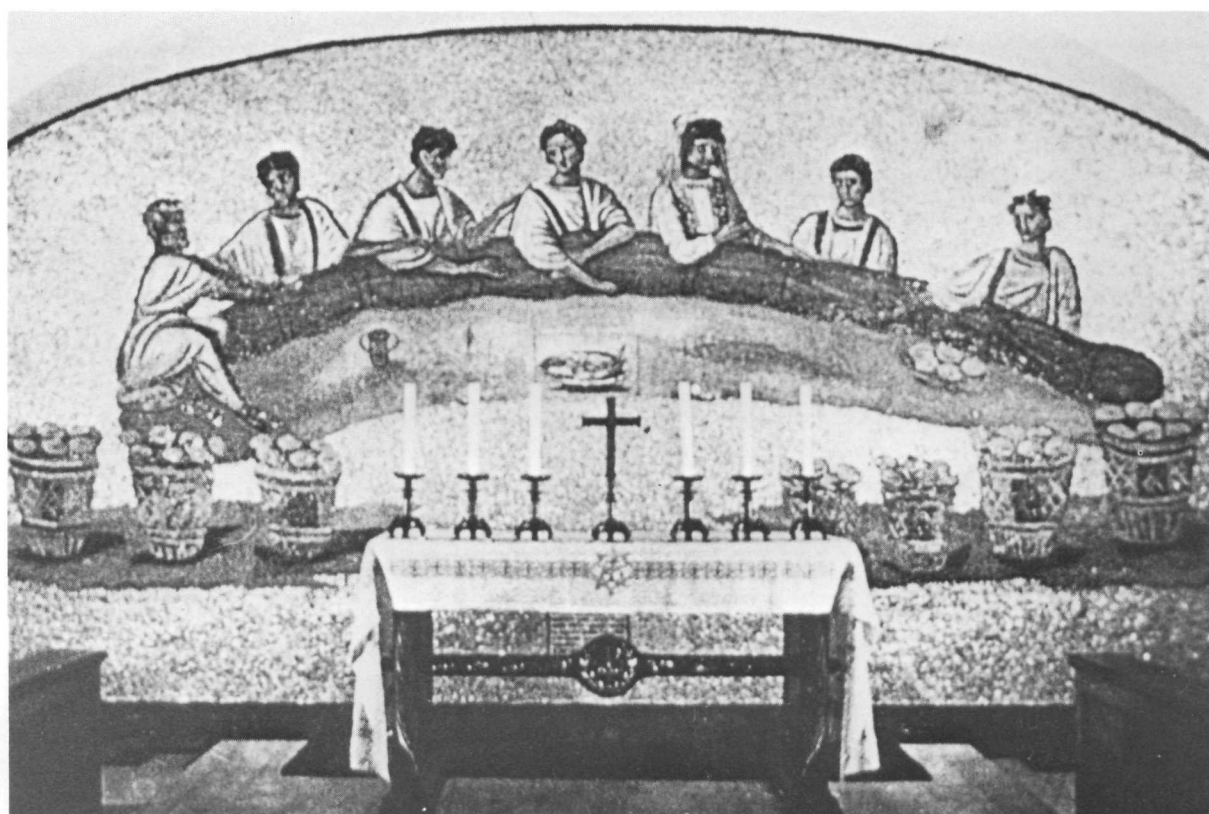
The tourist in Rome is also likely to see the impressive mosaic of the Bishop Theodora over the doorway of the Zeno chapel in the Church of St. Praxedis. But if the tourist relies on the postcards and guidebook — for sale on the premises — to refresh her/his memory a curious thing happens.

In *these* photographs of the mosaic, a dark shadow falls on the upper left corner, right over the words “*Episcopa Theodora*,” rendering them illegible. A visit to the Archaeological archives and to a photographic firm specializing in archaeology fails to unearth a sharper reproduction. But thanks to Joan Morris I have a slide of it so clear that when I show it to an audience, 4-year-old children have been known to spell through the inscription out loud with me.

A final reason we have been unaware of this important evidence can only be described as “mindset.” Here I must admit to having been a victim of that sociological phenomenon, noted by perceptive minorities and feminists,



Fresco of women  
celebrating the Eucharist



Sex changes in  
mosaic copy

by which the view of the oppressor is accepted by the oppressed themselves as true, even when it is contrary to what can be observed in reality. For example, before my consciousness was raised, I found and photographed in a small German museum many beautiful mediaeval carvings and paintings of women holding the host and chalice, of women preaching, and of women singing the office — all public liturgical acts for which ordination was required. (I must leave aside here the dating of these sources and possible variations of interpretation.)

I visited that museum many times over a period of 10 years before I realized what I actually saw before me, and began to wonder about its significance. I hadn't "seen" these things although I had often studied them, because I assumed they *could not* be true. And I was not even conscious of assuming that they could not be true!

Such rejection of evidence may well take place without hypocrisy or dishonesty; in fact, it is scarcely to be described as rejection. However, sound historical method now teaches us to overcome the suppressing of certain facts to preserve the status quo. We now know that these sources attest to the breadth and diversity of the early church and must not be ignored in favor of what church practice has become today. By reclaiming our history, we can solve many problems, not the least of which is how to bring the Good News to women.



*Continued from page 3*

justice, who wills that people be released from bondage of whatever sort, and that pursuant to that divine will, God led the people of Israel out of Egypt. We know of God's support of the Israelites in their struggle against the false values and false gods of Canaan. We recall at least fragments of the thunderings of the Old Testament prophets against their own people, a people who, like us, forget where God's real investment of concern lies. This is old stuff.

But this picture of the Bible is also new. We had assumed that when the canon of the Bible (the actual books included) was closed, the story had ended. We had felt that to be religious was to believe that the Bible contains the ultimate deposit of religious truth, tedious though it may be to quarry, difficult though it might be to structure our world with what we extract. On the contrary, to be religious, in the sense that the ancient Israelites were religious, would be to become prospectors, searching for religious truth. It would mean finding out what had to be done to master our social problems, and, in attempting to achieve that mastery, to identify the religious principles and the political process which could enable us. This would include readiness to modify and discard old religious and political models, and to create new ones suitable to our situation. This is what happened in the Israelite breakthrough into their new religion of Jahweh, which was based on the foundations of *their* old theology. It would call for us to be so experimental and radical in our religious thinking that later generations could say of *us* that we had "founded a new religion."

