

THE WITNESS

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Uniting Evangelism and Social Action

Arthur E. Walmsley
Neil Braxton Gibson
Julius Del Pino
Julio Torres

LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS

Of Tears, Vomit & Hell

Just who is Mark Harris and where was he when those Arab leaders urged Palestinian Arabs to flee their homes and not accept the UN partition which also established the modern state of Israel? (See "Palestine: Issues and Questions," June WITNESS.)

His article sounds so sincere but to me it smacks of those crocodile tears associated with the fear of where oil (especially Middle East and/or "Arab" oil) will come from.

I could not read his "vomit" long enough to notice if he also mentioned those Jews who, after many centuries or thousands of years, were driven out of their homes in Arab lands.

My anger is not toward Arabs as such; if anything it is directed against those so-called Christians who, although claiming to be "the New Israel", in their attitudes, actions and imperialism, are really the same old Rome. Any relationship to the beliefs and behavior of Jesus is strictly the work of someone's imagination and a justification of injustice as usual. It is just this sort of trash that brings out the particularism in me and makes it possible for me to tell alleged Christians to go straight to hell.

Joyce Ann Franz
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Terrorism Tactical?

In his generally helpful article on the Palestinians, the Rev. Mark Harris makes one statement which is, to me at least, arresting. "Terrorism is a tactical matter." The impact is not much lessened by Harris' further exposition of the problem. While it may be a tactical matter to those who use it, terrorism should raise problems for all to whom ethical questions are real questions.

Terrorism means the grouping of the relatively innocent with the relatively guilty, and thus ignoring the distinction between blowing up a police station in occupied territory and blowing up a market-place full of shopping housewives. Hence, any instrumentalist attitude toward it is, I think, truly pernicious.

Harris does well to point out that the Palestinians are more the victims of terrorism than its perpetrators and that the bombs of the Great Powers can also be pinned with that label. Nevertheless, *tu quoque* is an impermissible argument in ethics. Furthermore, when definitions become broad enough they lose their meaning and their moral impact.

Geoffrey W. White
Berkeley, Cal.

Christian Role Suspect

Since when have Christians earned the right to "protect" Judaism? Obviously, Mark Harris has no conception of the profound — and traditional — spiritual longings which form the substratum of Zionism. Moreover, to think of Christians setting themselves up as judges in a dispute between the two communities for which they have traditionally had most contempt and hostility, is, frankly, an outrage.

Rev. Harris does have some truths to tell us; unfortunately, they are mostly half-truths. For example, he speaks, quite rightly, of the Palestinians as a national community, a people demanding recognition. But it was not always so. Until well into the 20th century, such an identity would have been difficult to imagine, if only because the geographic region known as Palestine had not yet been defined as a political or ethnic territory. My point is not to brush aside the very real sense of Palestinian peoplehood which has emerged and, quite rightly, demands recognition, but only to guard against the polemic that results from reading the present into the past.

What's true of the Palestinians is true of the Israelis. The Jewish sense of peoplehood is very ancient. The

national consciousness of the Israelis is a modern phenomenon, as is that of the Palestinians. This present reality is what truly matters, not whose ancestors came first.

Since the question of history has been raised however, we should at least try to discuss it, giving due consideration to documentation. In 1947, it was the Jews — not the Arabs — who were willing to share the land. The Arabs, or at least, the Arab states, were unwilling to share the land. They wanted it all. Their hope was to destroy Israel. They lost. And the war has continued ever since.

Rev. Harris notes of the Palestinians that "So badly do they want to return home . . . that negotiations and compromise can take place concerning the establishment of a separate Palestinian state whose relations with Israel might well include more and more interchange and commerce, with less friction and armed conflict . . ." I can only applaud the sentiment expressed; at the same time, I must deplore its naivete. Where can he possibly have gotten the idea that such a mentality is prevalent among the Palestinians? From the PLO? Their stated aim is to obliterate the State of Israel and replace it with their own state.

