

THE

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WITNESS

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Humans Not Angels

I enjoy your magazine because it is enlightening and thought-provoking, frequently carrying views far different from my own. Occasionally I become angry, but that adds to the excitement. Nothing is more boring than reading one's own convictions as expressed by others.

The "Christmas Fantasy" in the December issue leads me to thank Almighty God that musicians and priests are not governors. In the vision of Carleton Schaller and Leonard Bernstein, one finds the gentleness and perfection of the Savior. But in the world around us one finds a hundred Hitlers, Stalins, Somozas, and Idi Amins at large — and another 10,000 yet unborn. Only 40 years ago, 6 million souls walked meekly and trustingly through the gates of Auschwitz, Dachau and Bergen-Belsen, knowing no one in their right mind would contemplate murdering an entire race of innocents. At this moment Soviet troops desecrate the land and people of Afghanistan and are poised to move into Poland if necessary to protect their interests as they see them.

Gentlemen, your case is moving, and I love you for your innocence, your sincerity, and your purity. But your naivete is overwhelming and dangerous! How many lessons and examples do you need? You are reckoning with human beings, not with angels!

Make no mistake: I am with you! We shall beat our swords into plowshares. The wolf will dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the

cow and the bear will feed, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

But, God in Heaven, give us grace to maintain our liberties in justice and peace. Grant us wisdom not to entrust them foolishly to wolves, leopards and bears, nor to beat our spears into pruninghooks *before* the lion eats straw! Amen.

In God we trust, but *not* in *man*! God bless you anyway — it's a beautiful dream.

Thomas C. Weller, Jr.
Mechanicsburg, Pa.

Schaller Responds

Admittedly, the language of "'Twas the Night Before Peace" is the language of a dream. Long before even contemplating the ordained ministry of my church, I served twice in the U.S. Army as an infantryman, during World War II and for a period amidst the Korean conflict. In between those years, I was engaged in secular work in New York. Influenced in large measure by those experiences, I personally find that "dreams" are essential to my own spiritual well-being.

But far more importantly, when Jesus said "Blessed are the peacemakers," it is my understanding that he was not addressing God, but people. Those words, then, were directly applicable to the lives of all those persons who were to go out into the world claiming Jesus' name. To be an aggressive peacemaker will cause us serious problems in our day, as it did the early Christians in their time of violence, yet the fact of these difficulties can in no way belie the teaching, nor that the teaching was directed to that portion of humanity called Christian.

In the practical realm of today's climate of aggression and raw power, what was conceivable, and even considered to be the only responsible course of action in World War II and in a place called Korea, I believe to be utter folly given the awesome destructiveness of thermonuclear weaponry. In other words, it's a brand new ball game! Accordingly, I am convinced that we who are the privileged inheritors of the words and actions of the Prince of

Peace, best do all that we can to affirm and share and proclaim our "beautiful dream" with the rest of humanity.

Carleton Schaller, Jr.
Littleton, N.H.

What Is Bottom Line?

I share Maynard Shelly's commitment to the pursuit of peace, and my politics, like his, is firmly rooted in faith ("Peace Churches, Negotiate Strategic Truce," December WITNESS). I have withheld my taxes during an unjust war because in Jewish Law any commandment may be set aside in order to save a life. There is no higher commandment than this. But a position of absolute pacifism can, at times give one shelter in oversimplification. It is the real-life experience of my generation that sometimes we are not offered the ease of choosing between good and evil. Sometimes the reality has been that we are offered choices between evil and greater evil. To take shelter in pacifism may make us a party to the greater evil if we fail to oppose it.

One third of my people died in my own lifetime. Those who survived Hitler were offered no homeland. They were the boat people who Britain turned away from Palestine by force of arms. And the Arab world would probably have made good its threat to drive the Israelis into the Mediteranean were it not for Israeli arms. Although I grieve at the obvious excesses of force used at times by the Israeli government, it is inconceivable to me that my people should speak of pacifism. Peace, yes. Compassion, yes. Pacifism, no. For saving one's own life, individually or collectively, is also required by the Jewish commandment.

I would like to ask Maynard Shelly where he draws the bottom line? Can he not imagine an injustice so extreme that his standard of Christian love would demand redress, even if by arms? Does the commandment, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," mean that we should all lie down with Mr. Shelly in martyrdom because he will not rise to his own, or anyone else's defense? I prefer to recall that the Love Commandment which

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THE WITNESS

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The Divine 'Nevertheless'

by Robert L. DeWitt

William Stringfellow, whose writings have appeared frequently in the pages of *THE WITNESS*, once made the comment: "There is one thing about being a Christian — you know you are going to lose!" A good biblical theologian, he of course knows full well the divine dimension of destiny — that God writes "nevertheless" across many a page of human history that seems to record defeat. But Stringfellow's statement is a helpful reminder that in the short term Christians cannot expect to fare better than Jesus Christ. They remember the cross.

This is not a new reality. In the old testament we read the account of Israel's attempts to translate into the social arena what they understood of God's plan for a human society based upon justice and equality and kindness. Their efforts were heroic, but they finally yielded to the superior power of the Philistines and others, and adopted the tyrannies and bureaucracies and social inequities which were the hallmarks, then as now, of societies which exalt state over people. Even then, an advanced technology in military and commercial affairs seemed more than a match for progressive theology and ethics.

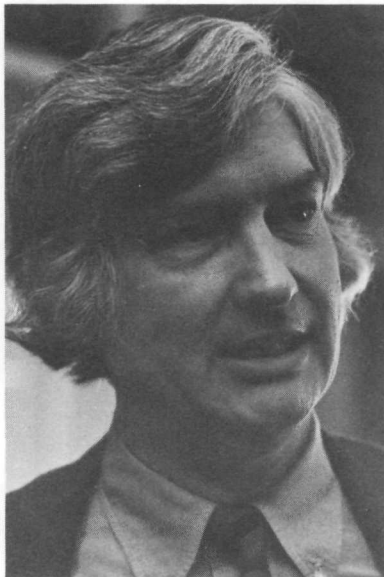
Was it ever thus? Will it always be so? It makes us wonder. Today, a small Roman Catholic convent owning a few shares of stock puts forth a resolution at an annual stockholders' meeting to protest the corporation's strip-mining activities — and two percent of the stockholders support them. A religious coalition attempts to address the plant closings of a large multi-national corporation and the cruel dislocations of communities and human lives which result from the closings — and find themselves ineffective. Religious and secular groups join forces to attempt to stop the headlong rush to destruction of the international arms race — and national arms budgets

burgeon. These efforts are all for the sake of a better world, because of a dream of a world of justice. But what chance have they in the face of modern industrial and military technology?

Such a question tests religious faith to the limits. If Christians know they are going to lose short-term, what is the divine "nevertheless" that is written across these ill-fated efforts in the name of justice? The recurrent theme of the Bible is that human rebellion against the will of God brings the judgment of God. Thus the old testament proclaimed, thus Jesus taught. But if it be the will of God, as the Bible makes clear, that the hungry be fed, the captives released, the naked clothed, the strangers welcomed, then it is also clear that the world today is in rebellion against God.

There are those who would read it differently, who would affirm a just society as an admirable ideal, but unrealistic. The world they say, never has functioned that way, and never will. Theoretically, they would concede, there is enough food available so that world hunger can be abolished, but political factors make it an unreachable goal. But designate the factor how we may — political or whatever — the presence of millions of poor and hungry people in this world is a defiant contradiction of the will of God.