And in so doing, those of us who consider ourselves Jews or Christians will discover that we are confessors of that same faith, holders of that same hope, which was forged centuries ago on the anvil of a covenant between God and people in their common quest for justice and righteousness in human affairs.

"What do we make of the Bible?" Perhaps the question should be rephrased: What is God, through the biblical revelation of that covenant with God's people, trying to make of us? ■

#### CREDITS

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# Mormon Action Undermines Trust

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by Alice Dieter

Excommunication is not a word most of us worry about these days. It lacks the punch it once had when the ringing threat of isolation in its syllables could bring recalcitrant kings to heel.

But since most of the Western world is no longer administered as a theological exercise in politics, the princes of the church don't go tossing excommunications around with much abandon.

That is why it is dangerously easy to underestimate how terrible excommunication really is.

The Mormon Church has excommunicated Sonia Johnson, a fifth-generation Mormon, wife, mother and church organist. The word from the church is that the action has nothing to do with Johnson's political efforts to organize and act as "Mormons for the ERA." We are, instead, asked to believe that this family-centered church has severed a devout woman from her family for all eternity for some other venial, heinous but unnamed crime.

That doesn't wash.

The rest of us remain convinced the Mormon Church has excommunicated a faithful member of their group because she broke ranks politically with its official position on a civic issue.

A bishop of my own particular household of faith was once asked to describe expectation of eternal life. He was a stern man and a precise scholar. He turned a rather withering look on the

questioner and snapped back, "Just what do you think you are living?"

In that context of eternal life we can all believe that the Mormon Church has truly excommunicated Sonia Johnson. Her father rejects her, her brother will not speak to her and her children are now forced to the destructive division of loyalty between their mother and the supportive church environment in which they have been raised.

I happen to believe there are alternatives available to this family unit through which they will find grace and support. But my view of her alternatives does not change the shattering action publicly administered as discipline over political disagreement with church hierarchy.

I think Sonia Johnson's excommunication also tears at the fabric of trust between Mormons and non-Mormons.

A case in the Idaho courts critical to the legal status of the Equal Rights Amendment is to be heard by a judge who is a Mormon. The issue of his impartiality to hear the case was raised. Marion Callister considered his state of mind on the subject and decided he could act fairly and impartially although he is not only a Mormon, but a high official of his church.

I have not met Callister. But I do know another member of our judiciary fairly well who is also Mormon. I admire his integrity and clear thinking and I would unhesitatingly trust his judgment. My

trust in him was transferable to his colleague . . . before the Johnson excommunication.

But the excommunication strains that web of trust. I do not want my potential legal status under the U.S. Constitution to be decided by anyone acting under any threat or fear of permanent and eternal separation from family and from grace. I do not believe anyone's judgment made on critical issues could be impartial under such potential pressure. Because I believe excommunication — in its full psychological effect — is completely and totally real.

The Mormon Church, as an institution, opposes the ERA as a threat to the stability of the family. (The amendment would guarantee that equal protection of the law would not be abridged because of sex.) I think the church's argument is absurd and rendered more so by its callous and destructive act against the Johnson family.

It smacks of that sophistry in Vietnam, where we had to "destroy the village in order to save it."

That also was excommunication. ■

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**Alice Dieter** is a member of Church and Society who works in corporate communications with a forest products company in Boise. She is a regular columnist for the *Idaho Statesman*, from which the above is reprinted with permission (Dec. 12, 1979).



## The Woman Who Was Bent Double

From generation to generation  
The long line of the righteous  
Piously parade their pomposity  
Smiling contentedly as they think  
Everything is under their control.

The bound woman, bent double,  
Crippled with centuries of oppression  
Cries out in her agony for healing  
The Man of Compassion declares  
Your bonds are loosed, you are free.

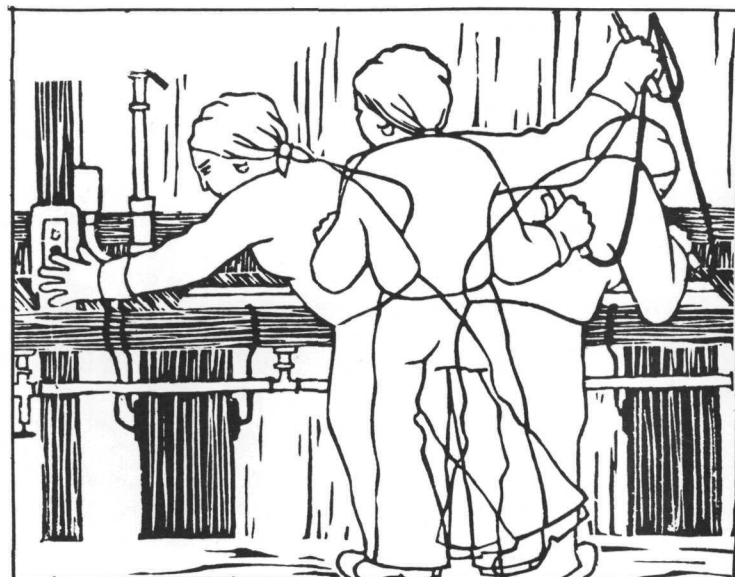
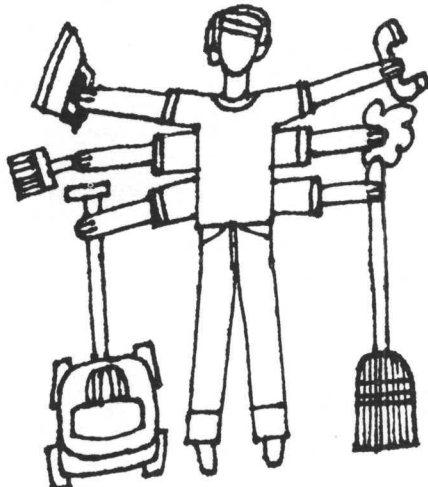
Obedying him, she stands straight and tall  
As their anger breaks like a dark sea  
Beating its waves against the Rock;  
But there is anger in his eyes  
At the hardness of their hearts.