If Christians insist on being part of this conflict — and it seems highly unlikely that they will, or can, refrain from doing so — then I would suggest that their most appropriate role would be in the realm of prayer, not partisan politics.

Paul Nathanson
Vancouver, B.C.

Mark Harris Responds

To Ms. Franz: It is not clear that Arab leaders did urge Palestinians to flee. Information exists to indicate quite the opposite: that Palestinians fled in large part because of Zionist fear tactics. Palestinian Arabs were not consulted in determining their fate. Arab state delegates to the UN walked out of the meeting that voted for partition, but even they did not represent Palestinian Arabs or dictate their actions. It appears that Palestinians fled because of the attacks

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THE WITNESS EDITORIAL

Some readers have been curious about THE WITNESS editorials, since we have not carried authors' names following the redesigning of the editorial page this summer. We decided at that time that editorial topics and content would be agreed upon by the editors listed on the masthead, with one responsible for the actual writing. Hence, the May and July editorials were written by Richard W. Gillett; the June editorial by Mary Lou Suhor, and the August by Robert L. DeWitt. Hugh White will produce the October piece. This month we offer a guest editorial in the form of a poem by Mary Jane Brewster of Portland, Ore.

Signs of the Times

Under the gaze of a televised world,
at a cost of two million dollars,
the Prince of Wales married his Princess,
who was properly dressed
for the once-in-a-century occasion
in a secretly designed ivory silk taffeta gown
trailing a 25-foot train.

The Hollywood groomed President of the United States
delegated his wife to attend.
Attired in an exclusive peach ensemble
of unmentioned price,
she presented the royal couple
with the President's wedding gift,
a cut glass bowl worth some \$10,000
of taxpayers' money.

Elsewhere in what remains
of the once-impregnable British Empire,
two more dedicated young men,
having refused food for over 65 days
in the cause of justice for their comrades,
slipped closer to death
in a North Ireland prison;
and the trapped black and white inhabitants
of Liverpool's Toxteth slum
demonstrated their desperation
in yet another night of violence

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Evangelism, Social Action Can Unite in New Way

by Arthur E. Walmsley

We are a people whose history began with a call of Yahweh to Abram and Sarah and their household. It was a call to covenant, a call to journey. It was to be marked by Shalom, God's peace, which would govern and shape their lives. Later, in the time of Moses, the great sign or sacrament of Yahweh's blessing would be a "passing over," their deliverance from bondage to new life.

Inheritors of that covenant and witnesses to a new one, called by the same creator God, we are marked by a passing over, delivered not only from human bondage but from death itself. We are the people called by God, purchased by the blood of Christ, signed by his cross, empowered with his spirit, sent to be his pilgrim people in the world, to witness to his Shalom, that peace of God which passes human understanding.

When the community of this new covenant came into being, it was described, quite simply, as "the new way" or "the way." The Graeco-Roman world was confounded by these strange people who began acting and talking with extraordinary confidence. It would not be accurate to say that they were people with a mission. In fact, they would put it the other way around: God who has a mission for the world has joined us to it!

To be part of the "new way" is to know oneself as a person overtaken by God's Spirit, and thrust into the world to proclaim that God is Lord of the world.

Throughout history, there are glimpses, intimations of the Spirit's power to grasp and change not only individual lives but whole peoples and nations. Let me share a fragment of the letter written by Sister Maura Clarke earlier this year. She was one of the four Roman Catholic missionaries

The Rt. Rev. Arthur E. Walmsley is Bishop Coadjutor of the Diocese of Connecticut.

murdered in El Salvador:

"What is happening here is impossible — but happening. The endurance of the poor and their faith through this terrible pain is constantly pulling me to a deeper faith. My fear of death is being challenged constantly as children, lovely little girls, and old people are being shot and some cut up with machetes and bodies thrown by the road and people prohibited from burying them. I want to stay on now . . . I am beginning to see death in a new way . . . for all these precious men, women, and children struggling or laying down their lives as victims, it is surely a passageway to life . . . our loving Father can't possibly have other than a new life of which we have little glimpses which will be full — total joy and oneness."

