

THE WITNESS

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Lethal Legacy: Radwaste
Larry Medsker

**Jeannette Piccard:
Holy Dying**

Alla Bozarth-Campbell • Chester Talton • Daniel Corrigan

**A Feminist Theologian
Views Abortion**
Beverly Wildung Harrison

LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS

Authors' Ire Emotional

The essay of the Revs. Suzanne Hiatt and Carter Heyward on "Right-Wing Religion's 'Dirty Little Secret' " (WITNESS, March) is unfair to the liberal Left in its anger at the sexism of the religious Right. The authors' ire has led them to make statements of more emotion than sense.

I certainly agree with both that the political Left has not dealt effectively with issues of sexism, but not for the reasons which Hiatt and Heyward cite; i.e., unconcern and lack of interest. Indeed perceptions, attitudes, and laws have changed in this area during the eminence of liberal thought in the United States. Even the religious Right is not oblivious to nor opposed to all the advances of "women's liberation."

No, the problem of the Left was the all-pervasive nature of sexism in society. I suggest that sexual division and discrimination are so deeply rooted that any institution raised by man or woman reflects this discrimination. Consequently, great breadth of vision is needed to come to grips with the problem. When that is coupled with the force of will necessary to develop a new non-sexist vision of life and society, to present it to the public, and to implement it, it is easy to see why the Left was on the defensive for most of the 1970s in regard to sexism.

It was unfortunate, but I suspect not surprising, that sexism did not emerge first from the civil rights agitation of the '60s. Unfortunate particularly because

the Left had by then turned its attention to stopping the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. There was little energy and less vision remaining with which to tackle the tenacles of sexism.

Haitt and Heyward contend that sexism was the "volatile, explosive, and decisive" issue of the 1980 elections, precipitating the defeat of President Carter and sundry U.S. Senators. Special pleading alone would pick that issue from the complex fabric of factors affecting voters in late 1980. The economy, foreign affairs, political organization, money, to say nothing of regional and state-by-state differences contributed to the liberal debacle (Iowa has never in the century re-elected a Democratic Senator). And to suggest that Jimmy Carter was in the same liberal circles on women's issues as Senators McGovern and Bayh is bizarre and contrary to the facts. As a final blow to the authors' thesis, polls continuously indicate that the American electorate is more liberal on social issues than the Republican candidates and platform.

What the Right has done is to capitalize on the Left's weariness after nearly 50 years of continuous political power and its lack of vision — and on the weaknesses of President Carter — to march into power. The Right has a plan and a vision, but the Left presently has neither. It is scrambling to find both. For the sake of the downtrodden and excluded, we can hope that it does not take liberals as long as it took the Right to come up with vision and a plan.

G. Ronald Kastner
New Brighton, Minn.

Abortion Violent

I have been warmly appreciating your magazine for several years now; I especially thank you for your frequent reiteration of the justice demands of the God of Justice: that we "hear the cries of the poor," that we "seek peace and pursue it."

This is why it seems so sad and inconsistent that you would accept the shallow analysis of Heyward and Hiatt. It is their assessment that religious

opposition to abortion is a matter of a prurient and anti-woman bigotry.

They are apparently unaware (or choose to keep their readers unaware) of the large numbers of feminist, progressive, and peaceful Christians who oppose abortion because it is violent — it is bloody — and it snuffs out human lives.

Or is this perhaps another of those "dirty little secrets"?

Ms. Juli Loesch
Prolifers for Survival
Erie, Pa.

Heyward, Hiatt Respond

Dr. Kastner is precisely correct in his final observation that the Right has capitalized on the weariness and weakness of the Left. That is what we were saying in the article and suggesting further that it was at the Left's weakest point — its inability to deal with sexism — that the Right has driven through the line. (When we've finally confronted racism and sexism we will have to deal with the pervasive militarism of this society that allows analogies of military strategy to be so easily used and understood.) Because sexism is so all-pervasive is no reason not to address it. It is because the Left has been marginally effective in the area of racism, an equally deeply ingrained evil in our culture, that the Right could not prevail with blatantly racist positions as they have with blatantly sexist positions.

Ms. Loesch reads into our pro-choice position an assessment of religiously motivated abortion foes as prurient and anti-woman. It has often been observed that people debating the abortion issue are not really talking about the same issues. The pro-choice people are discussing the lives and rights of women, the anti-abortion people are discussing the rights of fetuses. There is a conflict of rights here, not an issue of convenience on the one hand and murder on the other. There are at least two sides to the abortion issue. It is violent and bloody (as is birth). It doesn't help for any of us to label our opponents,

Continued on page 19

THE WITNESS

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THE WITNESS EDITORIAL

Why do They/We do This?

As the world watched and listened in disbelieving horror at the second assassination attempt upon a major public figure within 30 days, the media, pressing close to Pope John Paul II, recorded him as saying, "Why do they do this? Why do they do this?"

The Pope, gravely wounded from three bullets, perhaps unconsciously expressed in that moment of bewilderment the cry of people the world over as seemingly wanton acts of assassination and attempted assassination have increased dramatically: What, dear God, is this world coming to?

In the complex and confused morass of humanity such as this planet currently represents, the question is not totally answerable.

But certainly the analysis offered by U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig — that the chief threat to a nation's security is now international terrorism and that it is directed from the Soviet Union — is *not* the answer. Even the director of the CIA, William J. Casey, declared recently that after due investigation his department could thus far find no evidence that Moscow controls and directs an international terrorist network. Neither could FBI director William Webster find proof of Soviet-inspired *domestic* terrorism. Rather, terrorist incidents in the United States are on the wane, he said.

Nor, THE WITNESS is convinced, is much of an answer to be found in intensified studies of the childhood and family environments of so-called terrorist perpetrators of violence and such remedies as they might offer. However, the field of psychology may suggest one clue for proceeding. Psychologists long ago concluded that the field of abnormal psychology, wherein the behavior of mentally ill persons is studied, offers major clues to the dynamics and rationale of normal psychological behavior. Similarly, might it not be said that the abnormal, extremist acts of such perpetrators of violence offer important insights into the pressures and tensions building to the point of explosion in the society as a whole?

Instead, there is an increasing tendency,

Continued on page 18

Radwaste:

Lethal Legacy

by Larry Medsker

As we generate nuclear power and produce nuclear weapons, we also generate radioactive garbage which will last for many centuries to come. One way to minimize the problem would be to limit the amount of radioactive waste we are making. However, "radwastes" are waiting for disposal now, and we are likely to be adding to this supply for the foreseeable future. Some solution will have to be found, and the quality of that solution depends on the responsibility we take for future generations.

The long-term management of radwastes is a technological challenge and a moral imperative. Although some engineering problems may well be solved eventually, uncertainties in technical as well as sociopolitical matters mean that some "acceptable" risks will have to be taken. Of course, there is an ethical dilemma of whether we should be producing radwastes at all.

Lack of progress on this problem, despite the fact that we are 30 years into

the nuclear age, is due in part to inaction by governmental agencies and industry, which has produced a poor record of environmental protection in general. This has been possible because of the late awareness by the general public of the potential dangers and unique characteristics of radioactivity.

Radioactive materials contain atoms that give off energy by means of electromagnetic rays and ionizing particles which can damage biological material. The intensity of the radiation drops off in a time period that is characteristic of the particular isotope involved. After a time equal to one "half-life," the activity is only half of the original amount. After another half-life, the intensity drops again by half, and so on. Some isotopes have half-lives of a millionth of a second, and others, billions of years. If the half-life is a few minutes, then after a few hours, a negligibly small amount of activity would be left. The problem in radwaste management arises from the presence of isotopes with very long half-lives — as is the case in the development of nuclear weapons and the production of power with nuclear reactors. Instead of a waiting period of a few hours, a few thousand years must elapse before certain of the radioactive materials become harmless.

Radwaste is classified according to the level of the intensity of the radioactivity:

- *High level wastes*, such as those from weapons development and from spent reactor fuel, consist of concentrated radioactive materials with intense radiation. The spent fuel from a typical 1000 million-watt reactor amounts to about 25 million tons per year and a volume of about 300 cubic feet per year. The long-lifetime products determine the time scale of concern in waste management. Estimates range from a few thousand to several million years for the period that high level wastes should be stored before they can be considered harmless.

Earlier plans called for the reprocessing of spent fuel to recover fissionable material for use in breeder reactors. This would eliminate some of the unwanted waste products and yield a smaller volume for disposal. However, plutonium could be diverted for use in nuclear weapons, and reprocessing introduces additional hazards for workers and further chances for loss of radioactive material through handling and transport. Because reprocessing would reduce the magnitude of the radwaste problem,

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though, the present government policy against reprocessing makes even more urgent the need for a safe waste management program.