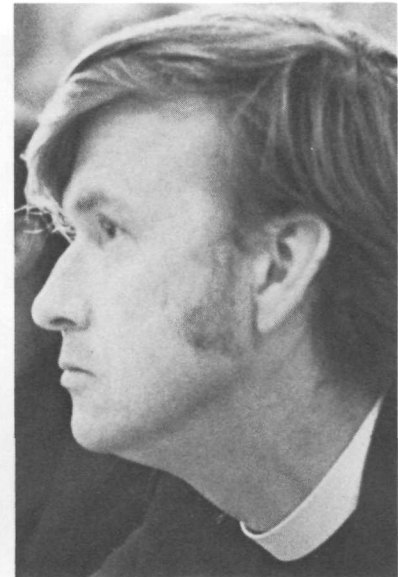
And rebellion against the will of God brings the judgment of God. This is the ultimate meaning of the threat of nuclear war, of depletion of the world's natural resources, of the threat to all human life on this globe. We do not break God's laws, it has been said — we break ourselves upon them. And if, short range, to be a Christian means to know that one will lose, it also means to know that God is God, and that God does not lose. And if Christians are on God's side, then they participate in the victory of truth. The shape of that victory is not yet clear, but for them the victory is assured. ■



Otis Charles



John Burt



John Spong

Bishops Ponder Urban Apocalypse

THE WITNESS brought a small group of bishops together recently to discuss their roles vis a vis the urban mission of the church and what they saw as signs of the pending "urban apocalypse" in their dioceses.

The group included Bishops John Burt of Ohio, Otis Charles of Utah, John Krumm, formerly of Southern Ohio and now Suffragan for the American Congregations in Europe, Paul Moore of New York, John Spong of Newark and Archbishop Ted Scott of the Anglican Church of Canada.

The U.S. bishops had been active in the Urban Bishops Coalition which formed in 1976 at the Episcopal General Convention and later conducted across the country a series of public hearings on the urban crisis. The UBC also launched, with the Church and City conference, the formation of the Episcopal Urban Caucus in 1980. That Caucus now numbers hundreds of lay persons, clergy and bishops from dozens of dioceses, and Ecumenical representatives as well, who are trying to relate the life and work of the church more closely to the critical needs of the urban areas where they live and serve.

Following are excerpts of comments made by Bishops Burt, Charles and Spong in a conversation with Robert L. DeWitt, editor of THE WITNESS, on the chief focus of their own involvement in urban mission. The conversation will continue in next month's WITNESS.

Bottom Line: People and Jobs

by John Burt

It was only a few years ago that all of us were snatching up Harvey Cox's *Secular City*, as though this was going to be the great event of the rest of the years of our ministry. Even though we knew at the time that things were wrong with our cities we felt, somehow, that we could remedy whatever was wrong through various programs. It wasn't very long ago that Lyndon Johnson was saying solemnly on TV that we could defeat poverty. If we rolled up our sleeves and really addressed ourselves to it, he said, we could do it. But then we began to realize that the tinkering, the ameliorative programs, just wouldn't do much.

Yet I remember as recently as when we first called together the Urban Bishops Coalition, I had a slight feeling that maybe we were being too alarmist. Then came the hearings that we held, and the reality that stared out at us from the financial pages and the headlines on the front pages, and we realize now more and more that the cities of our land and our whole urban culture are going through a crisis the likes of which we have never really experienced. I think a lot of us who sat in on the urban bishop's hearings and who began to

look at the real statistics that underlie the reality of our industrial situation, especially the foundering economic health of the cities of the northeast, realize that we are in desperate trouble in America, and indeed all over the world. More and more, the troubles we face are not something that any one community can solve. Indeed, the problems are so interrelated with the economies all through the world that any hope of any easy solution is a pipedream — all of which can be terribly discouraging.

Nevertheless, the first step toward any solution is the understanding of the problem. Some of us who serve in the cities of the northeast began to realize that the industrial layoffs were not just the result of a few knaves sitting in corporate offices, but were tied to a vast change in our economic/industrial system which is killing off cities, throwing them away, and what is more important, throwing away people. I was recently in Youngstown, where we tried to mount as sophisticated yet hardboiled an effort as we could to address the problem of the declining steel industry, and substitute an imaginative plan that many technical

people said would work. However, we have run into industrial and governmental principalities and powers, and there have now been 18,000 steel workers laid off permanently in the Mahoning Valley.

The night I went down there the Lordstown General Motors Plant, perhaps still the biggest automobile plant in the world, had laid off 5,500 for two months while they retool, hoping to build a car that will sell. How ironic, in an age when we have to cut down on gasoline consumption, that the best we can do is to say that the hope of that industrial corridor is to get right back into the same business, doing the same thing as before. I think really down deep the auto worker, the local mayor, and the boss at the steel mill, know that's a long, long shot. So I guess what I feel we're in now is a period of reappraisal. And although church leaders and others have taken a hard rap from business leaders for daring to ask questions, I've noticed that the questions that we have been jumped on for asking, or the statistics that we feared would go up, 12 months later are accepted dictums.

And so, what is the role of the church? I don't know. We haven't had any real

success thus far, in actually putting a new type of industrial component together. We did not succeed in opening up a steel mill under worker-community ownership, even though there was some fall-out of this concept in smaller industries that have picked up this idea, and that saved a lot of jobs.

One of the cynical satisfactions we have had from the Youngstown effort is the satisfaction of saying, "See, I told you so." They laid off half the city

employees there the other day. We had predicted the price that would be paid in lost tax revenues, and now there are not enough policemen to guard the town. United Airlines has taken off all the major planes going east, so that businessmen can't travel easily back and forth. And that starts to spell the doom of the city. It's like a row of dominoes falling down. It makes you weep to see day after day something new happening which will make it almost impossible for

that town ever to come back.

But I suspect our role in the long run will have been something of a prophetic role, of helping to see the seriousness of the problem, and also of trying to drive people to see that the bottom line is human beings, and that whatever ideologies may be proposed, the church is saying the bottom line is human beings and their jobs, their sense of having a decent shake out of the brief period that God has given to them. ■

MX Marks the Spot

by Otis Charles

I was fascinated that John Burt began with Harvey Cox, because Cox just came to Salt Lake City two weeks ago to address the whole issue of the development of the mobile missile system, the MX Missile system. He came with a message which is very clear and very simple. It was simply one word, "Enough" — we have enough nuclear weapons. It is important to grasp the magnitude of the proposed MX system project for Utah and Nevada, which is set forth as being essential to our national defense. It is an intricate network of 4,600 bunkers that would house 200 missiles. Each of those missiles is armed with 10 warheads which are probably some 30 times more powerful than the bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima.

The strategy behind it is that these 200 weapons are moved about, like a giant shell game, from one bunker to another to keep the enemy, the Russians, off balance so that they don't know where they are. And also, so that if they decide to attack us they have to use most of their weapons in order to do that. The number 4,600 is not an arbitrary number. That's the

approximate number of landbased ICBM's that the Russians possess at the present time. So, Utah and Nevada are being designed as a giant sponge to absorb the impact of any nuclear attack and presumably to neutralize the Russians.

This question is very complex and it can be dealt with from three different aspects. First, there's the whole question of nuclear armament, and whether or not in fact this particular approach contributes to the stability of world peace, or whether in fact it simply escalates the expansion of arms on both sides. Those who are pro-MX say that it neutralizes the enemy, and those who are opposed feel that, because at the moment we have no SALT II, it simply opens up the escalation of nuclear armament. So that is one part of the question.

A second aspect, for Utah and Nevada, is the incredible impact that this will make upon the whole life of those two states. It was distressing to us to hear the Secretary of Defense say at the Democratic Convention that while the impact of 25 square miles as a

control center seems like a great deal of land in Manhattan, that in reality it amounts to nothing in the West! But the fact is that the MX project will preempt an area that is three times the size of the state of Connecticut. And while the Defense Department says that sheep will be able to graze within 2½ acres of the silos, it's going to have 10,000 miles of roadbed and no one knows whether that will be off limits or not. In terms of the impact upon Utah's environment, water is one of the critical issues. They are talking about tapping the underground water sources, but nobody knows how extensive those underground water sources are, and in fact when they tap them, whether they might be draining off the water that serves vast areas of the West. So environment is not the only concern, but also the social and economic impact: an incredibly large work force coming in, boom towns for short time, and then bust.