Obey the law, wait until sunset  
for lamentations at Lambeth.  
Wait for the Synod to decide.  
Wait until darkness covers us  
And all our Sabbaths are ended.

The crippled woman stretches herself,  
Strong in her faith, her bondage ended.  
His compassion cannot wait.  
Light cannot wait upon darkness.  
Love cannot fail to care.

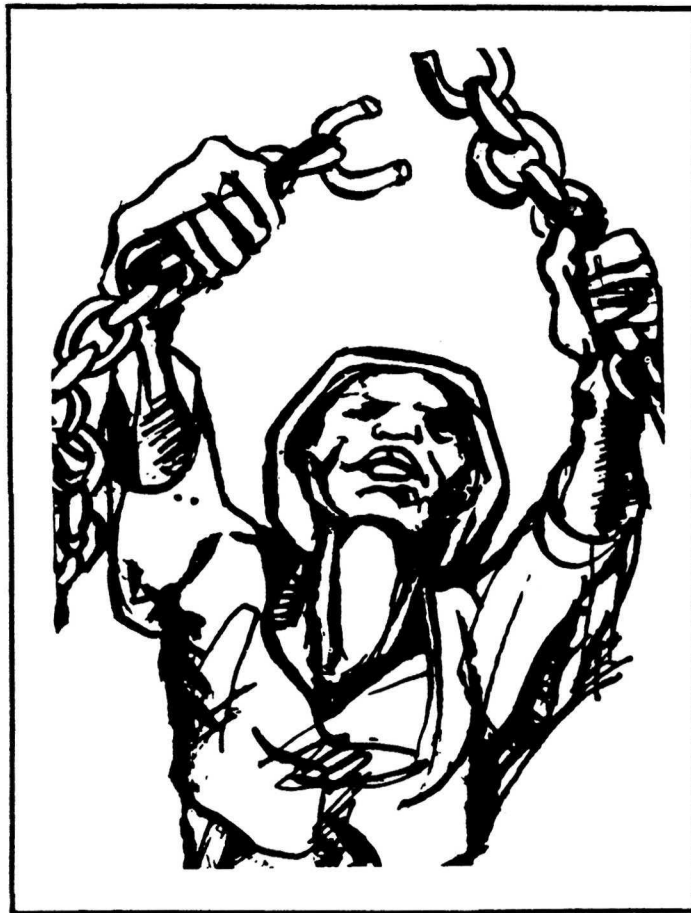
--Phoebe Willetts

Deaconess Phoebe Willetts, knowing she was dying of cancer, concelebrated the Eucharist with her priest-husband, Alfred, at their parish in Manchester, England in 1978, three weeks before her death.



# Standing Free

by Daniel Berrigan



The healing of woman bent double, in *Luke 13*. Nuanced and delightful! I cannot for the life of me, find anyone who treats it adequately.

She was bent over, Luke says (and he ought to know) by a diabolic spirit. Could it be that she was fated to dramatize in her frame, the fate of women, in that culture, in every culture? No one says so. Males write history generally; then to place things beyond doubt, they write male commentary. But Luke steps aside from all that; or better, Jesus does. In freedom, he walks over those puerile taboos and drawn lines. He takes the initiative with the woman: "He called her over when he saw her condition. . . ." Then he

"laid his hands on her," and simply announced her cure.

She straightened up. And "she gave glory to God." How sublime! A woman bent double (bent doubly) under the burden of hideous culture, and worse, religion, is healed of this evil spirit. For a spirit is at work in her, not a disease; or better, a diseased spirit. The culture, and the religion, are rightly regarded by Jesus as demonic. The woman must be exorcised, of culture, of religion. Then she stands upright, then with all her wit and will, she responds to God. Can you see her face at that moment?

The keepers of the status quo are of course, outraged. If we know anything, we know why. The miraculous is of no account to them. Religion is business. The rule is business as usual. Business is good.

But something deeper than this is in question; the healing of — a woman. Her face, alight with hope and joy, is an affront to their consecrated gloom, the atmosphere of a sanctuary which is a counting house.

Would they have struck back with such irrational fury had a man been healed under the same circumstances? One is allowed to doubt it.

In any case, Jesus is at pains to note that he has liberated not a man, but a "daughter of Abraham." This is her dignity. He refers to it, against all custom. A daughter of Abraham stands, upright; stands up, as we say, for her rights.

In the Gospel, the title is unique, where macho "sons of Abraham" abound. In the Jewish bible, the title is unthinkable. But no commentator notes these things, as far as I can find.

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**The Rev. Daniel Berrigan** is a noted Jesuit author, poet, and peace activist.

# From Submissive To 'Subversive' Theology

by Elice Higginbotham

Women in Latin America found little to rejoice in at the Third Latin American Bishops' Conference in Puebla, Mexico, a year ago. As Faith Annette Sand reported in April in *THE WITNESS*, the concerns of women were largely left to the sidelines. "Women for Dialogue" provided a forum for a variety of discussions of women's issues, as did a few other groups and organizations — but all safely outside the bishops' discussion halls, where a woman's voice was rarely heard.

Given such a recent negative historical experience, what more might women expect at the upcoming Fourth Conference of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, scheduled for February, 1980, in Sao Paulo, Brazil? Might an ecumenical, and more geographically diverse, body be expected to be more open-minded about including the experience of women?

That Puebla's easy dismissal of women not be repeated was uppermost in the minds of the planners of the Latin

American Women's Theology Seminar in Mexico City in October, 1979. Nineteen women from eight countries, plus three carefully-chosen men, spent what surely must have been one of the most exhausting and exhilarating weeks of their lives delving deeply into the specific situation, needs and contributions of women — an experience that has until now, largely been ignored not only by traditional church structures, but by the Theology of Liberation as well.