• *Low level wastes* contain less concentrated radioactive material, so the intensity of the radiation is lower. Examples include contaminated tools and clothing and radioactive trash from hospitals and research labs. However, a major source is the "front end" of the nuclear fuel cycle: mining, milling and processing of uranium for production of reactor fuels and development of nuclear weapons. The sand-like "tailings" left over from grinding and crushing ores at uranium mills are an important source of low level radwaste.

While the radiation from low level wastes can be diffuse, the total effect can be very large. The biological effects of low level radiation are a subject of controversy and are currently being re-examined. In the example of mill tailings, radon gas is given off and can cause lung cancer if sufficient amounts are inhaled. Radiation from other decay products in the tailings can cause

leukemia. Some of the most troublesome products have long lifetimes and must be treated with the same considerations as high level wastes.

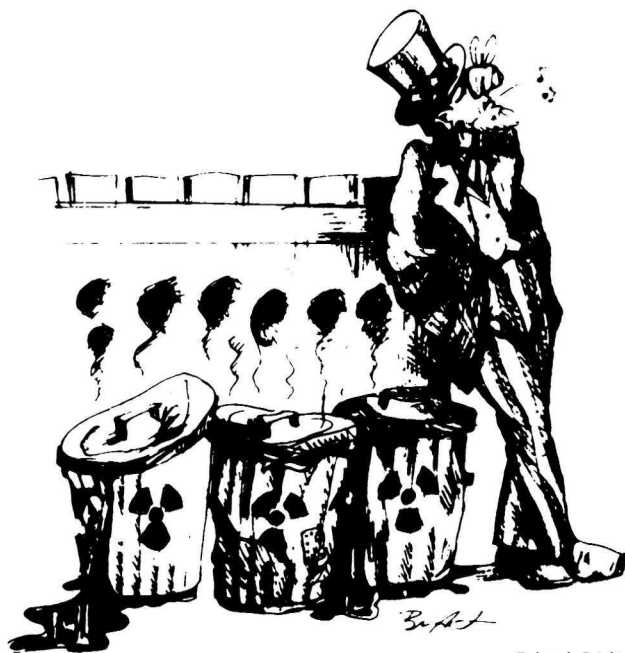
The low level radiation in tailings from uranium mills was long an unrecognized problem. Authorities failed to deal with this and in the 1950s and '60s even denied the dangers to public health. More than 25 million tons of uranium tailings have piled up at mills now inactive. Over four times that amount is stored at active mills, and the production rate is 10-15 million tons per year. Except for accidental migrations, these low level wastes remain, awaiting a plan for disposal.

The dispersion of low level wastes has already occurred through lack of awareness of potential danger and through insufficient safeguards. Wind and water erosion, theft, and early use of tailings in house construction have greatly extended the range of environmental contamination. The problem is how long and how well to secure the wastes. Under the Uranium

Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act of 1978, remedial action has finally been authorized but assigned to three agencies: the Environmental Protection Agency is to set standards for "acceptable" radiation levels, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is to have authority to license and make rulings, and the Department of Energy is to manage the remedial action. However, little guidance is available since the characteristics and effects of the tailing radiation are not fully understood.

A number of ideas for dealing with radwastes have been proposed over the years. Ejection into space, placement on polar ice sheets, and dumping in the ocean are a few examples. These are usually dismissed as unworkable, overly expensive, or requiring too much research and development. Most attention has been given to storage in deep underground excavated repositories. The Department of Energy hopes to demonstrate this technique in the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), which is a facility for weapons wastes and an intermediate-scale facility for wastes from about 1000 spent reactor fuel assemblies. Under the most recent plan, the wastes would be converted to glass rods, packaged, and placed in holes in the floor of a mined salt cavern near Carlsbad, New Mex. After that, the isolated repository would have to be guarded for a thousand years or so.

Technical problems include choosing a material that will contain the wastes for the time period involved and choosing stable geologic sites for the repositories. A prior problem is the establishment of standards for the acceptable release of radiation in the event of conceivable changes in the container and the geologic conditions. A number of nontechnical problems exist as well. Political insensitivity in previous repository site investigations has led to delays and wasted time and money. A history of hasty policy decisions and misplaced optimism on the part of federal agencies has reduced credibility and will hinder efforts to win



Deborah Bright

public support for future plans. And the necessity of guarding repositories for thousands of years requires human institutions of unprecedented stability.

Despite official optimism that a plan such as WIPP will be successful, the several problems to be solved require new extensions of geochemistry, rock mechanics, hydrology, and long-term predictions of seismology and climate. The difficulties in the current proposals for repositories have been pointed out in a 1978 circular by the U.S. Geological Survey. More recently, a detailed report was submitted to the White House by its Interagency Review Group (IRG), which was made up of representatives of 14 federal agencies including DOE. The IRG concluded that a mined repository in a deep geologic formation is the only kind of plan that is achievable in the near term (1990s).

However, their final report was cautious and acknowledged "gaps and uncertainties in our current technical knowledge" and the need for "societal judgment" as to the acceptable risk. According to the IRG subgroup report, "Given the uncertainties associated with our predictive capabilities in the earth sciences, with mathematical oversimplification of complex processes . . . a precise risk assessment of radioactive waste disposal in deep geologic formations may never be possible."

In fact, some of the recent research that has been done shows that earlier confidence in technical understanding was not justified. As examples: 1) new mechanisms for changes in salt formations have been discovered; 2) seismic predictions in particular geologic sites rest on data for no more than 300 years and in some cases only a few decades; and 3) theories of long-term climatic trends indicate that, on the time scale of concern for waste management, dramatic changes in climate could occur. The materials for waste packages may last only a thousand years, so the geologic barrier must be planned as though it were the principal containment. Also, reliable

techniques for sealing off the repository must be developed. Several researchers are looking at materials other than glass as the solid form for the converted wastes, and others are studying alternatives to salt as the geologic medium.

This is not to say that technical problems will not eventually be solved — but the risk will probably always remain high. Radwastes exist *now*, so we have to find some means of managing them. However, optimistic statements from officials that all the problems have been solved should be viewed with skepticism.

Here are some ways we can take action:

1. We should watchdog government agencies that are responsible for radwaste management. Policy decisions must be based upon realistic assessments of scientific capabilities. Continued temporary storage would be preferable to a bad plan adopted in haste or in order to meet political timetables.

2. The process should be open to the involvement of citizens — especially those who are directly affected by repository site choices. Technical information upon which decisions are being based should be made available to them. Even if WIPP appears to be successful, future repository site selections in other areas must be made with great care.

3. The necessity of nuclear weapons development and the use of nuclear power can be called into question. We should make sure that cost estimates for nuclear power, in comparison with alternative sources, include the expense of researching methods of radwaste disposal and the costs of storage and guardianship that will go far beyond the life of the power plant. Those costs should also include the management of wastes at the beginning when the fuels are produced and at the end when plants are decommissioned.

The licensing of new power plants, completion of plants under

construction, and the use of presently operating plants should be examined closely as long as waste disposal plans have not been adopted. We should insist that any plans have the support of knowledgeable nuclear power critics. However, efforts to limit the use of nuclear power should be accompanied by realistic alternatives. The waste problems associated with coal-powered plants may well be even worse than those for nuclear plants. Therefore, large-scale energy efficiency programs would be necessary, followed eventually by the development of renewable energy sources.

Resources

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A Matter of Faith, Study Guide for churches and Christian groups on the nuclear arms race, published by *Sojourners*. \$3.50 each, bulk orders available. Write *Sojourners*, 1309 L St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20005. ■

Case Study: Nuclear Waste Disposal

Holding the Future In Our Hands



The developments of recent months on the issue of nuclear waste disposal in Wisconsin have been typical of the way the government operates in the nuclear energy and weapons area.

First came the secrecy. The Department of Energy was considering Wisconsin's granite formations as a possible nuclear waste dump site, but somehow neglected to tell anyone until a newspaper account leaked the information. Wisconsin Gov. Lee Dreyfus, having heard nothing from the DOE, demanded an explanation. The result was a public "briefing" of the governor by DOE officials last July, when they assured him Wisconsin was just one of dozens of states being looked at, and that a decision was years away. Dreyfus, who has said repeatedly that Wisconsin's use of nuclear power carries with it a "moral responsibility" to accept nuclear waste, apparently was satisfied. He promised his cooperation, and the DOE promised to keep the state informed of its plans.