But there's a third aspect, related to the concern for what happens to the economy and to the poor and to people-oriented programs over the next 10

years, which may well affect what happens beyond that into the future. The program was first projected conservatively at \$33 billion. That did not include inflationary costs. Most people are saying now that what we have is a \$70 billion project, and others go beyond that figure. Now, that may mean jobs for a lot of people for a short time in Utah. But the fact is that these are non-productive jobs, they don't contribute to a developing economy. This kind of defense work is the least productive way in which to spend a dollar. And at the height of the project, it is going to demand probably \$10 billion annually. What is going to give, in order to finance this? And then there is the question of whether or not, when it is completed, it will even accomplish what it set out to do, because there are many who believe that it will be an obsolete system before it is completed. So it will be the greatest public works project ever undertaken, but one which will contribute not to peace, not to the economy, not to the people-needs of the country or of the world, and will destroy vast parts of the environment.

Yet people in other parts of the country seem totally unaware of these factors. The Defense Department's selling job is very smooth, well-orchestrated. The project is being presented as necessary and essential for the well-being of the country. Yet in my opinion it has awesome implications. If the system were activated, because of Russian attack or retaliation, the net result would be that the western part of the United States would be blown off, and that the fallout would go across the United States. If we remember the recent eruption of Mt. St. Helen's, and the volcanic dust which drifted eastward to the Atlantic coast, we begin to get some sense of what that fallout would be like. Any explosion that resulted from the activation of this missile system would mean that Utah and everything around it would just be gone; and throughout the Middle West

for four years, because of radioactive fallout, the agricultural capability would be dead. Our whole food production and what that would mean to this country, let alone to the world, would be gone. And the incidence of cancer and radioactive-related diseases on the East Coast would increase.

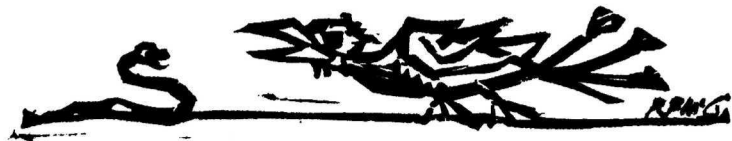
There is another factor, which relates to the question of confidence in the government. We have had two recent examples of this. One was the incident at Damascus, Arkansas, with Titan II. You recall the episode when the socket wrench was dropped and caused an explosion and the missile blew up. I want to underscore the way in which the Air Force never really leveled with the state authorities. Everyone wondered whether the warhead was there, but nobody knew whether it was or not. There is a state law which says that if nuclear weapons are to be moved the governor is to be notified and certain precautions and procedures are to be followed. The governor was never notified. At 7:30 one morning, the vans moved out and on the military truck was a box which said: "Do not drop." And in that box, presumably, was the warhead. It was taken right through the heavy traffic, but nobody said anything. The whole episode was one that diminished the level of confidence and trust.

The other incident that contributes to that same lack of confidence was the discovery concerning the disposal of nuclear waste off the coast of San Francisco, presumably 10 miles out to sea and handled according to certain safety procedures. Apparently whoever was responsible decided that there was no need to go that far out and dumped it close to the bay. A scuba diver who happened to be on the faculty of the University of California discovered a

canister that was broken open. He got other friends, and they discovered that in fact there were many, many canisters, that none of them were intact. Then they began to test the fish and discovered that contamination had entered the life cycle and was part of the food being consumed. And the point was that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission had been aware of this two years prior to the actual public announcement, and had done nothing about it.

So from our point of view, when the Defense Department or the Air Force comes in and says that the MX Missile is not going to disturb Utah, that they will handle the economic problems discreetly and sensitively and creatively, and that the MX is in fact a defense system and not an attack system — there is little to inspire confidence that that is true.

The national security program is not just going to impact Utah and Nevada. It is going to impact both the economy and the future well-being of the whole country. We in Utah have gone through a variety of stages of reaction to it. There are those who feel that it is going to be the greatest thing that happened to Utah, and are encouraging it. Initially there was a great deal of resistance to the development of the system because of what it would do to the quality of life in Utah and Nevada. What has happened most recently is that people have become discouraged, cynical, apathetic. People feel it is simply going to be, that nobody is going to stop the Defense Department. There is another factor in public reaction. For us in Utah a large part of our economy is defense-based, and there is a high degree of personal investment in the future of weaponry, so for many there is a reluctance to move against it. ■



Organizing Key to Power

by John Spong

There is a story about a polling agency that was hired to find out whether the major problem in the United States was ignorance of the issues, or apathy about the issues. The first person questioned responded, "I don't know, and I don't care". I think what John Burt and Otis Charles point to is that there is no hiding place, for any of us, from any of the social problems. It is a radically interdependent world. I have a scenerio in my mind that some day people escaping the problems of New York, and people escaping the problems of Los Angeles are going to meet in Hutchinson, Kansas, and know that the urban problem is finally inescapable.

One of the things I learned when I grew up in the South is that prejudice is never ended until it becomes too expensive for the whole society to continue to carry on. It is important to remember that when we think about the cities, because there is an enormous amount of prejudice directed toward our urban dwellers. And even the riots of the '60s didn't seem to make it too expensive to have the cities continue to bear the brunt of that sort of prejudice. In a real sense, the city is the place where we try to wall off a great number of our social problems so that they stay contained in isolated ghettos, and the city is the place where, in effect, segregation has been reborn in America. I came from the South to the Northeast, and have seen the South emerging from a system that crippled it, and now see the Northeast trapped in a new incarnation of that same system.

It is hard to get a handle on how to help a city. There are no available levers

of power. John Burt's experience in Youngstown is a good illustration of that. The decisions that dramatically affected the life of Youngstown were made in corporate headquarters in New Orleans. So it is with other cities. Even if the voters of the city of Newark, for example, were to organize themselves, they could not elect anybody who could make any decision that would dramatically change the shape of the life of Newark. And I think that is a fact in city after city.

The people who inhabit our cities today are not the owners. They are not the people who make the economic decisions. They are the victims of those economic decisions. People who live in the cities are victims of decisions that are made in industry, victims of decisions that are made in Washington. They are victims of the whole political process. So the cities tend to become the place where those who cannot escape the cities, remain. They are poor, they are elderly, they are generally under-educated. They are caught in a frustration cycle where motivation finally gets killed. They have been knocked down often enough so they have the apathetic attitude: "It doesn't do any good to struggle to overcome this situation."

Cities across this land today are places of very high unemployment. If the unemployment in the nation were as high as it is in the 10 largest cities of this country we would call this a massive depression. So when you look at an urban area, as a representative of the church, and try to find a way you can affect the life of that city, it is a

frustrating task. The levers of operation are simply not there. And that also leads after a while to an apathy in the church, I am afraid. We look at the wounds, but we know that we cannot deal with what causes the wounds because it is outside the purview of the life of the people that are living there. We might try influencing a political election or a national congressional act or an industrial decision. But if we cannot get to where those power brokers are we cannot really affect the life of the city.

So we have the only other alternative; namely, how can we do a kind of bandaid ministry: how can we patch up the wounds of those people who are hurting? And those wounds are real and bloody, and they make a difference in the life of the one who is hurt. It is a matter of constantly bandaiding the problems and helping individuals both work through the system and maybe even escape the system, while we are constantly frustrated about our inability to do anything that would make it dramatically different. I think we tend to denigrate the bandaid ministry, until we realize that those bandaids are better than nothing. If all we can give in Christ's name is a cup of water and a couple of aspirin and a bandaid to put on a hurting place, then I think that it is important that we not forget that, in our frustration over being incapable of getting at the root causes.

The three cities that I work with particularly in Northern New Jersey that are symbolic of all the things I have discussed would be Newark, Jersey City and Paterson. Now how can we break that massive urban system down to

small enough pieces so we can make a little difference in a tiny little way in a little orbit?

In the city of Newark we tried to analyze and understand the institutions within that city on which we might have some impact. The three that we began to see as possible entree points for doing anything would be the church, family life and education. If we could isolate a small enough area, and begin to see the church as a center for dealing with educational problems, or dealing with family problems, or helping people be less victimized by these primary institutions, then we could begin to make a little bit of difference.