Women, equally committed to political and social liberation and to the liberating word of the Gospel, have been as invisible in this new process as they have been in traditional theology and the church. Men have been the subjects, the actors, the ones whose perspective was considered normative. Women have been the passive recipients, both of male authority and, if they were of the exploited classes, of political authority — a double oppression.

Members of "Women for Dialogue" were the planners and coordinators of the seminar. From the event, however, emerged a new, more broadly-focused organization, Women for Theological Reflection in Latin America, defining

itself as "a group made up of Christian women committed to people's struggles, whose purpose is to carry out and promote theological reflection from the context of the women in Latin America." The new group and its members are to be characterized as "ecumenical, inter-disciplinary (not limited to "professional theologians") . . . involved in popular struggles — members of Christian base communities — and having feminine consciousness." Two seminar participants were selected, by vote, to represent the new organization at the Sao Paulo conference, and a document prepared at the seminar will be offered at Sao Paulo.

But that was the culmination of the week.

The excitement I felt during the course of the seminar came, I believe, from the sense that something almost entirely new for Latin American women was happening. Women were looking at their own situation, not only within a broader class struggle, but *as women*, and then helping to build, from and for themselves, theology and expressions of faith appropriate to their context. For these women, this meant neither rejecting men or men's contributions to

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**The Rev. Elice Higginbotham** is on the staff of the New York Conference of the United Church of Christ.

theology, nor creating a different political analysis based on categories of sexual, rather than class, oppression.

The participants were selected with an eye toward: political commitment to the struggles of the poor, demonstrated in actual practice through work or some active political affiliation; consciousness of the special needs of, and discrimination against, women in society at large, in the church and in progressive political movements; self-identification as a practicing Christian, though not necessarily through traditional church structures. The result was a group of women of amazing talent and energy, whose work ranged from direct base community organizing to seminary and university teaching; half were Roman Catholic religious or former religious; two were ordained Protestant ministers (myself and the Cuban delegate among them); several had ceased attending Mass nor did they retain any loyalty to traditional church practices, yet they found Christian symbols deeply meaningful in the struggle for freedom from oppression. Seven Latin American countries were represented: Argentina, Venezuela, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Mexico and Brazil. (I was the only North American observer, strictly speaking; two women of Latin American background, who now reside in the United States, also participated.)

*Context* is primary for the Theology of Liberation and for a class struggle orientation toward the causes and cures of oppression. Thus we spent several sessions examining the Latin American woman's context, her role and history in society, in the church, in liberation struggles.

In traditional theology (the European kind, which I was taught in seminary) one begins by describing God, and from the established definitions of Him (definitely *Him*), one begins to generalize about the human condition and the appropriate response and

relationship to Deity. Recent Latin American theologians, however, have begun to turn the process around. We begin theologizing, they state, by describing *ourselves*, our condition, our context, our needs. From this self-understanding, we read the scriptures, we study the history of the Christian body, and we begin to describe God and God's relationship to human beings, and the implications of that relationship for human behavior. This new process has brought renewed vigor and commitment to many churches and Christians throughout Latin America (at the same time as it has brought dissension and repression) — but it is only reiterating a truism to point out



that virtually all these “theologians of liberation” are males.

Although I handle Spanish fairly fluently, it took me a day or two to grasp the significance of the effort to perceive women as *sujeto*, or “subject” of theology. In English, we tend to think of “subject” more or less as “topic” — “The subject of my paper (or speech or anecdote or book) is such-and-such.” The “subject” is that spoken or written about; grammatically, we could say that, in English, we actually use “subject” to mean “object,” or that which is acted upon. In Spanish, however (and in grammatically correct English, too), “subject” — *sujeto* — is understood to be the *actor*, the initiator,

the one from whose point of view an analysis is made or an action taken. In Mexico, we began by seeing women — ourselves! — as the *subjects* of history and of theology. We began to appropriate our own lives, thoughts, needs and experiences as normative, as a framework for seeing ourselves and our world. Women of the oppressed classes spoke loudly and clearly, through the voices of an administrator of a consumer cooperative in rural Mexico, the organizer of a domestic workers’ union in Peru, an exiled political activist and wife of a *desaparecido* (disappeared person) from Argentina.

Reading the Bible *historically* was stressed in presentations on theology, Christology and Bible study. The Bible is a history of the meeting points between the forces of oppression and the forces of liberation, a seminary professor from Costa Rica pointed out. Only in taking seriously this dynamic can the oppressed truly appropriate the Gospel as theirs. And only from this perspective can women see that a liberating Gospel emerges even from a written tradition fraught with males and masculine images.

For the first time in my experience with Latin American Christians, an attempt was made to begin to deal with the whole concept of sexuality, recognizing that this biological characteristic affects all human actions and relations in some way. The presentation on sexuality was the only one in which a man participated; in fact, the speakers were a winsome middle-aged couple, both former religious, she originally from Spain, he a Chilean exile. Their paper was an initial attempt in a delicate field, but one in which sexual relations which are freeing, pleasing, self-identifying and fulfilling were defined as those to be sought after, whether confined to traditional marriage relationships or not.

Women’s role in the left and their

relationship to men in liberation struggles were constantly on the minds of all participants. Several political activists described their own attempts to be truly themselves and to take the leadership tasks of which they are capable within these movements. As a Protestant, I was enlightened by the growing understanding of the Catholic women present of the Virgin Mother as a (potentially subversive) liberating symbol of strength, independence and solidarity, rather than the submissive, ethereal, sexless creature that I usually have seen held up as the model of "pure Christian womanhood."

Two contrasting events provided dramatic background for the seminar. One was the recent victory of the Nicaraguan people in their struggle to free themselves from 40 years of repressive, U.S.-backed dictatorship. A Nicaraguan sister (who presently resides in Costa Rica) brought in news clippings that demonstrated the progress of the young revolutionary government as it slowly rebuilds that devastated country and builds new

structures that will take seriously the needs of all the people. Proudly, she shared with us anecdotes of the active participation of women in the Nicaraguan struggle.