What this woman's testimony makes clear is that what is unique about "the way" is that it is a transforming life. Those who are overtaken by the spirit of God are those who, following the command of Jesus, imitate him.

Evangelism is not something the church does, like putting on potluck suppers. Membership in the church, leadership in the ordained ministry in the church, indeed the very life of the church is the effort to follow the example of our Lord, in word and action. Our task is not to point to ourselves as evangelizers or even to the church as the sign or sacrament of God's presence in the world. Rather it is by word and act to point to Jesus who is the Lord. But that witness, in this age as indeed through the last 20 centuries, is often a risky and precarious course of action. In one of his last sermons in El Salvador before his assassination, Archbishop Oscar Romero said:

"Christ invites us not to fear persecution because — believe me brothers and sisters — he or she who is committed to the poor must run the same fate as the

poor. And in El Salvador we know what the fate of the poor signifies — to disappear, to be tortured, to be captive, and to be found dead."

In this witness, there can be no simple distinction between what the church has traditionally called "evangelism" or "evangelization" and "the social ministry of the church." The similarities between the first centuries of the Christian era and our own time are striking. To be a Christian means, in more rather than fewer places, to stand against the values of a society increasingly dominated by violence and the fear of it. What holds faith together in such times is a capacity to enter into the agony of the world's people, and such an action begins and ends in prayer. There is a necessary sense in which those whose initial experience of Christian faith may have grown out of a conversion experience, and those whose point of entry into faith has been an identification with the world's suffering, find a common ground. That commonality falls in our extraordinary dependence upon the power of God's Spirit to overcome the *fear* that is in us.

Until recent times, it has been difficult for Episcopalians to carry on serious discussion about evangelism. Our track record in proclaiming the Gospel is, to say the least, spotty.

There is a built-in ambivalence in Anglicanism, arising from the close tie in the Church of England to the state. It can safely be said that it was not until this century, and truly not until the independence of provinces in countries formerly under the colonial domination of Great Britain or economic dependence on this country, that Anglicanism has begun to develop anything like an international shape. To go to East or West Africa today is to encounter expressions of our heritage which are authentically Anglican in piety and order, and simultaneously non-Western.

But the suspicion remains strong in

this country, no matter how much we may protest otherwise, that we are not a church for all people, that we have no serious missionary strategy, either domestically or overseas, and that unlike churches of an American frontier spirituality, we are not serious about evangelism. What I think is required of us is a *major* reordering of our life. Why does not the Episcopal Church truly flourish among Spanish-speaking peoples, as do the churches of a pentecostal ethos? Why have we not raised up indigenous ministries of and by poor people in the center cities or in rural areas?

That, to be sure, is not a new issue before us. In 1853, William Augustus Muhlenberg addressed a famous "Memorial" to the General Convention, intended to make the Protestant Episcopal Church on the one hand something more than a church "only for the rich" and on the other, an instrument of Christian unity in America. The document raised the question of whether the church

"with only her present canonical means and appliances, her fixed and invariable modes of public worship, her traditional customs and usages, is competent to the work of preaching and dispensing the Gospel to all sorts and conditions of men, and so adequate to do the work of the Lord in this land and in this age."

I submit that the agonies through which we have gone in the last 25 years — to wit, the end of our domination of overseas jurisdictions in the Philippines, Brazil, Japan, China, and increasingly in Latin America; our involvement in the social struggles of our time, epitomized by the civil rights debates of the 1960s and General Convention Special Program; the renewal of our liturgy and the acceptance of a new Prayer Book; the ordination of women to the priesthood; and the emergence of an evangelical or charismatic movement within the

Episcopal Church — all these are a coming to fruition of the questions posed by Muhlenberg about our identity as a church for the American people a full century and a third ago.