In the city of Newark we are working now on developing an experimental school system that will start in the very low grades. By the time a child gets into the third, fourth or fifth grade, it seems that the damage done by the system is already almost irreparable. So we want to pull these three institutions together — the school, the church and the family — and try to develop an experimental school system which will be deliberately aimed at breaking some cycles. We want to start in very low grades, like kindergarten, and supplement that with adult education programs in which we hope to be dealing with the parents of those children. We want to draw these children from all over the city. It would be a small enterprise obviously, but we have seven Episcopal churches in that city and they happen to be located in almost every ward. We have a satellite family education program for the parents of the children who would be coming into this central place. And in that process we try to have the church perceived by the people of the city as on their side, as willing to be beside them, and to struggle with them, and to identify with them, and to be an ally in their struggle for humanity. I don't know whether we'll succeed or not, but only by breaking the problem down from the big city to the little levels of

school and church and family, can we begin to try to make our input.

We also want to upgrade the morale of the people of the city to the point where they feel capable of doing something together to affect the quality of their life. In the Heights section of Jersey City there was some abandoned housing. One of our priests, who coordinates our Hudson County Urban ministry, roused the people of that neighborhood to see the abandonment of these two or three houses in that immediate neighborhood as an enormous community opportunity. And indeed a community *problem* if they did not get these houses rehabilitated, and occupied, and make them stable parts of the life of the community. Those of you who live in great urban centers know that once a neighborhood starts to decline it goes very rapidly, becoming a "bombed-out" area in no time at all.

The result of this effort was that the people in that neighborhood won a battle. It was a little battle. It saved two or three houses in their neighborhood. But they won by being organized by that priest. And the great serendipity of that was not the two or three houses, it was what happened to the morale of the people of that neighborhood, who suddenly felt that maybe they had some power and control over the destiny of their own neighborhood. And they began to perceive the life of our church in that community in a powerfully different way.

We had a similar victory in Paterson. I think it was an even more dramatic victory — at least the local Paterson newspaper played it so. It was a community organization started by the Paterson Episcopal Mission, the vehicle through which we do our urban ministry. They were the organizing force for all of the people who lived in this neighborhood. They aroused the neighborhood from apathy. There was a motel in this neighborhood that was

notorious for arrests for drug peddling and for prostitution. And most people in the community tolerated this motel because they felt, "There's nothing you can do about it." But some said to our executive in Paterson Episcopal Mission that they wished they could do something about this. And so he decided to see if they could. Soon they were having big public meetings and people were raising their concerns and it got the attention of the mayor, who also happens to be concerned about running for governor — which didn't hurt at all! And his primary political opponent didn't want to be outdone by the mayor.

Suddenly the people discovered they had tapped into a political nerve end. So both the major political opponents began to be aroused, and the community got together, and they forced the closing of that motel as a public nuisance. Once again, that's a little story, but the result is that the people in that community felt, for the first time, a tremendous boost in morale. It was the fact that they could control an event, they weren't just victims of the event. Now if you put together a few little victories like that you can begin to do significant things together.

One of the most important things is that by and large the church in the urban community — and I mean all churches, not just Episcopal — is perceived as a kind of alien industry. It is there, but isn't really there. It's in the community but not of the community. But now, suddenly, the church is being perceived not just as a good citizen in that community, but as a comrade in arms, maybe even the kind of institution that is willing to put its life on the side of the people who live there. That's a tiny step, but it is a first step toward building trust. Unless we build that kind of trust, I don't believe that anything we try to do in urban areas will ever be very successful. ■

Continued next month.

Right-Wing Religion's 'Dirty Little Secret'

A recent mass mailing from "moral majority" leader Jerry Falwell greeted recipients with a plain brown envelope carrying a warning that the contents were unsuitable for children. The accompanying letter explained that the envelope contained material so shocking that children must be protected from it, yet added that it was being taught to children in public grade schools.

Upon opening the brown envelope, the recipient found it contained excerpts of an explicit, sexual nature from a biology textbook. (The letter did not explain that this was a college level textbook). Having read, and presumably been titillated by the offending material, the addressee could be expected, red-faced and guilty for having seen such "filth," to return a contribution to keep similar things out of the hands of children.

A minor skirmish in the never-ending battle to win the hearts and minds of the American public, perhaps, but it seems to us a significant one. Right-wing preachers and politicians have learned from television and the advertising industry that what catches peoples' attention is sex — what D. H. Lawrence referred to as "the dirty little secret." Hence, from a panoply of possible issues, the Right has latched onto the attention-grabber — sexuality — as the main concern around which to build its empire. Often sex is peddled under another guise — the threat of promiscuity to marriage and the family, the horrors of abortion, the castrating threat of the Equal Rights Amendment, the allegedly high rate of illegitimacy among black female welfare recipients, the rumored child-molestation by homosexuals. All these perceived threats are what Madison Avenue would call "sexy." The discussion of them, especially the obligatory

"horrible" examples, provide an opportunity for sexual fantasizing and titillation — for tickling the dirty little secret. It provides as well a convenient guilt reaction which can be alleviated by a generous contribution to demonstrate one's outraged decency.

These sexy issues are not new, nor are the highly successful efforts of Right-wing religion to capitalize on them and their attendant guilt feelings. Two and a half years ago, in an article we wrote for *Christianity and Crisis* entitled, "The Trivialization of Women," we concluded:

The political right is gaining strength in its attack on human rights precisely because the male left, within and without the church, has made it clear that women and sexuality are not issues worth fighting very hard about. The left has given the right a go-ahead in the harassment of women and homosexuals by not taking these matters seriously as matters worthy of action beyond statements about civil rights for all. Liberal churchmen and politicians still have not learned that human rights are human rights, within and beyond the church. As women and homosexuals are denied full equality under law, so, too, will disappear the civil and ecclesiastical rights of other powerless people. Perhaps, sooner or later, the list will include the rights of straight, white, liberal Christian men.

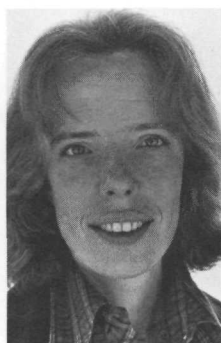
Our intention is not simply to update what we wrote. Current events speak for themselves. The Right-wing, presenting itself as a Christian, patriotic, decent, moral majority, was able to score major victories in November by stirring up anxieties about women and sexuality. Anxiety about sexuality is rooted, historically, in misogyny, men's contempt (often shared by male-identified women— for women and the so-called "feminine" (what women represent or "have"). Anxiety of this sort is at the root of the sexual interest and resultant guilt the religious and political right so effectively exploit with their crusades for decency.

We suggest that no other single issue — not Soviet power, not the hostages in Iran, not deteriorating race relations, not energy, not even inflation and the pocketbook — was as volatile, explosive and decisive in the 1980 elections as the feminist and anti-feminist tensions that simmered in stews about "family" and "morality" and came to a boil in controversies about the "sexy" issues of the ERA, abortion, and gay/lesbian rights. The President of the United States,



Hiatt

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Heyward

by Carter Heyward and Suzanne Hiatt

along with Senators Frank Church, Birch Bayh, John Culver, George McGovern and others were targeted and defeated because they had been portrayed effectively as feminist men — i.e., as men in favor of women's rights, apparently under the evil spell of women, and therefore opposed to God, country and family. Common decency demanded their removal. To demonstrate their commitment to common decency Americans voted to remove them.

Serious responsibility for the current political situation rests with the Left. Until now sexism has not been taken seriously as a form of oppression by liberals and radicals. Most liberal men have been willing to speak passionately from pulpit and platform about the urban crisis, the nuclear threat, economic injustice, world hunger, and, after 10 years hiatus, racial strife. However, with few exceptions these champions of the oppressed have been unwilling to speak with the same sense of urgency on behalf of women. Perhaps liberals have sensed that agitating "the dirty little secret" is at the heart of the furor about sexism and have seen themselves as "above" that level of argument and by default, above the entire range of women's issues. In any case, liberal silence has allowed Right-wing politicians and preachers to galvanize their forces around precisely the issue others have ignored: the oppression shared by *all* women, right, left, rich, poor, young, old, black, white; namely, the denial of woman's sovereignty over her own person — her body, her name, her energies, her time. The denial of sovereignty over basic life-choices is experienced most sharply, but not exclusively by poor women, black women and women of other colors.