As if to demonstrate how far we have to go, that was also the week of Pope John Paul II's visit to the United States — acknowledged by all present as representing a setback for Roman Catholic women. The Mexican press chronicled the Pope's every move and speech, and groans were heard every morning in our meeting room as the front-page articles were passed around.

A few impressions of deeply touching moments . . . a sister from Colombia reading a letter from prison, from a 16-year-old high school student who had been detained and tortured; in the middle of the letter, the reader's voice broke, and she handed the page to the woman seated next to her: "I'm sorry, I can't go on; she's a friend of mine." . . . A moment in one of the nightly sessions for evaluation of each day's process and activities: "It seems to me we've been a little undisciplined with regard to the

daily clean-up tasks we agreed to share among us. Remember, if we were a gathering of men theologians, we'd have women to do these things for us; as it is, we've got to take the responsibility ourselves!" . . . Tears in the eyes of most participants at the seminar's closing ecumenical eucharist, in which the bread and wine were served by the ordained woman from Cuba; most had never attended a worship service in which a woman presided, and many verbalized the deep emotion and sense of solidarity they felt at walking into the room and seeing a woman seated behind the communion table.

For some participants, the Mexico City seminar was one of a long series of experiences in confronting their own female identities in church and society; for others, it was a first experience in a gathering of militant Christian women. All left expressing the feeling that this meeting had been unique, and had buoyed them up to continue, as women and as fighters for liberation, in the struggles which they confront in their home countries. ■

## Urban Caucus Assembly Underway

As THE WITNESS goes to press, plans are reaching final form for the Organizing Assembly of the Episcopal Urban Caucus in Indianapolis Feb. 13-16.

Conceived by the Urban Bishops' Coalition and the Church and City Conference of the Episcopal Church, the project will be convened by Bishop John Walker of Washington and the Rev. Michael S. Kendall, heads of these two groups, respectively.

The Assembly will open with a dinner in the Indianapolis Civic Center. Keynote speaker will be Ms. Mattie Hopkins, a teacher in the Chicago public school system, vice-president of the Union of Black Episcopalians, and a

trustee of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company. Two to three hundred are expected for the event, and interest throughout the church has been high.

The Assembly will form an Episcopal Urban Caucus of laity, clergy and bishops to reassert the church's mission and ministry in cities large and small. Strengthened by ecumenical contacts with other denominations and secular groups, the Caucus proposes to represent and lobby for the concerns of the urban mission of the church.

Plenary sessions will alternate with meetings of strategy groups, the latter to address themselves to the revitalization of parishes, economic development and

community organization, the arms race and the threat of nuclear holocaust, the response of the church to the energy crisis, and to the purpose, goals and organization of the Caucus.

Several regional institutes have been held throughout the country in preparation for the Assembly, at which attention has been directed to *The Challenge for Evangelism and Mission*, the document which will serve as the agenda for the Assembly. This Assembly is the outgrowth of a series of open hearings on the urban crisis held by the Urban Bishops' Coalition in 1977-78, at which the needs of the urban areas were strongly impressed upon the bishops. ■

## Tax Resistance: **Another Kind of Vote**

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by Kay Atwater

Coming out of the closet seems to be the rage these days. Well, here goes: I am one of those people who resist the payment of taxes for federal military expenditures for reasons of conscience. There are a lot of us, perhaps as many as 20,000 who hold back the tax on their telephone bills (earmarked for defense during the Vietnam War), and an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 who refuse a portion or all of their income tax.

Some have been to court, only a few have gone to jail, many have had their property seized, most have carried on some kind of dialogue with IRS representatives as well as with their senators or representatives. No court case has been decided clearly in favor of the taxpayer's right not to support military expenditures on constitutional grounds, but tax refusers agree that resistance is worth all the trouble, since each case adds to the witness for justice and peace.

The military emphasis in the United States and our policy with regard to other nations and ideologies in the world has disturbed individual citizens and groups since early in our history. WITNESS readers are familiar with the peace movement and with the arguments for disarmament, not the least of which is that basic human needs suffer as a result of the heavy military budget. Those who refuse taxes on the grounds of Christian conscience usually contribute these refused taxes to organizations working for peace or to alleviate human need directly. Half of my income tax for the last two years has been sent to the World Peace Tax Fund Escrow Account, a budding organization started by Georgia and Ed Pearson of Bellport, Long Island. The World Peace Tax Fund is a proposed arm of the federal government which would collect taxes from those who oppose war on the grounds of

conscience and would use these funds for peace programs. The bill has been introduced periodically (HR 4897, S 880), but has only a modicum of support. Meanwhile, the Escrow Account is holding, in federally insured savings accounts, refused taxes designated for peace. The interest from this money supports administration and publicity.

Many tax refusers prefer to put their money to work in alternative funds, such as that of the Brandywine Peace Community or the War Resisters' League, or give it to a church fund for the relief of suffering.

While the idea of tax refusal was germinating in me, I spotted a short notice in *The Other Side* magazine, inviting inquiries to the newly formed Center on Law and Pacifism in Philadelphia. Bill Durland, an attorney with theological integrity and legislative

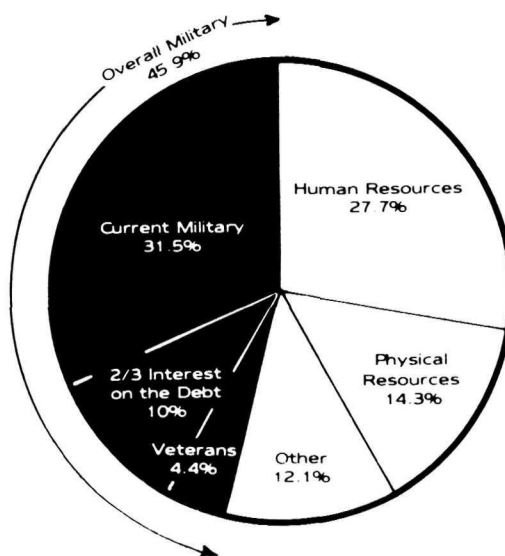
experience, and his wife Eugenia Smith-Durland, author-activist, started the Center in 1978 to give tax resisters information and legal advice and support. A newsletter is published bi-monthly, and other literature, including legal briefs, is available on all aspects not only of tax resistance but of institutional violence, and the efforts, including civil disobedience, being made to combat its many forms. The staff and board of the Center are ecumenical. Conferences and workshops are sponsored regularly, and legal counseling is done by a sizable staff of attorneys located in many different parts of the country.