It came as a surprise to the governor when the DOE, in response to a Freedom of Information Act request from Wisconsin's Environmental Decade, released in October a report that listed 16 Wisconsin counties as among the most favorable areas for a geological waste disposal site, and said a seven-county area in the Lake Superior region was the Number 1 choice. Dreyfus was especially distressed because the report in question had been completed in December 1979, seven months before his "briefing."

The long delay and coverup of the report by the DOE outraged the state's citizens and politicians. *The Milwaukee Journal*, the state's largest newspaper, said it had "serious doubts that DOE is the right agency to handle the waste disposal problem for the federal government," and suggested an independent national commission be established to deal with the problem. (A few weeks before, the paper had accused opponents of nuclear waste disposal of demagoguery.)

Dreyfus again demanded an explanation, and Colin Heath of the Division of Waste Isolation — the same person who had given Dreyfus his briefing — assured the governor no decision had been made, said the DOE had no plans for Wisconsin, and said the newly-released report did not reflect official DOE policy.

Somehow, that was not too reassuring. Since the Reagan administration has taken office, the situation is even more uncertain. Energy Secretary James Edwards has called already for the country to move quickly in finding disposal sites for nuclear waste, even if the sites are "temporary."

Wisconsin is at the top of the DOE's list of potential sites because it has granite formations now considered the most likely place to put high-level nuclear garbage. Whether such sites would remain geologically stable for 250,000 years — the period of time the waste remains deadly and must be kept

isolated — is less than certain, considering that as "recently" as 15,000 years ago much of Wisconsin was covered by glaciers.

The Progressive Foundation in Madison, Wisc. has begun to assemble information for a public education campaign on the issues of nuclear waste disposal and nuclear waste transportation. Although the focus so far has been on the potential dumping sites in Wisconsin, many other regions are also under consideration, and what the Foundation learns can be applied elsewhere as well.

The DOE report listed 36 areas which might be suitable for high-level waste repositories. Two of them, including the one designated as Number 1, are in Wisconsin. Twelve are in Minnesota, which offers similar types of geological formations. The list also includes two in Idaho, one on the Idaho-Montana border, one in Upper Michigan, four in North Carolina, two each in Colorado and Wyoming, one joint Colorado-Wyoming site, two each in Georgia and Oklahoma, and single sites in New Hampshire, Missouri, Texas, Arizona, and Nevada. We would like to hear what's happening in those areas. ■

The article above is reprinted with permission from The Progressive Foundation, Inc. Newsletter *Update*. Those who would like to order the Dept. of Energy's complete report on waste disposal referred to above may do so by sending \$11 to The Progressive Foundation, Inc., 315 W. Gorham St., Madison, Wisc. 53703, attention Bill Christofferson.

Solution for Storing Nuclear Waste

Abbie Jane Wells

My solution to the problem of storing nuclear waste is to give little lead boxes of it to the users of nuclear power — sort of an extra “dividend.” They could bury it in their own backyards or store it in their houses or apartments — a family heirloom — a legacy to be handed down to their children and to their children’s children and on and on, to be cared for and monitored for leaks for 10,000 years or more.

I would ask the pro-nuclear power people: If you received a little of the nuclear wastes to store on your premises as well as a little of the nuclear power electricity to use, would you still want a nuclear power plant in your area?

Let each user and builder and profit-maker of nuclear power store their share of the nuclear wastes on their own property rather than dump it in storage sites in someone else’s backyard — in mass dumps.

And on nuclear arms, each taxpayer could be given an Income Tax rebate of their share of the National Stockpile of nuclear waste generated from the building of nuclear arms, a share to match the amount of taxes paid into the National Budget for nuclear hardware.

The builders of nuclear weaponry or nuclear power plants would get their quota to distribute among employees according to their contribution to the building of nuclear arms or power.

So there’s my solution: A share of the national heritage of nuclear waste to each who contributed to the building of it to be passed on down to their children as family heritage, to be added to by grandchildren and their children ad infinitum, as they contribute to the national heritage of nuclear waste.

Abbie Jane Wells is a WITNESS subscriber who from time to time provides us with insights and reflections written in her kitchen in Juneau, Alaska.

Plutonium Is A Religious Issue

by Albert Blackwell

Its uses are matters of life and death. Its disposal propels our imagination toward eternity. Thus plutonium gives rise to issues of religious dimensions. And I believe that religious categories, in particular the categories of sin and evil, are appropriate to our national debate over the production, handling, uses, and disposal of this beguiling element.

Plutonium is something new under the sun. Until 1941 this element existed only in traces associated with natural uranium deposits. Quantities of plutonium first came from the nuclear piles of World War II’s Manhattan Project. At the beginning the amounts were small. Physicist Enrico Fermi is quoted as saying that in 1941 the world’s supply of plutonium reposed in a matchbox in his desk drawer. It is no longer so. Today hundreds of tons of plutonium have accumulated from nuclear weapons programs and nuclear power generation. It is dispersed throughout the biosphere as a consequence of fallout from nuclear weapons testing and the two nuclear detonations over Japan. It is stockpiled in government

repositories and deployed in the current arsenal of nuclear weapons. And it is bound up with other radioactive elements in spent fuel assemblies being held in cooling pools at nuclear power reactors . . .

Government records released under the Freedom of Information Act disclose that as of the end of 1976, 8,000 pounds of plutonium and bomb-grade uranium were unaccounted for in the United States, enough for the construction of hundreds of clandestine nuclear weapons. Primitive nuclear bombs are not difficult to build. Thus the mere claim of a terrorist group to have a nuclear weapon, supported by a small sample of plutonium, would probably suffice to blackmail any governmental authority that received it.

A sample of plutonium could suffice as a blackmail threat even if no explosive device were claimed, in fact, for plutonium is a radiological poison of pernicious toxicity. By weight plutonium is 20,000 times more deadly than cobra venom or potassium cyanide. Microgram quantities can induce lung cancer. In theory, eight kilograms (eight billion micrograms) would suffice to kill every person on our planet.

Most poisons can be rendered harmless by chemical processes. As every home canner knows, for example, deadly botulism is rendered completely harmless by 15 minutes of boiling in the presence of air. The radiological toxicity of plutonium, however, persists through all chemical alterations. If I die of plutonium-