Through ignorance and trivialization of sexism, liberals and radicals have been complicit in the emergence to power of people in the Executive and Legislative branches of U.S. government (the Judicial will follow shortly) steeped in antagonism not only to women but to human rights in general. When we wrote our earlier article, we might well have noted that while it was not respectable for liberals to be racist, it was well-accepted for anyone to be sexist — to tell jokes about broads, fags, mothers-in-law; to pinch fannies; to pass conscience clauses permitting Episcopalians to deny ordination to women solely on the basis of sex; etc. It seems apparent to us that the Right-wing took the left's trivialization of women seriously. By constructing their campaign on sexist assumptions they sensed were shared by all men and by exploiting the "sexy" issues, they have gained significant ground over the past few years. That ground,

upon which stands the newly-inaugurated government, is not only fiercely sexist but it is also racist, classist and unabashedly imperialist. In short, sexism has been a useful vehicle in which "Christian" leaders have been carried into high places. Having arrived, they are now prepared to implement social policy based on negative assumptions about women, gays, Blacks, Native Americans, Hispanics, the poor throughout the world, working class people, prisoners, liberation movements, Jews, Muslims and "non-believers."

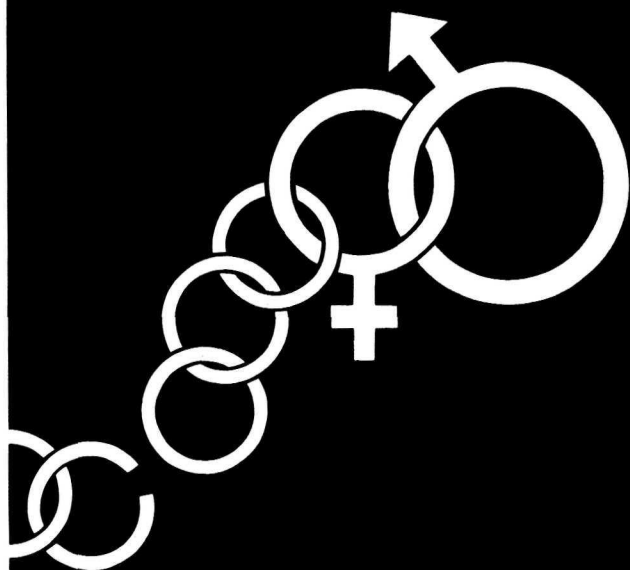
We do not wish to maintain, because we do not believe, that sexism is more important or more fundamental than other forms of oppression. As a black colleague remarked to us during a squabble over which particular problem to address next, there is enough oppression to go around. To insist that any one single form of oppression stands alone at the top of a hit parade of oppressions is to fail to appreciate the enormous complexity of the fabric of the dominant-submissive social relation. It is to lose the seriousness with which *all* forms of oppression must be taken if *any* is to be eradicated.

As white women, born and raised in the upper-middle stratum of the social and economic system, we realize painfully the depth at which we and other privileged white people must probe to challenge racism and classism at both personal and systemic levels. We realize also that any effective agency of social change must be deft enough, like a juggler, to keep in the air several balls at once. If one ball is dropped, the whole act collapses. The "ball" of sexism has been dropped and the whole act is in disarray. ■



Eve Was Framed

LA FAMILIA



niko/76

The Women's Project of Theology in the Americas presented at the recent Theology in the Americas meeting in Detroit a strong platform in support of the family, but in rejection of Right-Wing forces which manipulate the concept of "family" in propaganda. The Women's Statement appears below.

The Women's Project of Theology in the Americas wishes to affirm the value of family life, both traditional and non-traditional. We are concerned about the effect on families of the present economic crisis, recession and inflation, especially:

- the decreasing employment opportunities for all people of color and for white women which leads to more and more families falling below the poverty level
- the increase in violence in families especially wife and child abuse

- increased hardship for the elderly, especially the large numbers of single women on fixed incomes
- disruption of family relationships from stress and financial insecurity
- difficulties faced by many refugee families in light of the increase in overt racism in the United States.

In the light of this we are dismayed by the platform of the Right-wing forces who use support of "the Family" in order to justify:

- resistance to the ERA
- opposition to reproductive

- rights for women
- decrease in social services to poor families
- increase in military spending which results in social service cutbacks.

We are also appalled at the strategy whereby the Right uses a strong "Pro Family" position which promotes the family in its narrowest sense to gain support for its whole program. This is possible because feelings about families are so deeply rooted and families *are* experiencing great stress and suffering. Therefore in this time of economic and social disorder, they appeal to people's

need for security. The Women's Project of Theology in the Americas sees that this situation requires:

- maintaining adequate child care services
- equality of rights related to child bearing and protection from sterilization abuse for all women
- increased services for women and children who are victims of violence in the family
- maintaining affirmative action and job training programs and equal employment opportunity for people of color and white women.

Therefore we call on Theology in the Americas to:

- support a broader definition of family which accurately reflects the present diversity in forms of family life
- encourage supports for maintenance of services which support families in all forms and establish those services for oppressed women
- advocate an analysis of the strategy of the Right which understands their misuse of "the Family" to justify the program and the impact this has on white women and people of color
- listen to the sense of family operative among people of color that goes beyond blood ties; rethink the meaning of family and developing a theology of family that re-appropriates the message of the Gospels, in particular Jesus' clear cut commitment to the poor and the outcast in light of our present concerns for family life
- remember and affirm the strength which comes to each of us from our families as we engage in struggle.

A Clerical Fantasy

by Robert Cromeey

Suppose hundreds of gay Priests and Bishops of the Episcopal Church come out of the closet in a common statement and public event. They say to the world they are the best kind of Christian they know how to be. They state they are homosexual. These clergy tell of the babies baptized, children taught in church school and confirmation classes. They talk of the thousands of youngsters worked with in young people's fellowship groups and at summer conferences. They recollect the numbers of people they have prepared for marriage, weddings performed, marital cases counseled. These gay clergy count up the hours calling in people's homes, visiting the sick, carrying the sacraments to the sick and shut in and how many graves they have stood beside, praying for the dead and comforting the bereaved.

They add up the thousands of hours planning liturgy and sermons, celebrating eucharist and preaching. They witness to the simple, pastoral ministry to Christians all over the United States and the world.

Gay Bishops talk of the hours counseling the clergy and their families, confirming new members, ordaining Priests and Deacons, attending endless Diocesan, Parish and civic meetings.

In short gay Bishops and Priests say they have a valid and full ministry and they are homosexual. They witness to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and they are among the hated and shunned gays.

When people learn about gayness

from people they know, love and trust, they have a better chance to understand what homosexuality is all about.

The clergy, Bishops and Priests who are safe could certainly come out of the closet. The retired, the firmly entrenched, those not ambitious to become Bishops or Cardinal Rectors could do it. They could come to a great banquet, go public and tell the world they are gay and they are good Priests and Bishops.

A few years ago a national organization on alcoholism tried to get 100 Americans who are alcoholic to be on a television program. They were able to gather less than 50. Prominent gays would be even more difficult to gather, but it would be worth a try.

How could the gay Bishops and Priests do it? A co-ordinator writes a letter to all clergy of the Episcopal Church. They sign a simple statement that they are Christian clergy and homosexuals. The signer also agrees to let his or her name be used in publishing the statement.

When the names and permissions are in, an event is held where all the signers gather, do Eucharist and attend a grand banquet open to the world media. I suspect there would be little trouble getting media people there.

Meetings and teach-ins are then held in local areas around the country to listen to the people's response to the clergy who have come out of the closet. A massive education process has begun.

What a great witness to the love Gospel of Jesus Christ if the hundreds of gay Christian, Episcopalian Bishops and Priests could say publicly, "I am a faithful witness to Jesus Christ. I am a homosexual." That's risk . . . renewal . . . that's laying down your life!