By far the bulk of tax cases, at least up to the point of actually going to court, are *pro se*, planned, executed and defended by the individual taxpayer with supportive guidance only — a kind of do-it-yourself method which has proven most appealing to all concerned. Since there are so few precedents, each new case exhibits creativity in its presentation.

Durland reports on each of the court cases he has argued, among them that of Episcopal priest Howard Lull. Lull's argument is based primarily on the Ninth Amendment, which states that "the enumeration in the Constitution of certain rights shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people." One of these prior, inalienable rights is the right of conscience, which we may take to include the right not to kill. Howard and his wife Barbara have refused military taxes for the last seven years and will continue to do so. Their case is one of only four that have reached the stage of a formal petition for a hearing by the Supreme Court. The Lulls' petition was denied. "I don't know why there are so few of us refusing taxes. It's so obvious!" Lull said.

Why professing Christians continue to pay for war and preparations for war while they speak out and pray for peace is a question that has occupied better

minds than mine. It has been suggested that the endorsement of the church by the Emperor Constantine in the fourth century brought the church into a too cozy relationship with the political state that continues to this day. The goals of church and state became intertwined. Armies were conscripted, and the "just war" theory came into being, one of its staunchest defenders being St. Augustine. But no war is just. For killing does not make life, but death, both physical and spiritual.



No great civilization has escaped the dread and shame of war and the longing for peace. The idea of peace has been central to religious belief since antiquity. In ancient China, for example, the Taoists taught that we are all part of a magnificent natural order, and to the extent that we can attune ourselves to it we are at peace with each other and with God. Peace is taken for granted as inherent in creation. Similarly with Hinduism. The *Bhagavad Gita* ("Song of God") contains the seeds of the philosophy of nonviolence, taught and used successfully by Mohandas Gandhi in the early part of this century. Freedom is achieved through acting out God's all-inclusive love with a "holy indifference

to the fruits of action." Peace in the Jewish tradition, *shalom*, means not only the end or absence of conflict, but also signifies a working together, a harmony between nations, family members, even between separate components of the human personality.

The Christian way of peace carries the idea yet a step further: "Resist not evil, but repay evil with good." *Active* nonviolence is required to sustain peace. It is not enough to refuse to fight. Violence must be overcome with acts of love, even toward those who are considered hateful enemies. For the early Christians it was unthinkable to take up arms against another human being. When Jesus disarmed Peter just before he was arrested, he made it clear that the sword was not to be used, for that would only perpetuate violence.

The first Christians were known for their strange customs. The refusal to fight, even to defend oneself, or to pay taxes (early Christians refused to pay taxes in support of Caesar's Temple in Rome) is still thought to be unpatriotic and unusual, *even by most people who say they are Christians*. And yet, some of the noblest and clearest pronouncements have come from church leaders: "War as a method of settling international disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of Our Lord, Jesus Christ." (Lambeth Conference, 1930, 1968, 1978) In 1978 the following was added: "... the modern technology of war is the most striking example of corporate sin and the prostitution of God's gifts. We ... call Christian people everywhere to engage themselves in nonviolent action for justice and peace and to support others so engaged, ... recognizing that such action will be controversial and may be personally very costly."

Last year at the 66th General Convention of the Episcopal Church these resolutions were adopted, along with a resolution opposing the draft. Working both up front and behind the

scenes on these actions was the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, a Washington-based organization long noted for its support of conscientious objectors and its opposition to any church involvement in the things of war. A Joint Commission on Peace was also established, with organizational funding for three years. The Fellowship invites both draft and tax resisters to register with them, and publishes a newsletter.

Long before the Episcopal Church became involved in the peace movement, there were conscientious objectors to war taxes among Brethren, Quakers and Mennonites, to mention those most active. The reader is referred to *The Power of the People: Active Nonviolence in the United States*, a splendid pictorial history edited by Robert Cooney and Helen Michalowski and published cooperatively by 35 organizations (Peace Press, 3828 Willat Ave., Culver City, CA 90230; \$7.95). Seen as a continuous witness, the movement gathers momentum in times of war, and experiences less activity in times of peace — except for the present, when the threat of oblivion from nuclear war brings to it a new urgency. The many marches, demonstrations and peace missions in recent years have had strong consciousness-raising effects and have shown mass support for peaceful negotiations and cooperation between nations and ideologies.

The anti-nuclear constituency, whose voice has been so prominent since Three Mile Island, has also made an impact. Environmentalists and conservationists point us to the fragility and interdependence of all life, highlighted by the spectacular photographs of our Earth brought back from the moon shot. We can look back to the success of the popular outrage against the War in Vietnam, but we must also look forward, to see how we can preserve this tenuous sheath of life. I think it will take more than letters and marches.

One of the most difficult impediments for the tax refuser to conquer is the withholding system. If one can prevent taxes from being collected by one's employer and turned over to the IRS, the procedure is easy. In order to do this, one must revise the W-4, the form that reports the number of individual allowances, and by which the employer is guided in figuring payroll deductions. If more allowances are claimed, less tax will be withheld. But in order to claim these extra allowances one must be prepared to claim either a Peace Tax Credit or Deduction when filing the 1040.

The first return on which I claimed this credit was filed without the benefit of these extra allowances. Naturally, the IRS came back to me with a bill for what appeared to be an amount I still owed. Even though I had enclosed with my return a statement outlining my reasons for claiming the Peace Tax Credit and the resulting refund, I had to repeat this statement in my response to the initial audit, which I did. More dialogue ensued, the most recent notice asking that an appointment be set up to discuss my case with local representatives. Just before Christmas, however, I did receive the refund I had claimed, with interest! I turned it over immediately to the World Peace Tax Fund Escrow Account. No one has contacted me, yet, to set up that appointment.