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~~~~~  
*Plutonium is spilled by fools like me,  
 But only God can make a nuclear reactor  
 ninety-three million miles from the  
 nearest elementary school.*  
 ~~~~~

induced cancer and my body is cremated, I yield up my plutonium through the smokestack into the biosphere where it may kill again, and this toxicity persists for 250,000 years.

When we are told, therefore, that radioactive wastes are to be buried in areas where security can be guaranteed, we shall do well to realize that if plutonium had been stored in the Great Pyramid of Egypt, it would remain 90% as lethal today as on the day when Pharaoh Cheops proclaimed, "They'll never find it there." When we are told that radioactive wastes are to be disposed of in areas that are sparsely populated, we shall do well to realize that plutonium will remain lethal for 50 times longer than any civilization has yet endured on the earth. When we are told that wastes are to be stored in geological formations that are stable and dry, we shall do well to realize that plutonium will remain lethal for 20 times the epoch since the last ice age. And when we are told that these radioactive wastes are simply part of the cost of our energy appetite over the next few decades, we shall do well to realize that the plutonium excreta from our generation's energy diet will remain lethal for five times longer than our species *homo sapiens* has yet roamed the planet.

A quarter of a million years, then, is not time on human scale. It is time on God's scale. Our sour grapes of plutonium will set our children's teeth on edge, not merely to "the third and the fourth generation" of Biblical prophecy, but to 10,000 generations.

Indeed, since plutonium is a genetic mutagen as well as a radiological poison, our sour grapes of plutonium may set our children's teeth on edge for as long as the human species endures . . .

In the interest of a "national security" teetering in an international balance of terror, and in the interest of satisfying our energy appetite for the next two or three decades, we are producing comprehensively threatening substances, of which plutonium is the most lethal and long-lived. Our nation and our generation, it seems to me, are asserting self-interest without regard to the welfare of the whole, conceived as the entire human community including its future generations. If the darkness of our self-assertion is to be enlightened, we must seek to bring self-interest under the discipline of a more universal good. In practical terms, this means to me that the movement for nuclear disarmament and the disciplines of conservation and increased energy efficiency challenge our generation with the urgency of religious obligations . . .

Genesis 3 roots individual sin in our desire to "be like God." Genesis 11 roots corporate sin in our attempt to construct a tower "with its top in the heavens." Our generation is presuming to construct, not an astronomical tower with its top in the heavens, but geological waste disposal caverns with their futures in eternity. We forget that before that stretch of time is far advanced, our civilization, like Babel of old, may well be "scattered abroad over the face of the earth." Or to alternate once more from geological to astronomical imagery, let me conclude with a poem making its rounds in the national debate over energy policy:

**Plutonium is spilled by fools like me,
 But only God can make a nuclear reactor
 ninety-three million miles from the
 nearest elementary school.**

The poem may not scan particularly well. But in my judgment both its anthropology and its theology are irreproachable. ■

Polly Bond Award To DeWitt Editorial

The 1981 Polly Bond Award for the category of best interpretive editorial was presented to THE WITNESS for Robert L. DeWitt's "Married Clergy, Separated Churches" at the annual Episcopal Communicators meeting in Sierra Madre, Cal. recently.

The award, for excellence in church communications, is presented annually in several categories: best news story, feature, editorial, etc. and is named for a noted Episcopalian woman who was director of communications for the Diocese of Ohio. Ms. Bond died of cancer in 1979.

Judges for the event this year were Jack Langguth and Ed Cray, faculty members of the USC School of Journalism, and Eric Bailey and Beau Riffenburg, teaching assistants.

In the prize-winning editorial, which appeared in the October issue of the magazine, Editor DeWitt analyzes the Roman Catholic Church's reception of a group of married clergy who left the Episcopal church in protest over the ordination of women and the new prayer book.

"Rome has sent a message — indistinct but discernible — that Anglicans who object to the ordination of women are to be commended, and received (albeit with less than open arms)," DeWitt wrote. "How should the Episcopal Church react to this message?"

"No doubt the ordination of women by the Anglican church casts a shadow across relations with Rome and Orthodoxy. But issues which touch on justice and pastoral concern are not negotiable, neither in the most earnest concern for comprehensiveness within a particular church, nor in the desirable effort to seek a deeper unity within Christendom," he said.

Readers who would like a copy of the issue containing the complete editorial can send 50¢ to cover postage to THE WITNESS, Box 359, Ambler, PA 19002.

The Rev. Jeannette Piccard, who at age 79 was one of the first women to be ordained to the Episcopal priesthood, died of cancer in Minneapolis May 17. A noted scientist, stratosphere balloonist and space consultant, she was 86 years old. THE WITNESS invited three persons to share their reflections on the death of this valiant woman: The Rt. Rev. Daniel Corrigan, longtime friend and one of the three bishops who ordained the Philadelphia 11; the Rev. Alla Bozarth-Campbell, the youngest ordained in that group, and the Rev. Chester Talton, former pastor of St. Philip's, St. Paul where Jeannette Piccard served as assistant.

Holy Dying

by Daniel Corrigan

“Jeannette Piccard is to undergo surgery tomorrow morning. Here is the phone number in her hospital room.”

When Jim Diamond, our minister to the University of Minnesota, called with that message, it was a pastoral gift — an opportunity for us to carry on some conversations from Feb. 16 to May 14, 1981.

As she approached dying, Jeannette moved quickly into mature and faithful acceptance. Our conversation on the evening before her surgery was little concerned with the operation but filled with projects: Ideas to get out and onto paper, maybe publish; places to visit, etc. When we talked two days after her surgery which revealed inoperable cancer, she had already surrendered those projects and characteristically moved on to the business at hand — Holy Dying . . .

The Piccards — we shared the same parish from 1948 to 1958 — embodied intelligence, reverence and utter courage. They always gathered eager boys and girls around the breakfast table after early Eucharist to lead them into the depths beneath and up into the starlit heavens with breathtaking story,

dialogue and animated conversation. While trying to instruct a confirmation class on the meaning or quality of reverence but getting nowhere at all, I

was inspired to ask, “How many of you have ever noticed the look of the Piccards as they kneel quietly in the front pew before service?” *OH THAT!*

Of Babies, Balloons, Bishops

On May 17, the Fifth Sunday of Easter, we heard from the Gospel the words of Jesus, “I go to prepare a place for you,” and so it was that on that morning, Jeannette Piccard, our sister and friend, died and went home to the Holy One.

Three vital images stand out in my mind from the celebration of the life of the Rev. Canon Jeannette Piccard: babies, balloons, and bishops. Two days before her death, she had been made an honorary Canon of the Cathedral Church of St. Mark in Minneapolis. It was in this church that Jeannette's and my ordination to the priesthood in 1974 were finally recognized by our bishop in 1977. It was in this same chancel that Bishop Daniel Corrigan who ordained us and Bishop Robert Anderson who cared for us led Jeannette's community in the final Happy-Birthday-into-Paradise-Party for her final soaring toward God.

The stately Cathedral resounded with sounds and reflected sights of life: colors flying in banners flanking the nave for the spring Arts Festival, and babies singing lustily in their parents' arms. One young mother fed her newborn as the singing began; and one young father sang to his newborn in the narthex as the larger song

subsided. Already the third and fourth generations appearing to receive the mantle, already crying out praises, prayers for food and recognition.

Bishop Corrigan celebrated the Eucharist wearing Jeannette's bright red stole with multi-colored balloons. He wore her mantle for all of us, bold with the rainbow promise of a new covenant. At the Peace, Bishop Anderson spoke the most simple, startling words, quietly to me. I repeat them here, with gratitude. I began to leave the chancel steps from where I led the Prayers of the People, to return to my place. As he came out to proclaim the Greeting of Peace, Bishop Anderson said softly, “Don't go. Stay by my side and hold my hand.” Dear Bishop, you do not know how much your words meant to me, and would have meant to Jeannette, for what you asked just then is all we ever meant to do.

As Jeannette Piccard's holy death turns a page in history, I pray that Bishop Anderson's simple, modest request can be uttered in time by all of God's sons to all of God's daughters, and vice versa.

Do not rest in peace, Jeannette, but pray and work on with us: live in glory.

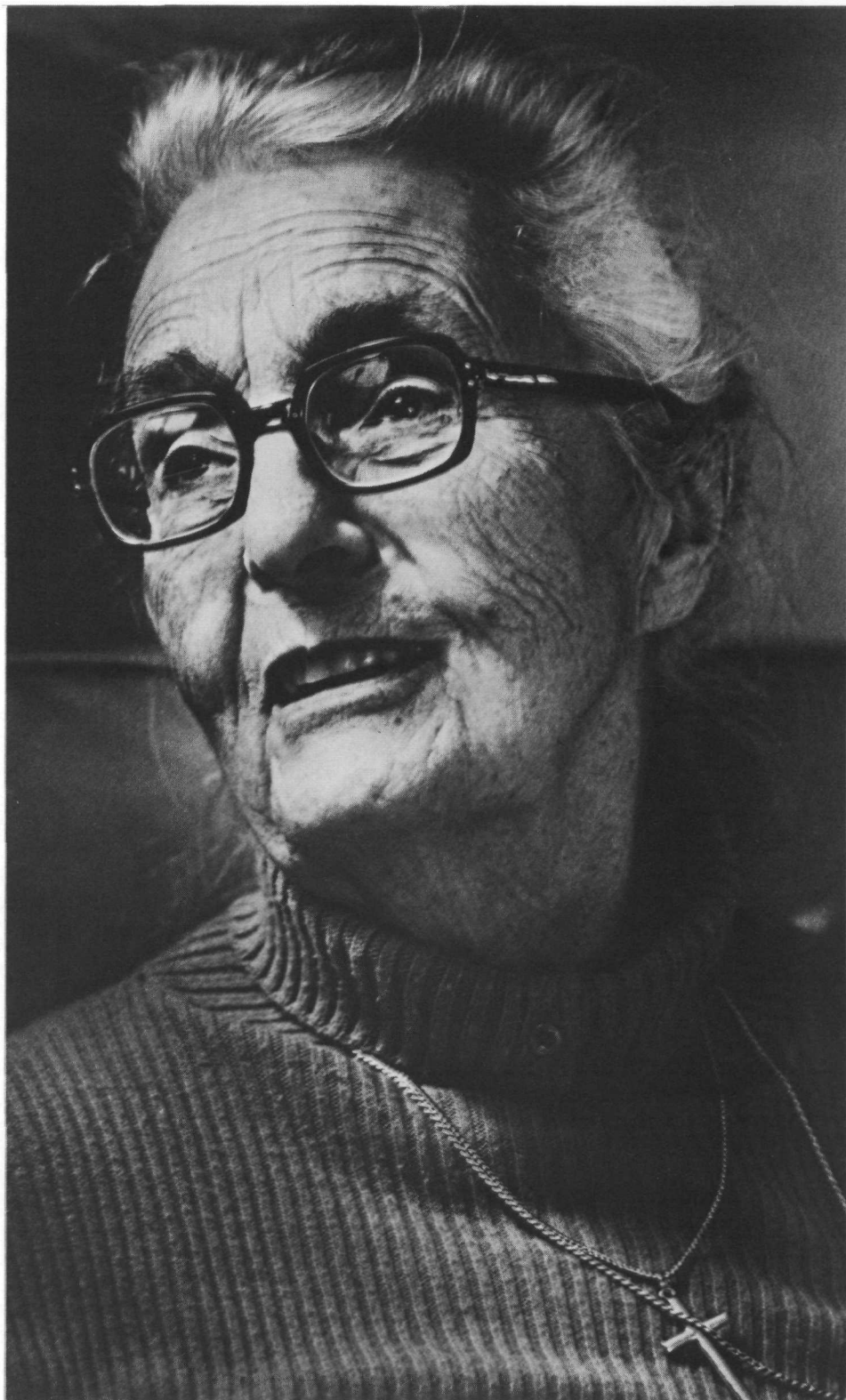
— Alla Bozarth-Campbell

they exclaimed. Yes, that! That's it! We all know what *that* is. Teaching like Kierkegaard's *Birds*.