The Rev. Robert Warren Cromeey is an Episcopal priest-counselor who resides in San Francisco.

Church as Advocate

Who Are the Poor? . . . Those Who Die

by Jon Sobrino

El Salvador is characterized right now by two words: Death, and Life or more exactly, the *hope* for life. Exploitation is too weak a word to describe the situation in El Salvador. People are not just exploited, they are not only oppressed, they are assassinated.

The church has incarnated herself in this world of death. And I would like to quote Archbishop Romero, because I think he put it very well. He said, two months before he was assassinated, "I am proud that Christians have mixed their blood with the blood of the people."

We can talk about incarnation on many levels. On the cultural level, we can say that the Church must be Indian, the Church must be Black, the Church must be Woman — that is all part of incarnating the Church Herself (or Itself?). But I think the depth of the incarnation doesn't come to light until one considers this further type of incarnation: sharing with the people of El Salvador what is most profound and most basic — death.

This has helped us to solve a theoretical, and a practical, important

question. We all say that the church should make an option for the poor. The Latin American bishops said that at Medellin and at Puebla. I don't have to explain that by "the poor" is not meant the rich who, somehow or another, are poor in spirit.

The Puebla documents say that the poor are the peasants, the workers, the children with no hope of surviving, the elderly people. But for us in El Salvador, the poor, the image of the poor, are the dead, which, by the way, should be very clear, a priori, if we would consider the roots of our Christian faith. If Jesus Christ is "the poor," it is not so much because he was probably born into a family of low income. If he is "the poor," it is because he ended as he ended — crucified, dead.

Although it may be a bit macabre, I want to remind you of a few facts so that you have an experience, at least from a distance, of what it means to be poor today in El Salvador.

In the first six months of 1980, approximately 6,000 or 7,000 people had been assassinated. And if, in a country of five million people like ours, 6,000 or 7,000 people have been assassinated, that is the equivalent of 300,000 to 350,000 United States citizens being assassinated. This is our reality at the moment. This is the type of poverty we live in. This is the type of exploitation and oppression we have.

On the 14th of May, at the Sumpul River, 600 peasants were killed. Can you imagine if tomorrow, in the newspapers, a headline would read,

"600 people have been assassinated in Detroit in five hours, in one place." I imagine everyone in the United States — the President, Congress, everyone — would be very anxious to know what happened. Well, that is what happened in El Salvador: 600 people were killed at one place in four or five hours. How were they killed? They were tortured; children were flipped into the air, bayoneted and thrown into the river . . . A fisherman from Honduras found the corpses of five babies in his net. Things like that . . .

I think death is the reality for peasants, for workers, and also for other people who usually don't get killed in civilized societies. This year alone, 32 school teachers have been assassinated. The same is true for medical doctors. Usually these people don't get killed. As far as I know, at least 14 doctors have been assassinated because somebody suspected that a particular doctor might have helped, or could sometime help heal someone from the Left. Wounded people in hospitals have been assassinated, and this is not normal in civilized societies. Some people who have been wounded in the struggles get to the hospitals, and, at least in seven cases that I know of, paramilitary groups, in connivance with the armed forces, with the government, have gone into the hospitals and killed them.

What I am saying is this: Who are the poor? *Those who die*. Seven priests have been murdered in El Salvador in the last

The Rev. Jon Sobrino, S.J., teaches at the Jesuit University in El Salvador, and is the author of *Christology at the Crossroads* (Orbis Books). This theological meditation is his response to a query put to him recently at the Theology in the Americas Conference in Detroit: What is the role of the church in El Salvador today?

three years, and also Archbishop Romero. Lay catechists have been assassinated. Residences of men and women religious have been searched, bombed at times, or machine-gunned. The radio station of the archdiocese has had at least four bombings. The same thing has happened to the weekly diocesan newspaper office. Jesuits have been threatened, as a group, with death — once in 1977 and once in 1980. Rutilio Grande, the first priest murdered, was a Jesuit. Eleven bombs have exploded in our University. (I don't think many bombs have exploded at Catholic universities in the United States.) But certainly what has happened to us, as you can imagine, has been very minimal. We, as Jesuits, have power, have international connections. You can imagine that if these things

happen to us, what happens to the peasants, who have no power?

The end result of this point is that the church has incarnated Herself among the poor.

Now the next point is: what has the church done for the poor, and what have the poor done for the church?

What has the church done for the poor? Scripture says very clearly that the poor are the privileged ones of God. You can say this, you can write about it, but the point is to make the poor the principals of action and of understanding. I think this is the first thing the church has done for our country — telling everybody, the government, the armed forces, the intellectuals, that the poor are the privileged ones of God. This is very significant.

The second thing the church has done is to state very clearly that we have to defend the rights of the poor. When we talk about rights in El Salvador we are not talking about civil rights in abstract ways, but the most basic right: *the right to breathe, the difference between being alive and being dead*. Defending human rights has meant defending the right to *live*. And I think the church has done that by denouncing death, and positively, by being “the voice of those who have no voice.”

The church has defended other human rights, especially defending the right of peasants and workers to organize. That might sound very simple to you, but in El Salvador the peasants do not have a legal right to organize. Why the church has defended this right is very important. If the poor, especially the peasants, and the workers don't get organized, they will be more easily victims of oppression.

Another thing the church has done is to go a step further and say that the poor should play some substantial part in politics. At Puebla and Medellin, the bishops said that if the poor are not the makers of their own destiny, nobody will do it for them. Not the government, not the theologians, not the church, not the North Americans or the South Americans. The people, the poor of each country, are the basic makers of their own destiny. And that means that they should have a certain amount of power.

Now, what has the church learned from the poor? That is important, because we think of the church as teacher — “Mater et Magistra.” But the church, the theologians, the bishops learning from someone — that is almost incredible. And, I think the church *has* learned from the poor.

What has She learned? First, I think She has learned what sin is — “that which brings about death.” This, of course is very traditional. Jesus Christ died because of our sins. You can



interpret that historically. Jesus Christ died because some people killed Him. So sin is to kill the Son of God. And sin is to kill the Children of God. Well, "how simple!" you say, "You don't have to study too much to understand that." But it is curious. You have to live — at least I have had to live — in a situation like ours to understand this. That is why, also in the best theological tradition, sin can be *mortal*. Mortal sin, because it gives death. Of course we used to say, with fright, mortal sin gives death to the sinner, a spiritual death which, I believe, means a total failure of the one who commits the sin. But the tragic thing about sin is that it is not just a death somewhere inside somebody. It is objective: People get killed. So that is the first lesson. You are with the poor, you see them dying; you say, well that can't be God's will — that has to be sin.

The second thing the church has learned is what grace is, sanctity. Primarily, the church has learned that nobody has greater love than he or she who gives up a life for others. That is St. John's Gospel. This type of love is the most important expression of sanctity or of holiness. One begins to understand holiness and sanctity in the readiness to give to others, even to give up one's own life.

Third, I think the church has learned what the following of Jesus means, which is a praxis of justice, within a conflict, to bring about the Kingdom of God — but like the servant of Yahweh, as described in Isaiah.

The church has learned, I believe and I hope, the most important thing about the True God. What is at stake here is faith in God. Who really is God? We have learned, I hope, to understand the mystery of God — not in opposition to atheism but in opposition to idolatry.

What do I mean by idolatry? I mean the existence of real idols, gods who, in order to survive, demand victims. You know, in the old mythology Moloch is that type of god. There are gods in our country, as in your country. For us the

main ones are the National Security State, absolutized capitalism. They demand for themselves the characteristics which only the True God could demand — ultimateness. Well, the National Security State, absolutized capitalism, are idols which demand *victims*. That is the ultimate reason why some people get killed. So, for us to believe in God is very profoundly an option not just for life, but to give life to other people. And we found, a posteriori, a criterion to see if we believe in this True God or in idols. Atheism is not important at the moment. And if we see that we, as Christians or non-Christians, are helping those who bring death, then we are in connivance with them, consciously or unconsciously. Then we will have to admit that we are idolators, we worship idols.

The first, the most fundamental thing about believing in God is not just to love life — we all do that — but to work that there is life.