A tax refusal is usually processed fairly, though it may take a few years. Throughout, the dialogue is important, for it confronts IRS personnel with the dimension of conscience over and over and over again. What they do about it will depend in large part on the measure of sincerity and good will presented.

Anyone considering a tax refusal action should certainly get some information and guidance, either from someone with experience or from one of the organizations listed below. The right to petition the government for a

redress of grievances is in the First Amendment, along with the basic freedoms of religion, speech and the press and the right of assembly. I would like to think of this right as a *duty*. For if our democracy is responsive only to an elite sector of its citizenry, then one *must* petition, or that condition will continue.

Specifically, I do not want my children or anyone else's children to die or be maimed in another war; but more than that, I do not even want them to have to participate in a victory if it means that other human beings will die. It's my opinion that much more could be done at negotiating tables to settle disputes than is done at present. Since half of our national budget is spent on war, past, present and future, my refusal to contribute to this effort is my vote against distrust, stand-off and hostile confrontations, and in favor of cooperation and mutual assistance between nations. The reservoir of moral strength in the free world has scarcely begun to be tapped and put to the purposes and goals we all long to achieve.

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### Resources

Center on Law and Pacifism, 300 W. Apsley, Philadelphia, PA. 19144. (215-844-0365). Information, publications and legal support.

Episcopal Peace Fellowship, Hearst Hall, Woodley Road and Wisconsin Ave., Washington, D.C. 20016. (202-363-5532). Support group and registry.

Fellowship of Reconciliation, Box 271, Nyack, NY. 10960. (914-358-4601). War Tax Packet, \$1.25.

World Peace Tax Fund Escrow Account, 44 Bellhaven Road, Bellport, NY 11713. (516-286-8824). Same address: Conscience and Military Tax Campaign, registry for pledges to refuse war taxes when 100,000 signatures are obtained.

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*Continued from page 2*

the baby born.

Mr. Friedrich seems to prefer a literal interpretation of the Bible. He advocated limiting sex to the Judeo-Christian teaching — within marriage. I would plead, however, for a more situational interpretation in view of Biblical passages condoning polygamy and gang rape, among other practices. (See Genesis 19:4-8 for Lot's offer of his two young daughters to satisfy the rabble who came for his angelic visitors.)

Mr. Friedrich also claims that he fits into the "fanatical fringe" but not the mold. I used "fanatical fringe" to refer to that segment of the pro-life movement found, by a sociological survey published in 1978, to be pro-fetal life amendment, pro-death penalty, pro-military might and anti-racial minority progress. People who do not fit the mold are not part of the fringe. Those with a pacifist-egalitarian outlook that includes support of fetal life are not among the fanatics bombing women's clinics and engaging in other acts of social, political and personal terrorism-in-the-name-of-God.

Finally, I believe that our theology and ethics must grow from deep reflection on our real-life experiences. For this reason, I was moved by Mr. Friedrich's reflections on being a genetically damaged child. I respect that experience and sincerely apologize for the pain my over-generalization may have caused him or others. By the same token, I demand respect for my experience — that of a sexually abused child. A recent report from the National Council of Churches, "Sexual Violence," reveals that one in every four girls will suffer molestation by the age of 18. Half of the reported cases will be incest. And sexual abuse is disproportionately high within "families with strict religious backgrounds." Just as women had to bring the experiences of unwanted pregnancies into the open, I believe we must bring the experiences of child abuse into the open. Regarding Mr. Friedrich's suggestion that targets of rape and incestuous attacks should rely

on prayer, I respond from my own experience, "Bull!"

**Georgia Fuller, Chair  
National Committee  
on Women and Religion  
National Organization for Women**

*Editor's Note: "Sexual Violence," is available from the NCC Joint Strategy Action Committee, Room 1700A, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, N.Y. 10027. Cost is 20¢, plus a self-addressed, stamped envelope.*

## **A Purple 'Right On'**

In reflection on your editorial in the November WITNESS dealing with the Spears report (on homosexuality) and the resolution by John Krumm, let me simply say, "Right on." Pax.

**The Rt. Rev. Richard Trelease, Jr.  
Albuquerque, N. Mex.**

## **Outraged and Saddened**

I am outraged and deeply saddened by Paragraph 3 of General Convention's action on homosexuality and ordination. The grave danger lies in its hypocrisy.

God will surely not suddenly stop raising up for ministry some persons whose capacity to love trespasses the sexual behavior rules, occasionally or by responsible intention. Now that the Convention has legislated the possibility of intrusive inquiry into private sexual behavior by anyone involved in screening candidates, the only sensible alternative for such a person is to lie. What a vicious double message!

As a theological educator and life-long observer of clergy in action, I am certain that a high degree of authenticity is one of the few irreducible qualities of the faithful and effective priest. Now for some of our candidates, we intrude a "higher" value, either conformity to a behavioral code, or cynical deception in order to exercise ordained ministry. I want a passionate priesthood — able to confront the demons and the angels,

subject to risks of failure and sin. I don't want only a bland easily-conventional army of managers.

And hypocrisy infects the whole body, not just those directly affected. When I was a young Presbyterian "postulant," my adviser told me that if I didn't believe the Bible to be literally the "only infallible rule of faith and practice," to say it anyway, tongue-in-cheek, in order to get approved for ordination. I refused. When the Methodists were requiring the "pledge" on tobacco and alcohol, countless faithful pastors had to lie in order to exercise their ministry. What a cost, in eroded credibility and distrust. The whole church suffers from hypocrisy, not just one part.

What would I have us say? Preferably nothing, when we don't know. Or, that the church does not yet know clearly how to translate the real standard of morality, the love of God disclosed in Jesus Christ, into universally applicable sex norms.

**Paul Nicely  
Methodist Theological School  
Delaware, Ohio**

## **In Liberal Corner**

I've been delighting in THE WITNESS for more than a year now. Since all my worst predictions came true at General Convention, I feel I have to put my money as well as my heart in the liberal corner. We can find solace, I guess, in the fact that our more rigid sisters and brothers see us as enough of a threat to vote against us. Before we didn't count enough to worry about. Keep up the good work.