There were many pictures around the East River Road house. It was fun to look at those which were hung and to page through the albums. We often had time to do this for they made their home available to young people struggling to put their family life together. They were very good to two of our boys as they embarked. Several shots commemorated the historic Lake Erie ascent. In one of these Jeannette is well out of the gondola, into the shrouds, way up in the air, to reactivate the valve which controlled the hydrogen gas. Courage! And the picture was pure courage, too; taken by John in the gondola, unable to help. They always brought concern, intelligence, reverence and courage with them to such a degree that the earthbound were lifted up.

Her entrance into the stratosphere has been often noted and recounted. Indeed, I have an invitation and program for the dedication of "The Piccard Balloon Collection" at the University of Minnesota, Jan. 28, 1981. Probably her "*Vale*" was made there in response to the tributes. Its title? "The Wind Bloweth Where it Listeth." Her going up from the pew to ordination and the altar has also been mentioned, a subject of conversation, dialogue and monologue.

Who can do these things and not be destroyed? Who has what it takes to live with controversy? Who can ride out the storm? Who can survive rejection, misuse, no use? Because of the way things work nowadays I have some of the abusive communications which were addressed to her. You know, "Copies to the P.B., the press, the President, the Bishops of X, Bishop Corrigan, etc." While it is easy to imagine the pain, resentment and frustration which fathered the letters, communications, prohibitions, whatever, we owe her an understanding of her prior acceptance of the barbs,



Jeannette Piccard: 1895-1981

thrusts and shoves.

The few times the Philadelphia-Washington ordinands met before the ordination of women to the priesthood was recognized were occasions which revealed the need of much healing. Jeannette's eyes saw the wounds, her ears heard the loud or muttered cries, saw the outer symptoms of the inner wounds. The Wounded Healer reached out and in to restore and sustain; keep alive until better times. A priest forever after the order of Melchisedek then and when she broke the Bread and poured the Wine at our dining room table to celebrate the mystery of God's life-giving presence. I looked at the ancient Tarquinian plate last night. It will always have a discernible aura not only because skillful and loving hands contrived it — but also because her priestly hands have lifted it and offered it.

Then the Day! Thursday, Sept. 16, 1976, Minneapolis. Women may serve as Christian priests, no innate obstacle. How great the joy for many. How great the pain and sense of utter loss for many! Shall we raise a glad cry? Shall we celebrate? Now is a moment of testing. And "the Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm, Whose voice is contentment, Whose presence is balm" was present, evoked. Jeannette's reaction was, "Let compassion mark our response — no vaunting, no cries of triumph. Let us go in the morning to whatever altars have been provided to give thanks; to pray for the wounded, maybe even the dead."

Jeannette Piccard had a rare gift of looking at things from several angles at once. This wide but many-angled view emerged in her polemics as surprising and startling comments. You were likely to say to yourself "How come I never noticed that before?" She showed up at the special General Convention of 1969 in South Bend with a paper she had written *DEFENDING* St. Paul's general opinion of women.

In the last years she shared with me

several manuscripts upon which she was working. We will all be losers if her revealing comments on Genesis, the Pauline Epistles, the Pastoral Epistles and some of the Church Fathers are not published and circulated.

And then Jim Diamond again with a new hospital phone number. Jeannette's voice was tired but clear when I asked, "Would you like it better for me to come now to be with you or for me to come dance at your wedding?"

"Call in a couple of days and I'll tell

you," she said.

So next call — "Right away, come dance — and the Bishop and the Dean and Fr. Diamond have all come this afternoon and made me a Canon of the Cathedral."

I couldn't resist. "Another first, Jeannette! I never heard of anyone being canonized until long after their wedding!" And she laughed. "Vale!"

We did feel sad during and after the intimate family requiem at St. Philip's, St. Paul Wednesday morning. The people there were doubly bereaved. They had taken Jeannette to their hearts when she was in some sense a person cut adrift. She had been nourished by them and had served them for many years. Fr. Talton was there as host and master of ceremonies but had ceased to be their parish priest the Sunday before and was on his way to Trinity, Wall Street. He preached a remarkable sermon that evening in the Cathedral. The Good Shepherd in Jeannette had arranged all things however — the order of service, the cast and even the evening hour so that men and women, both clergy and lay, could come from anywhere; that her beloved Phillipians might not only swell the throng but serve and lead as ushers, crucifers — and oblation bearers. Oblation bearers — Holy offerings rich and rare.

You knew they had kept her alive and sweet in hard times and now not only given her to the Cathedral but to the whole church and that the whole church had accepted her. My grandson Daniel drove me home from the great wake in the Woman's Club of Minneapolis. We talked about the celebration. He summed it up "There was a lot of power in that place tonight. I never felt power like that before."

And the Good Shepherd knew I might need a lift. Her magnificent balloon stole was there for me to wear — so I could be up and away — maybe with the young Magee, "Touch the Face of God." The wind bloweth where it listeth and tends toward the Source. ■

Blacks Understood Jeannette's Suffering

Jeannette Piccard was a balloonist, an adventurer, a mother, a courageous fighter, a priest and pastor. The role she preferred was that of pastor, and it was that role she fulfilled at St. Philip's Church.

Her only regret was that because of her advanced age, she could not drive, and was therefore not able to make hospital and parish calls on her own. However, she was always available to those in crisis and it was not unusual for her to be found in long vigils at the bedside of a dying parishioner, and offering counsel to the family.

Jeannette loved to celebrate the Eucharist at St. Philip's. She wanted her last service to be very much a joyous occasion, like a party. She didn't want her people to be sad, to feel so much a sense of loss as to celebrate a life which she had tried to live well and for a long time.

Historically, Jeannette had been a member of St. Philip's for 10 years. The Rev. Denzil Carty was originally responsible for welcoming her into the parish, and he also presented her for ordination in Philadelphia. For the past five years, she was a regular part of the ministry at St. Philip's.

To me, it is significant that a parish like St. Philip's, predominantly Black, could particularly understand some of Jeannette's suffering at not being able to exercise herself fully in what she was called to do. Blacks familiar with that feeling could reach out to her in a way others could not.

— Chester Talton

Bring a Torch, Jeannette

by Alla Bozarth-Campbell

The importance of names
Jane and Jeannette:
"God has been gracious"

You pass on the mantle
to your granddaughter.
I see your tall robust
stature thin and small
in the hospital bed
as Jane helps you take off
your gold ordination cross,
your wedding rings.

How gracefully you strip yourself
of this life.
Your son and great-grandson sit
to my left looking on, eating chocolates.
I am all eyes, I who shared
history with you.

We were ordained together,
you the oldest at 79,
I the youngest at 27,
womenpriests.
"I'm glad we shared that day,"
I say, the Feast of Mary and Martha.
"You know I love you," you say.
Yes, How many meetings like this:
Mary and Elizabeth — you now come
to term with life, I only a little
pregnant — Elijah and Elisha — you
in a chariot of fire in the sky,
going up for the last time
in a balloon no one else can see.

I did not share that early victory
with you, the dream you made history
before I was born: the first woman
to ascend into the stratosphere.
I've heard you say the day we shared
you rose still higher.
Your High Years were 1934 and 1974.
Your children came and grew

in the years between flights.
How competently you helped pilot
your sons into humane manhood.

The deep hibiscus has paled
in your room, thirsting for light
by the window into the soft pink
of your fading bones.
You ask for a blessing:
Dear Woman, bathed in love,
how tenderly tight you are held
in this communion of saints
we share. Joy, you say, to die
in such arms.

May the Holy One take you
gently as a mother takes her baby
home.
Then I give you the blessing
of the bee and the bear
and the butterfly, as our bishop
does quoting me, and I blush
as your son John says "He follows
you." It remains that what we did
took. I'm glad we shared that day.

You are clear today as in my dreams
when both of us again and again
tell the story on television;
as when you stood by me in hard times,
stood by us all.
Now all the dreams fulfilled,
all deeds done.
I ask you to whisper tips in my ear
from your broader vision,
and the deathbed advice from you
is truer: "Don't believe
everything you hear."

Driving away from you
I enter the Freeway
and think of your journey
past and future; of all the dreams
in which I was pushed onto bridges

where I did not want to go,
and turned myself around.
And now your bridge.
"Left Lane Must Exit"
You go that way.

Rachmaninoff's Concerto in D Minor
soars out the windows.
A news interruption shocks me
awake: "The Pope has been shot
but will probably live."
Fulfilling the violent predictions.
May 13 resumes with music.
The music conjures mountains,
Canadian Rockies, forbidding,
snowhigh in summer.

Your son said he might send
your ashes up in a balloon
and give you back to
the stratosphere. But that is
too lonely. You belong here.
Give you back to Mother Earth
and us.

Now it is I who cross the Great River.
I signal my turn, take the right lane,
look your way to see rows of lilacs
in bloom to usher you where you must go.

Home, where I live, where I habitate,
a huge bouquet of spring flowers waits
at the door for me. A woman brings
two loaves of fresh bread for my birthday.