The second thing about God is that, in a metaphorical way, God is a crucified God; somehow or another, the idea that God is suffering belongs to our faith in God. And lastly, that God is a liberating God. This experience of God also brings about hope.

Another point is something which, for me, is very important. We have heard a lot about different groups being exploited, being oppressed. But I don't think we have heard much about how *to live* this being exploited, this being oppressed.

It is understandable that somebody who is exploited looks for revenge, for example. That would be one way of living being exploited — with resentment, or resignation. Now my point is that I think people in El Salvador live this being exploited with hope.

Hope is not just optimism — "okay, don't worry, at the end everything will be all right." We have had enough historical experience not to be optimists. Hope is not a cheap joy,

either — "Okay, we suffer during the day, but at night let's get together and sing." Hope is really believing that the suffering implied in the fight for liberation and for justice is salvific.

Now that is, I think, what this model of the servant of God drawn from Isaiah tells us: "My servant will do justice to the world." (Isaiah 42:1) He is sent for something very positive; namely, to do justice. The last song of Isaiah recognizes that, precisely because he has been sent to do this, he suffers and dies. But, not only that: in doing this, the servant takes away the sins of the world. This is not just a theological conception. If a person, group, or whole people (by and large) have this experience, then this suffering is really salvific. Then there is a type of hope, and I mean historical hope — not just one in heaven, but that we will celebrate Christmas of this year in peace — which gives hope to those who suffer.

I have listened to Gustavo Gutierrez (a Liberation Theologian from Peru) talk about joy, about how subversive joy is. I really like that idea. I would say that the type of joy we have at the present moment would be best described by the word hope, a deep hope. The fact that most Salvadoreans are Christians, at least culturally, and many of them also explicitly, has helped us to go through a political struggle with hope. On the other hand, it has helped for the people of the church to see that the whole people, *el pueblo*, doesn't despair. I think that it is a sign of the times for the church to see that where the only logical thing to expect would be despair, not despair, but hope arises.

These would be my theological insights behind the actions of the church in El Salvador. I am not saying that all of us think that. Some bishops wouldn't understand a word of what I said — and some priests and some lay people. What is at stake here is what does it mean to believe in a living God in a country where people die and where there is hope for liberation and more life? ■

Getting a Handle On Institutional Sin

by Charles V. Willie

Arnold Toynbee in an article entitled, "Is Religion Superfluous?" wrote about the danger of worshipping collectivities. He said, "The transfer of . . . worship from nature to . . . collective power seems . . . to be a great spiritual regression." Toynbee understood religion to be "the overcoming of self-centeredness in both individuals and communities."

Racism is a form of self-centeredness in which the racial collectivity with which one identifies is exalted and all others are assessed as being inferior to one's own kind. Racism may be practiced by white people, brown people, black people, any people. Racism is the exaltation of one's own racial tribe in a way that denigrates others. Operationally, racism occurs when the opportunities of society are limited for some individuals simply because of their race.

The distribution of income is a prime example of racism in America. When black and brown males are similar to whites in age, when they perform the same jobs, live in the same regions, and work equal lengths of time, they tend to receive, on the average, a median income that is 15 to 20% less than that received by white men. There is no explanation for this except racism.

Sexism is a form of self-centeredness in which the sex category — male or female — with which one identifies is

exalted and used as the basis for arbitrarily excluding persons who are different from equal access to opportunities in the society. Sexism appears when the hoarded opportunities for one's own kind are justified on the basis of sex even though sex may be irrelevant to participating in a particular opportunity system.

The distribution of employment is a prime example of the presence of sexism in the United States. Women who represent slightly more than half of the population consist of only one-fourth of the managers and administrators, but more than three-fourths of the clerical workers; they are about 5% of the skilled workers but more than 95% of the private household workers. Men, however, are slightly less than half of the population; but they represent three-fourths of the managers and administrators and only one-fourth of the clerical workers; moreover, they hold 95% of the craft and skilled jobs and do less than 5% of domestic or private household work for pay. It is fair to say that men have captured the preferred occupations and left most of the routine and uninteresting work for women. There is no justification why the distribution of work by occupations is so grossly imbalanced in favor of men. Sex discrimination is the only explanation that is honest.

Elitism has to do with hierarchy and social class. It is concerned with the differential distribution of power, privilege, prestige, and prerogatives, and is often both a manifestation of and a means of concealing racism and

sexism. Nineteenth century social Darwinism was the philosophy and justification for elitism. It was believed that the fittest were successful and that success was an indication of superior human capacity. As recently as 1978 (the last quarter of the 20th century), 19th century thought still persisted in our value and belief systems. In October of that year, I addressed the West Tennessee Education Association in Memphis on the future of education in this nation and endorsed desegregated education as the only strategy that will save us and help us survive.

About a week after my presentation, one southerner felt compelled to respond to the version of my speech that was reported in a daily newspaper. He classified my call for race-mixing in the public schools as "muddle-headed thinking" and "wild notions." He said that "to actively work to destroy man's preference for his own kind . . . is to deny human beings the benefits and pleasures of homogeneity." In his letter to the editor, the man from Memphis also made these points: that one should value one's own race above all others and strive to preserve its purity. His main interest was in preserving the purity of the white race because of its alleged superior capacity and elite position. "History stands as proof," he said, "that any white nation which crosses its blood lines with blacks sows the seeds of its own destruction." He conceded that "all races might excel in some areas," but he was emphatic in stating that "it is the white race that has led mankind to its highest level of

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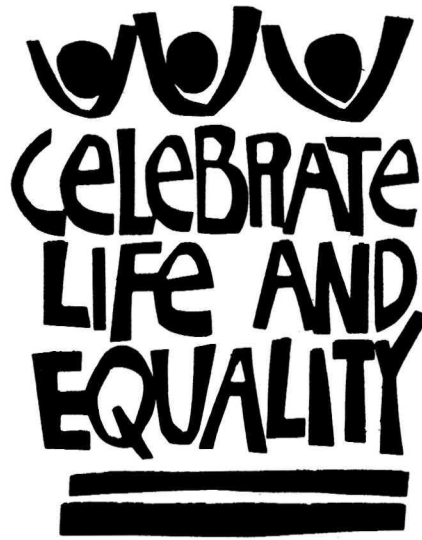
achievement.” He concluded that race-mixing in education “would ultimately lead to genetic changes and condemn civilization to the Dark Ages.”

This man said in unguarded words what many have felt but been unwilling to verbalize. It was not so much the white race, but the preservation of standards and civilization that concerned him. He did not so much hate blacks. But he hated the “Dark Ages.” His consternation was about the erosion of standards. In some respects, he could be called a white supremacist. Actually, however, he was an elitist.

The elitism in our society is most clearly manifested in our restriction of higher education to a certain few. We have restricted education in this nation because it has become the fastest elevator for upward social mobility. The Supreme Court took note of this fact in its 1954 decision that outlawed segregated and unequal education. The Court said that “it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if denied the opportunity of an education.” Success in getting ahead, and education go hand in hand. By denying a quality education to some individuals, we deny them the opportunity to succeed in some endeavors. By denying admissions to some schools, we limit in an arbitrary way the options available to some individuals.

Education is the mechanism through which elitism with reference to race and sex is often manifested. It is related to some extent to the income that one may eventually receive and to some degree to the job that one may eventually get. The Census Bureau has discovered, for example, that over a life-time a college degree can increase one’s total personal income (over what one would receive if one did not go beyond high school) by one-quarter to one-third of a million dollars.

With reference to higher education, blacks, who are 11% of the total



population, constitute around 11% of the junior college students, but approximately 8% of the four-year college students, and only about 5% of the graduate school students. If intelligence is randomly distributed among all populations, there is no rational reason why blacks should not be 11% of the student bodies in all college and graduate schools. It is fair to conclude that as one ascends the education hierarchy, racial minorities have been systematically excluded from educational opportunities and the increased income these would confer. Despite these facts, a 1978 Gallup Poll revealed that four out of every five whites believe that educational opportunities are now equal for all races.