**Ann Willis Scott  
Walnut Creek, Cal.**

## **Confession About ERA**

In thinking about the unthinkable — that women of the oft-thought sophisticated Episcopal Church would defeat (in Triennial, September, 1979) a resolution calling for the adoption of the Equal Rights Amendment — I decided to review the action as confessional. "What were these particular representatives of mine saying?" I choose to ask that

instead of disavowing that they were representing me. While that might appear easier, I would then disavow that by God's grace we are all one body in Christ.

The confession I see: We, the women of the Episcopal Church, do not know how to follow our Lord's advice to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's."

My duties as a citizen are of direct concern to the state's enrichment. The extent to which God cares about what's happening in matters of human governance is incarnate only to the degree which the body of believers is active physically and/or spiritually in those affairs. Without our best efforts we know that humanly contrived systems often become instruments of oppression rather than instruments for furthering the free state we understand God created us capable of achieving.

Personally, I am oppressed by the present inability of the United States to ratify the simplest possible statement of policy regarding the general impropriety of discrimination on the basis of sex. Initially, I was embarrassed that women of my church would not make an intellectual and civil response to that. Then, I was angry that they would choose to compromise the "credibility" of Episcopalian credentials in that way.

Now, I'm recognizing that the bondage of years under sexism will not be put to flight easily or eradicated from the body's consciousness. We have become accustomed to the state's operating without our best efforts! I have never lived in a civilization that welcomed or incorporated the ideals of peace and justice that lie close to the hearts of many women I know. We have never seen female citizens exercising even an equal degree of authority with men in affairs of state. Some churches are barely beginning to address that in affairs of the Kingdom. And, we need training. Collectively, women do not know how to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's (although occasionally we see an individual — Shirley Chisholm, Barbara Jordan, Gloria Steinem — who seems to have more understanding of the process than we do). But many women, I suspect, do not want to be told "how."

My confession: I am still waiting for the church to take me and all my sisters personally. Stand under us for awhile if you would truly understand us. Seeing resurrection in tokenism is something we may be prone to do.

**Ann Knight  
Christ Church  
Ontario, Cal.**

## Filled With Truth

Your October issue, "Theological Education Today: In Caesar's Household" — is filled with truth. Congratulations. I hope it spurs all of us to move into the future with more honesty and courage.

**Pat Kluepfel  
Mystic, Conn.**

## 'Caught in Mystery of Sexuality'

*Following General Convention's action concerning homosexuality and ordination, Bishop Robert Rusack of Los Angeles circulated among the people in his diocese the letter which appears below:*

The General Convention's House of Bishops has affirmed the "teaching of the Church on marriage, marital fidelity and sexual chastity." But, as it has done this, it has also opened the door to discourage close pastoral relationships between a bishop and his clergy in the whole realm of sexuality. Indeed, by including a recommendation to the church that "it is not appropriate for this Church to ordain a practicing homosexual or any person who is engaged in heterosexual relations outside of marriage," the majority of bishops have placed themselves in a difficult position. The passage of this recommendation brings more disunity.

Let it be said that I stand firm on the centrality of the family in our culture and in the church, but we cannot deny that there are those in the family of God who cannot live out their lives in the context of a family. Some have attempted to do so, with grave consequences for the partners and often children involved. There are homosexual clergy and laity of our church who have rendered great service to Christ and his people, and have been heterosexual. This bishop has "no intention of ordaining irresponsible persons or persons whose manner of life is such as to cause grave scandal or hurt to other Christians." (From statement prepared by bishops opposed to the recommendation passed by the House.) I trust our Commission on Ministry and Standing Committee to continue to thoroughly screen all

persons making application for postulancy and ordination. This, I truly believe, should not be dictated by powers beyond the diocese, for the total pastoral responsibility of a bishop with a postulant or priest is at the diocesan level.

To pass a recommendation that excoriates a large number of members of the Body of Christ in an attempt to keep a bishop from ordaining a homosexual or promiscuous heterosexual is folly. We hurt many who are caught in the mystery of their sexuality, desperately needing the care and concern of the Body, the family of Christ.

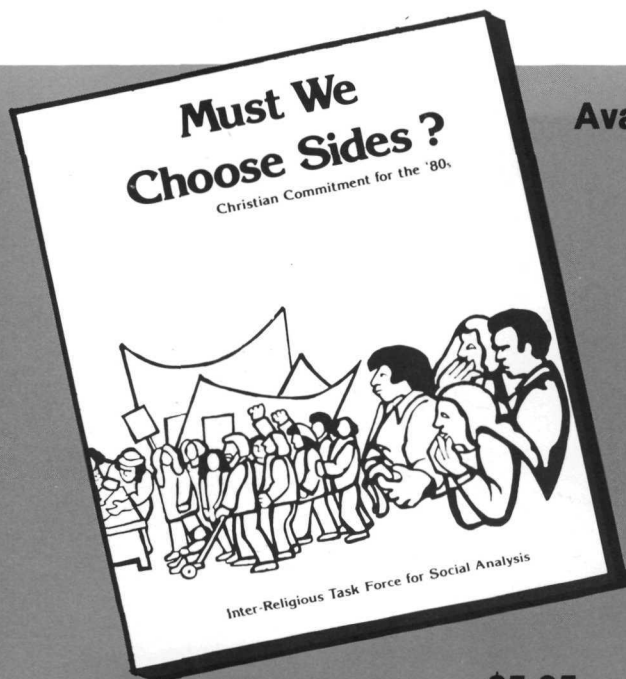
We in the Diocese of Los Angeles have long been caring and loving people, ever loyal to our God—a God of justice, mercy and love. Time and again in the last 15 years I have been overcome by the graciousness of clergy and laity as they have been forbearing and forgiving even in the face of grave excesses on the part of some clergy and some laity. They have been willing to trust those into whose hands pastoral care is placed.

In this pastoral situation of ordination, we must continue to trust the clergy and laity who assist the bishop in the screening, shepherding, schooling and finally ordination of fit persons to serve Our Lord and his church.

**The Rt. Rev. Robert Rusack  
Los Angeles, Cal.**

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