In a box in the mail I find a crystal heart
from the California mountains.

I think for a moment I want to give
these things to you for your great
Ascension Day. "Don't believe everything,"
you say. I'll keep them, then, and
dance to the rainbows and remember
you while I wait my turn.

Part 1

Theology of Pro-Choice: A Feminist Perspective

by Beverly Wildung Harrison

Much discussion of abortion betrays the heavy hand of misogyny or the hatred of women. We all have a responsibility to recognize this bias, sometimes subtle, when ancient negative attitudes toward women intrude into the abortion debate. It is morally incumbent upon us to convert the Christian position to a teaching more respectful of women's history and experience.

My professional peers who are my opponents on this question feel that they own the Christian tradition in this matter and recognize no need to rethink their positions in the light of this claim. As a feminist, I cannot sit in silence when women's right to determine how procreative power is to be used is under challenge. That right is being withdrawn by the State even before its moral basis has been fully elaborated. Those who deny that women deserve to control procreative power claim the right to do so out of "moral sensibility," in the name of the "sanctity of human

life." We have a long way to go before the sanctity of human life will include genuine regard and concern for every female already born, and no social policy which obscures that fact deserves to be called "moral."

I believe the human wisdom which informs our ethics about abortion comes from what earlier Catholic moral theologians meant by "natural law" more than from quoting the Bible alone. Unfortunately, however, natural law reflection in a Roman Catholic context has been every bit as awful as Protestant Biblicism on any subject that involves human sexuality, including discussion of women's "nature" and women's "divine vocation" in relation to procreative power.

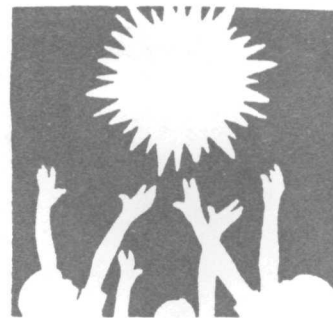
Protestants who oppose procreative choice either tend to follow Roman Catholic moral theology or ground their positions in Biblicist anti-intellectualism, claiming that "God's word" requires no justification other than their claim that it (God's word) says what it says. Against such irrationalism, no rational objections have a chance. If Protestant fundamentalists do give reasons why they believe that abortion is evil, they too revert to traditional natural law assumptions about women, sex and procreation. Therefore, it is against the claims of traditional Catholic natural

law thinking on the subject of sexuality, procreation, and women's power of rational choice that objection must be registered.

Any treatment of a moral problem is inadequate if it fails to question the morality of the act in a way which represents the concrete experience of the agent who faces a decision with respect to that act. Misogyny in Christian discussions of abortion is evidenced in that the decision is never treated as an integral part of the female agent's life process. Abortion is treated as an abstractable act, rather than as what it always is — a possible way to deal with a pregnancy.

Those who uphold the immorality of abortion are wise to obscure the fact that it is a fully living human female who is the moral agent in the decision. In the case of pregnancy, the woman's life is deeply, irrevocably affected.

Where the question of abortion might arise, a woman finds herself facing an *unwanted* pregnancy. Consider the actual circumstances which may precipitate this. One is the situation in which a woman did not intend to be sexually active or did not enter into the act voluntarily. Since women are frequently victims of sexual violence, numerous cases of this type arise because of rape, incest, or forced marital coitus. Many morally sensitive



Dr. Beverly Wildung Harrison is Professor of Christian Ethics, Union Theological Seminary, New York City. The above is adapted from a lecture to the Symposium on the Theology of Pro-Choice in the Abortion Decision, sponsored by Religious Leaders for Free Choice and Religious Coalition on Abortion Rights, Stephen Wise Synagogue, New York.

opponents of abortion will concede that in such cases it may be morally justifiable. I would insist that in such cases it is a moral good, because it is not rational to treat a newly fertilized ovum as though it had the same value as the existent, pregnant, female person, and because it is morally wrong to make the victim of sexual violence suffer the further agonies of unwanted pregnancy.

Another more frequent case results when a woman — or usually a young girl — participates in heterosexual activity without clear knowledge of how pregnancy occurs and without intention to conceive. A girl who became pregnant in this manner would, by traditional natural law morality, be held to be in a state of “invincible ignorance” and therefore not morally culpable. I once met a scholarly Roman Catholic nun who argued, quite seriously, that her church should not consider the abortions of young Catholic girls as morally culpable since the church was “overprotective” of them, which prevented them from understanding procreation and the sexual pressures which contemporary society puts on girls.

A related type of pregnancy happens when a woman runs risks by not using contraceptives, perhaps because taking precaution is not “ladylike” or requires her to be too “unspontaneous” about sex. However, when pregnancies occur because women are skirting the edges of knowledge and running risks, is enforced motherhood a desirable solution? Such pregnancies could be minimized by eradicating childish myths, embedded in natural law teaching, about female sexuality.

In likelihood, the largest number of abortions arise because mature women who are sexually active with men and who understand the consequences, experience contraceptive failure. Schizophrenia in this area is exhibited in that many who believe that women have more responsibility than men to practice contraception, and that family

planning is a moral good, rule out abortion altogether. Such a split consciousness ignores the fact that there is no inexorable biological line between prevention of conception and abortion. More important, this ignores the genuine risks involved in female contraceptive methods. The reason we do not have more concern for finding safer contraceptive methods for men and women is that matters relating to women’s health and well-being are *never* urgent in this society. Moreover, many failures are due to the irresponsibility of the producers of contraceptives rather than to “bad luck.” Given these facts, should a

*“When one stops to consider the awesome power over nature which **males** take for granted, including the power to alter conditions of human life in myriad ways, the suspicion dawns that the near hysteria that prevails about the immorality of women’s right to choose abortion derives its force from misogyny rather than from any passion for the sacredness of human life.”*

woman who actively attempts to avoid pregnancy be punished for contraceptive failure when it occurs?

Theological Context

In the history of Christian theology, the central metaphor for understanding life, including human life, is as a gift of God. Creation itself is seen primarily under this metaphor. In this context, it follows that procreation itself takes on special meaning when expressed within a patriarchal society in which it is the male’s power which is enhanced by this “divine gift.”

Throughout history, women’s power of procreation stands in definite tension with male control. In fact, ancient historical evidence suggests that what we call patriarchy derives from the need

of men, and later of male-dominated political institutions such as tribes and states, to control women’s procreative power. We must assume, then, that many of the efforts at social control — including church teaching on contraception and abortion — were part of an overall system. The perpetuation of patriarchal control itself depended on wresting the power of procreation from women. Another critical point is that in the last four centuries, the entire Christian story has had to undergo dramatic accommodation to new and emergent world conditions grounded in the scientific revolution. As the older theological metaphors for creation encountered a new human self-understanding, Christian theology had either to incorporate this new reality in its story or to become obscurantist.

The range of human freedom to shape and enhance creation is now celebrated theologically up to the point of changes in sexuality or ways of seeing women’s nature. Around these issues a barrier has been drawn which declares: *No Freedom Here!* The only difference between mainline Protestant and Catholic theologians is on the question of contraception. That Protestant male clergy are usually married does have a positive experiential effect on their dealing with this issue; generally they have accepted the moral appropriateness of contraception. Most Protestants and nearly all Catholics, however, draw back from recognizing abortion as a defensible exercise of human freedom or self-determination.

The problem, then, is that Christian theology everywhere else celebrates the power of human freedom to shape and determine the quality of human life except when the issue of abortion arises. The power of *man* to shape creation radically is never rejected. When one stops to consider the awesome power over nature which males take for granted and celebrate, including the power to alter the conditions of human life in myriad ways, the suspicion dawns that the near hysteria that prevails

about the immorality of women's right to choose abortion derives its force from misogyny rather than from any passion for the sacredness of human life. The refusal of male theologians to incorporate the full range of human power to shape creation into their theological worldview when that power relates to the quality of women's lives and women's freedom and women's role as full moral agents, is an index of the continuing misogyny in Christian tradition.