And women, who are slightly more than half of the total population, constitute less than one-fourth of all people with doctoral and first-professional degrees according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Women with doctoral degrees still are restricted largely to such fields as home economics, library science, and languages. Incidentally, as late as 1977, less than 3% of the doctor’s degrees in theology were awarded to

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Continued from page 2

Jesus preached is found in the same chapter, (Lev. 19) as the words, “you shall not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor, I am the Lord.”

Sue E. Levy
Abington, Pa.

Shelly Responds

What’s my bottom line? Sue Levy has it in her bottom line: “I am the Lord.” That says it all.

I totally share Ms. Levy’s commitment to peace as expressed in Leviticus 19. Those are my roots also. “I am the Lord” (used 13 times in that chapter) is defined by: “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.”

Peacemaking, both for the Leviticus people and for the Jesus disciples, is not passive-ness (lying down to receive martyrdom) but an aggressive seeking after justice for the poor, the oppressed, the alien, and the enemy. (Even-verse 16, sometimes read as “not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor” is not an opening for retaliatory violence but a call to be an advocate for one’s neighbor’s rights, according to the reading of Today’s English Version, “When someone is on trial for his life, speak out if your testimony can help him.” Jesus and Paul, following Elisha and the prophets of Israel extend love for neighbor to include even love for enemy as I have shown in my book *New Call for Peacemakers* (Faith and Life Press, Newton, Kans.)

Our choice is not between greater and lesser evils, but always between the way of the world and the way of God — the God of the Exodus who delivers people not by force of arms but in God’s own way because God is holy.

My people (the Anabaptist-Mennonites of the fifteenth century in Europe) experienced persecution as severe as that endured by the early Christians at the hands of Nero and later Roman emperors. Let’s listen to the martyrs of your people and my people. Their faith was such that they would rather lose all than to betray their faith in the one who says, “I am the Lord . . . be

holy." They the mighty meek — and we with them — will yet inherit the earth.

**Maynard Shelly
Newton, Kans.**

Not Christ's Way

While I am not a Christian, I do believe that there are some Christian tenets that are worth following. After reading the series of articles in the November issue ("Christian Alternatives to Business as Usual") I could only wonder at the Christianity of people who would give money to people who obviously need it worse than they do and not only demand repayment but even exact an interest charge as well. I also question the whole notion of tithing when it entails taking a tax deduction. Further, to use money so that it can be invested with the purpose of gaining a reasonable profit in return flies in the face of everything that Christ stood for. We do good works not because it will make us rich but because that is what defines us as decent human beings. The whole notion of Christian self-sacrifice is destroyed by this benevolent capitalism.

When fewer and fewer people pay taxes due to the various loopholes created for the rich and near rich — there is less money available for the purpose of redressing the grievances created by our unjust economic system. It is then that these religious charlatans come along in the guise of helping to fill the void by offering their own brand of free enterprise. This does little to assuage the underlying causes of poverty and degradation and in fact offers tremendous support to the very system that created these miseries.

When people are offered the dubious opportunity to enter the market place with the stipulation that they must pay the piper or get out of business, this places an intolerable burden on them that can only be relieved by doing the same things that every business must do — cut corners. Where do they cut corners? Wages, working conditions, environmental controls, etc. In the case of worker-owned enterprises — how do you expect them to survive either economically or ideologically in a capitalist sea where all phases are controlled by forces far beyond their

little factory?

This Christian capitalism is still exploitation. It still involves getting more out of something than you put in and that is quite simply unjust because someone always ends up on the short end.

Until all injustices are eliminated we must continue to give our excess wealth to others so that they might live with some dignity. However, if we offer only indebtedness and its handmaiden political obligation, then all we do is subsidize the status quo. That is not Christ's way.

**John Russell
Memphis, Tenn.**

Stenning Responds

Although he did not mention the Ecumenical Development Cooperative Society by name, it is probable that several of the comments made by Mr. Russell were in response to my article about that organization in the November WITNESS.

With regard to the issues he raised: In the first instance, it is important to understand that EDCS was created to challenge the churches to set aside portions of their investment portfolios and commit that capital to the struggle for human development. In many cases, the total dis-investment of those funds is not possible. Many of them were legally restricted by their donors and cannot legally be placed in uses which do not offer some kind of return. While it is true that interest is charged on loans made by EDCS, it is at a rate substantially lower than the interest rates available from other private and commercial money lenders.

A second main aspect of EDCS is that it is a cooperative. It is mutually and

equally owned and managed by the shareholders rather than a corporate model which would concentrate power in a few persons or groups. Whether a church invests \$250 for one share or \$250,000, it has only one vote. Through EDCS, the churches are trying to demonstrate that in the administration of their investment funds, they are willing to surrender the decision-making power which usually accompanies financial power. One shareholder is entitled to only one vote irrespective of the number of shares he/she might have. At the present time, nearly 40% of the shareholders (voting power) of EDCS are from the Third World.

A third point Mr. Russell makes is the equating of EDCS practices with "benevolent capitalism" and identifies it with "exploitation." To the contrary. EDCS specifically seeks to invest in projects which are cooperatively and communally owned and managed. It extends loans only to projects whose production goes directly to meeting basic human needs. The Society is attempting to show that investment decisions can be made essentially on the basis of social desirability, 'business and commercial considerations being treated as constraints only.' A far cry from the practices of traditional capitalism. As for his point about 'tax deductions,' returns which are earned on investment in EDCS are not tax-exempt or tax deductible: EDCS does not constitute any kind of tax loophole for investors.

In several ways, the EDCS is fundamentally different from the usual commercial and corporate ventures to which Mr. Russell draws parallels. It must be admitted that it does not have all the answers to the problems imposed by present economic and social systems. But if taken seriously — in the words of Dr. C. T. Kurien, a leading Third World economist, "it can help the churches to reflect theologically about these and related issues implicit in any discussion of the stewardship of resources."

**Ronald E. Stenning
Church World Service**



CREDITS

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women. This indicates that women were excluded from some of the humanities as well as the sciences.

All that has been said thus far is the basis for my conclusion that racism, sexism, and elitism are three great institutional sins. Some of us may have difficulty in identifying these as sins because we know that the attitude of the public has changed, so much so that most people will declare that performance and not race should be the basis for awarding wages for work and that talent and not sex should be the basis for hiring people to work. Despite these pervasive attitudes, the actions of our society are different: a disproportionate number of blacks get less pay than they should and a disproportionate number of women get worse jobs than they should. This happens because of institutional practices and procedures rather than because of individual prejudices and predilections. These practices and procedures that limit in an arbitrary

way the opportunities for women and black and brown people, I call sin.

Karl Menninger, the psychiatrist, has emphasized why institutional practices and procedures are sinful but so difficult to understand as sin. He said that we have attempted to reduce sin to strictly personal matters — an offense contrary to conscience, an often secret but wrongful choice of action. If this is what sin is, then we believe that it can be dealt with privately.

Menninger classified the sources of our troubles as group irresponsibility and group arrogance. Racism, sexism and elitism are examples of group arrogance. Menninger said that as groups multiply, the individual seems to grow less and less clearly accountable for the actions of one's group. Menninger reminded us that in group situations and group actions, there is a degree of personal responsibility either for doing or for not doing. The word sin involves these considerations.

Menninger declared that he has pursued reviving the use of the word sin

— not for the word's sake but "for the reintroduction of the concept of guilt and moral responsibility." Menninger said that calling something a sin and dealing with it as such may be a "useful salvage or coping device." One cannot remain passive with sin. One must become active and repent. Not to do so, according to Menninger, may cause "great harm." Nowadays people speak of error, or transgression, or infraction, but not a sin. This is what Karl Menninger has to say in his book, *Whatever Became of Sin?* (Bantam Books, New York, 1973).

One notes that a book with a title such as this was written by a physician rather than a cleric. Maybe this is why churches and other religious organizations have had great difficulty understanding and dealing with racism, sexism, and elitism — three great institutional sins of our time. They have a better understanding of the seven deadly sins because they are personal and little knowledge of these three great sins because they are institutional. ■