By contrast, a feminist theological approach recognizes that nothing is more urgent, in light of the changing circumstances of human beings on planet Earth, than to recognize that the entire natural-historical context of human procreative power has shifted. We desperately need a "desacralization" of our biological power to reproduce, and, at the same time, a real concern for human dignity and the social conditions for personhood and the values of human relationship. And note that "desacralization" does not mean complete devaluation of the worth of procreation. It means that we must shift away from the notion that the central metaphors for divine blessing are expressed at the biological level to the recognition that social values bear the image of what is most holy. The best statement I know on this point comes from a Roman Catholic feminist who is also a distinguished sociologist of religion, Marie Augusta Neal:

As long as the central human need called for was continued motivation to propagate the race, it was essential that religious symbols idealize that process above all others. Given the vicissitudes of life in a hostile environment, women had to be encouraged to bear children and men to support them; child-bearing was central to the struggle for existence. Today, however, the size of the base population, together with knowledge already accumulated about artificial insemination, sperm banking, cloning, make more certain a peopled world.

The more serious human problems now are who will live, who will die and who will decide. . .

Alternative Reading of History

Between persons who oppose all abortions on moral grounds and those who believe that abortion is sometimes or frequently morally justifiable, *there is no difference of moral principle*. Pro-choice advocates and anti-abortion advocates share the ethical principle of respect for human life, which is probably why the debate is so acrimonious. I have already indicated that one major source of disagreement is the way in which theological story is appropriated in relation to the changing circumstances of history. In addition, we should recognize that whenever strong moral disagreement is encountered, we simultaneously confront a different reading of history. The way we interpret the past is already laden with a sense of what the "moral problem" is.

For example, professional male Christian ethicists tend to assume that the history of the morality of abortion can best be traced by studying the teaching of the now best remembered theologians. Looking at the matter this way, one can find plenty of proof-texts to show that *some* of the church fathers (as we call them) condemned abortion and some even equated abortion with either homicide or murder. However, when a "leading" churchman equated abortion with homicide or murder, he also *and simultaneously* equated *contraception* with homicide or murder as well. This reflects the then almost hysterical anti-sexual bias of the Christian tradition.

However, this anti-sexual tradition is *not* universal, even among theologians and canon lawyers. On the subject of sexuality and its abuse, many well-known theologians had nothing to say and abortion was not even mentioned. An important, untold chapter in Christian history is the great struggle that took place in what we call the medieval period, when clerical celibacy came to be *imposed*, and the rules of sexual behavior rigidified.

*"The reason we do not have more concern for finding safer contraceptive methods for men and women is that matters relating to women's health and well-being are **never** urgent in this society. Moreover, many failures are due to the irresponsibility of the producers of contraceptives rather than to 'bad luck.'*"

By contrast, my thesis is that there is a relative disinterest in the question of abortion overall in Christian history. Occasionally, Christian theologians picked up the issue, *especially when those theologians were "state-related theologians"*; i.e., articulating policy not only for the church but for the political authority. Demographer Jean Meyer, himself a Catholic, insists that the Christian tradition took over "expansion by population growth" from the Roman empire. Christians only opposed abortion strongly when Christianity was closely identified with the State or when theologians repudiated sexuality except in the reluctant service of procreation.

The "Holy Crusade" quality of present teaching on abortion is quite new and related to cultural shifts which are requiring the Christian tradition to choose sides in ideological struggle and to rethink its entire attitude to women and sexuality. No Protestant clergy or theologian gave early support for proposed 19th century laws banning abortion in the United States. It is my impression that Protestant clergy, usually married and often poor, were aware that romanticizing "nature's bounty" with respect to procreation resulted in a great deal of human suffering. The Protestant clergy who finally did join the anti-abortion crusade were racist, classist, white clergy, who feared that America's

strength was being threatened because white, middle class, "respectable" women had a lower birthrate than black and ethnic women. Sound familiar?

One other point must be stressed. Until the late 19th century, the natural law tradition, and Biblicism following it, always tended to define the act of abortion as interruption of pregnancy after ensoulment, or the coming of the breath of God to the fetus. The point at which ensoulment was said to take place varied, but most typically it was at quickening. Quickening was important because knowledge about embryology was terribly primitive until the last half century. As a result, where abortion was condemned, it was understood to refer to the termination of pregnancy well into the process of that pregnancy after ensoulment. Until the late 19th century, then, abortion in ecclesiastical teaching applied only to termination of prenatal life in more advanced stages of pregnancy.

Another distortion in the male-generated history of this issue derives from failure to note that, until the development of safe, surgical, elective abortion, the "act of abortion" frequently referred to something done to the woman, with or without her consent (See *Exodus 22*), as an act of violence. Now, in recent discussion it is the woman who does the "wrongful" act. When "to do an abortion" meant terminating a pregnancy against the woman's wishes, grounds for moral objections were clear.

Furthermore, whether the act was done with or without the woman's consent, until recent decades abortion always endangered the woman as much as it did the prenatal life in her womb. No one has a right to discuss the morality of abortion today without recognizing that one of the traditional moral reasons for objection to abortion was concern for women's well-being.

Beyond all this, however, the deepest moral flaw in the pro-life position's historical view is that none of its proponents have attempted to

reconstruct the all but desperate struggle by sexually active women to gain some proximate control over nature's profligacy in conception. Under the most adverse conditions, women have had to try to control their fertility — everywhere, always. Even when women are infertile, their relationship to procreation irrevocably marks and shapes their lives. Those who have sought to avoid sexual contact with males, through celibacy or through lesbian love, have been potential, even probable, victims of male sexual violence or have had to bear heavy social stigma for refusing the centrality of dependence on men and of procreation in their lives. Women's lack of social power, in all recorded history,

has made this struggle to control procreation a life-bending, often life-destroying one.

So women have had to do whatever they could to avoid too numerous pregnancies. In most societies and cultures, procreation has been in the hands of women's culture. Some primitive birth control techniques have proven rather effective. Increasingly, anthropologists are gaining hints of how procreative control occurred in some pre-modern societies. A woman often has chosen to risk her life in order not to have that extra child that would destroy the family's ability to cope or that would bring about a crisis unmanageable within her life.

We have to concede that modern medicine, for all its misogyny, has replaced some rather ghastly practices still widely used where surgical abortion is unavailable. In light of these gains, more privileged Western women must not lose the ability to imagine the real-life pressures which lead women in other cultures to submit to ground-glass douches, reeds inserted in the uterus, etc. to induce labor. The radical nature of methods women resort to bespeaks the desperation involved in unwanted pregnancy.

Nor should we suppress the fact that a major means of birth control now is as it was in earlier times, *infanticide*. And let no one imagine that women made decisions to expose or kill new-born infants casually. Women understand what many men cannot seem to grasp — that the birth of a child requires that some person must be prepared to care, without interruption, for that infant, provide material resources and energy-draining amounts of time and attention. It seems to me that men, especially celibate men, romanticize the total and uncompromising dependency of the newly born infant upon the already existing human community. This dependency is even greater in a fragmented, centralized urban-industrial modern culture than in a rural culture, where another pair of

Communi / / cation

I rode the train again today
enjoying my privacy until a
dark-haired girl sat down beside me —
a student
but I kept on writing.

We entered a tunnel
with the rumbling and rushing of
wind — darkening my
reflection in the window.

Then the feeling took me:
I had to cough;
I had to ask her if she minded
if I smoked;
I had to tell her I was scared
of growing even a minute older,
but I couldn't and kept on
writing.

She coughed
She cleared her throat —
many times,
as if waiting for me to say
how dry the weather was.
I kept on writing.

Sometimes I think humanity is
sitting beside me, waiting for me to
clear my throat.
But still I keep on writing
while the darkness roars outside . . .

Gail E. Atwater, 18
St. Thomas' Church
Whitemarsh, Pa.

hands often increased an extended family unit's productive power. No historical interpretation of abortion as a moral issue which ignores these matters deserves moral standing in the present debate.

In drawing this section to a close, I want to stress that if present efforts to criminalize abortion succeed, we will need a State apparatus of massive proportions to enforce compulsory childbearing. In addition, withdrawal of legal abortion will create one more massively profitable underworld economy in which the Mafia and other sections of quasi-legal capitalism may and will profitably invest. The radical Right promises to get the State out of regulation of people's lives, but what they really mean is that they will let

economic activity go unrestrained. What their agenda signifies for the personal lives of women is quite another matter.

An adequate historical perspective on abortion recognizes the long struggle women have waged for some degree of control over fertility and of their efforts to regain control of procreative power from patriarchal and state-imperial culture and institutions. Such a perspective also takes into account that more nearly adequate contraceptive methods and the existence of safe, surgical, elective abortion represent positive historic steps toward full human freedom and dignity for women. While the same gains in medical knowledge also open the way to sterilization abuse and to social

pressures against some women's use of their power of procreation, I know of no woman who would choose to return to a state of lesser knowledge about these matters.

There has been an objective gain in the quality of women's lives for those fortunate enough to possess procreative choice. That millions of women do not possess even the rudimentary conditions for such choice is obvious. Our moral goal should be to struggle against those real barriers — poverty, racism and cultural oppression — which prevent authentic choice from being a reality for every woman.

Next: The Moral Status of the Fetus, Body-Right as a Moral Claim, the Moral Quality of Pro-Choice Political Strategy.

Editorial . . . Continued from page 3

accelerating sharply with the Reagan administration, to apply the words "terrorist" and "terrorism" to one side of the political spectrum — the Left. Thus, as Mark Harris indicated in the June WITNESS, members of the Palestine Liberation Organization are called "terrorists," a word not usually applied to Israeli "commandos" raiding Palestinian settlements. Similarly, our government calls terrorists and extremists those who resist the ruling junta of El Salvador, but furnishes with arms the soldiers and guardsmen of that government.

It must be said in strong rebuttal that, if one insists on using the word "terrorism" to describe irrational acts that are an affront and threat to all humanity, the greatest terrorism of all is the increasingly pervasive fear, shared by the whole human race, that the insane nuclear arms race will end in nuclear holocaust.

Viewed in this light, we might then speak of the new "terrorist budget" of Reagan and Haig, which holds the poor of our own country hostage to poverty while terrorizing the world with its unprecedented nuclear arms buildup.

Indeed, the poor are doubly terrorized: They are besieged by the daily terror of being deprived of food, jobs and health programs, and they are increasingly aware that nuclear holocaust daily moves closer to reality with the arms buildup.

Twenty-seven years ago a band of Puerto Ricans proclaiming independence for Puerto Rico invaded

the U.S. Congress and fired shots, wounding several Congressmen. This act was understandably denounced at the time as the act of extremist terrorists. However, few noted that on the day before, the United States detonated the first "deliverable" megaton-class hydrogen bomb on Bikini atoll in the Pacific. This was a far greater act of terrorism by the only nation ever to use an atomic weapon on a people, at Hiroshima.

How might concerned Christians pondering such considerations respond?

First, the world's greatest terrorism, the threat of global nuclear war, must be denounced and the de-escalation of the arms race (sometimes called the balance of terror) pursued with unrelenting vigor.

Second, those people held hostage both at home and abroad by the shackles of injustice and oppression must be given full voice before a world that needs to hear from them directly. The world's press literally and figuratively held out a microphone to the wounded John Paul II. Cannot the churches "carry the microphone" to the poor and dispossessed and allow them to tell their story?

Third, we must be serious about programs which give the poor access to the essentials of life.

If we begin to address these major illnesses of the body politic — the massive impoverishment and oppression and the madness of the arms race — the aberrational acts of a demented few, expressing the deep frustration of the many, might begin to decrease dramatically. ■

Letters . . . Continued from page 2

but it does help to try to raise all the issues and to acknowledge that hard moral choices are involved either way.

The Rev. Carter Heyward
The Rev. Suzanne Hiatt
Cambridge, Mass.

Where Place the Jews?

I am disturbed that, 36 years after the liberation of the death camps, William Stringfellow, an intelligent theologian and courageous activist, can offer us an Easter message in the April WITNESS that puts forward the career of Jesus as the "disposition of Israel's vocation." I may lack the strong theological constitution of the neo-orthodox, but I am not able to survey the 1,400 years during which Christendom's "foot of pride" rested upon Israel, and then reaffirm any notion that Jesus in some sense replaced or fulfilled Israel's mission. Where in this theological construct do we place the Jews who faced Christian fires, gallows and gas chambers sanctifying the Name of the Holy One?

Can we Gentile Christians maintain that the minds of the Ghetto Jews "were hardened" or that "a veil lies over the minds" (2 Corinthians 3:13-14) of the Brooklyn *hasidim* because they believed in the messiah and even today await him? Can we hold up the cross as a "stumbling block" (1 Corinthians 1:23) to the Jews who perished in the Holocaust, believing that God would not abandon his people? The only cross toward which I would point Israel is the cross of Yeshua of Nazareth which stands in the midst of and *level with* all the other crosses raised by Rome in occupied Palestine.

Thirty-six years after Auschwitz, and all that our best theologians and preachers can offer us is some new version of the ideology of replacement of Israel by Jesus, who at least was a Jew, or by the Gentile Church, the self-styled "New Israel." All this after Jules Isaac, James Parkes and Malcolm Hay, and closer to home Rosemary Ruether and Franklin Littell, have exposed the

raw nerve of anti-Semitism at the heart of Christian theology and practice. I sometimes think it may be best that we Christian Gentiles admit that we are what we are, "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise." (Ephesians 2:12)

Perhaps we should allow the spiritual Christ of Greek metaphysics to fade into the pages of history and at last permit the Galilean *hasid* Yeshua to return to his own people. Then we might come to share in the messianic expectation of Israel, the hope for that day when "all flesh shall come to worship" on the holy mountain Jerusalem (Isaiah 66:18-23). We may even learn to await the resurrection from the sleep of death, which Yeshua shares with his righteous brothers and sisters. And, just perhaps, after enough prayer and fasting we might begin to do theology again.

John J. Klopacz
New York, N.Y.

Stringfellow Responds

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the serious and moving letter of John Klopacz and I would welcome an occasion to talk face-to-face with him about these matters.

I think his letter interpolates far too much in reference to my article. I am aware of roots of anti-Semitism in Scripture and in the abuse of Scripture, as well as in arrogant pretensions of what Klopacz calls "the Gentile Church," but I do not see how that is connected with the affirmation in the article that Jesus on the Cross becomes Israel. On the contrary, Jesus on the Cross exemplifies the reconciliation of the whole of humanity in the Word of God. In that context, the Jews who perished in the Holocaust, theologically speaking, are participants in the Cross.

In my view, furthermore, the article exposes the apostasy of the professed "new Israel" quite as much as that of the "old Israel." Some of the implications of that are discussed in an early book of mine entitled *Count It All Joy*.

William Stringfellow
Block Island, R.I.

Sparks Two Programs

I am enclosing the Sunday bulletin from St. Mary's Church to inform you that we are having two programs on El Salvador with the Rev. Richard Gillett and Blase Bonpane. This is partly in response to the influence of THE WITNESS. I have been a subscriber since 1937. My thanks and appreciation to you for following faithfully in the steps of Bill Spofford.

Mary B. G. Zava
Laguna Beach, Cal.

Speak to Social Issues

Magazines such as yours are going to be needed even more in the very near future. Please continue to research, review, analyze and speak to the social and ethical issues of our day. We have too much superficial churchy propaganda and we need more evidence that God is alive and active at the root of His/Her world. Keep up the good work.

Fred Ansell
Kansas Baptist Convention
Pittsburg, Kans.

Forming Study Groups

Please rush me *Which Side Are We On* as advertised on your back cover. I already have *Must We Choose Sides* and what I assume to be the prelude to both volumes, *Struggling With The System: Probing Alternatives*.

Having struggled with these issues for over three years now, these volumes and your magazine have been very useful. In fact, a group of us is about to contract to go through these study/action volumes. Such commitment brings both excitement and fear. Thanks for your own efforts which have been encouraging.

Raymond J. Fancher
Denton, Tex.

CREDITS

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