It is worth noting that Muhlenberg experimented, with great ingenuity, about urban ministry, formed the first religious sisterhood in the American Church, introduced a weekly Eucharist in a time of great liturgical polarization, established St. Luke's Hospital and that complex of social services on Staten Island called St. Johnland, abolished pew rentals when that was the norm, pioneered a statement of ecumenical principles which is substantially the basis for the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral and later Anglican involvement and leadership in the ecumenical movement, organized a parish day school, a parish unemployment fund, trips to the country for poor city children. And all this on the basis of a very Pauline, very Reformation insistence on the doctrine of grace. Who said, "We can't do it?"

The identity of the Episcopal Church is at stake, as never before. Our time of testing, far from representing God's abandonment of us, may simply be taken as a sign that those whom God loves, God chastens. But it is important that we position ourselves quite precisely as who we are in the mainstream of traditional Christianity. There is no meaningful distinction or separation between declaring in word the name of the Lord and declaring in act that God's followers are sent as servants of the world's poor. The whole religious scene in America is in flux. There is a genuine religious hunger among the American people. It is time to cast off our preoccupation with those internal struggles on secondary matters and lift up the nature of the Anglican heritage for what it is. I propose that this includes at least the following seven points and I offer in them a description of a diocese which I believe to be serious about the task of serving the way

faithfully in the contemporary American scene.

1. The bishop. A bishop is to lead the Church of God. A bishop must have the ability to take a world-wide and catholic view, to sympathize with many attitudes, but to give a lead for the primacy of the Word and for the Mission, the *missio dei*. Again and again, this will mean the assurance to the people of the diocese and all its institutions and parishes, that though words are slippery and though the church is up against it, especially in the great cities of the world, we are not left to die. As the report of the Urban Bishops' hearings made clear, the Jesus Christ pattern is the one to which we bishops must aspire, to hearten fellow Christians, so that they may continue to say their prayers, be themselves, and get on with it.

2. The clergy. It will take a 180 degree turn for us to accept a standard of clergy solidarity and collegiality, but that is what the church lacks and the church needs. Bishops, clergy, and lay people have the obligation and the Biblical sanction for *expecting* this of each other. The spontaneous expansion of the church in the early centuries happened because of the trust of those in authority that the Holy Spirit would raise up and empower leadership. We should expect no less. Urban ministry is not a project to be individualized by the few on behalf of the many — what is needed is a joining together of rich and poor, suburbs and city, in a disciplined commitment on behalf of the whole church.

3. Diocesan strategy. Every diocese needs a plan of mission strategy. But are we once again going to draw a false and Biblically-unsound wall between those who preach and those who act, between evangelism and social service, between the call of God to each of us to commit ourselves in faith and the demand of a righteous Judge that nations, and races,

and economic systems must answer to a standard of justice, compassion, concern for the poor, the outcast and the stranger? In short, do we recognize the inner and outer dimensions of the Lord's Shalom?

The kind of mission strategy I am talking about calls for common cause between those whose enthusiasm is for evangelism and church renewal and those whose passion is for the poor, disfranchised, and the multicultural community such as is blossoming in Los Angeles. When I say mission strategy, I mean one with an irreducible floor under it. As a start, an absolute moratorium on the closing of churches, in urban areas or anywhere else, except where the physical environment no longer has people living nearby. Better, we should have a commitment in each place to open new churches to serve areas we have abandoned, and to raise up indigenous congregations where there are Spanish-speaking and Asian peoples moving in. There are techniques to learn about the stabilization of congregations. One simple rule of thumb: when a church is in trouble, don't reduce its ministry to a part-time one!

But, "Where shall we find the financial support for such an effort?" I cannot believe that has ever been a serious issue for the church at any moment in her history when the fires of renewal burned in her life. A church with the passion I have described, a church with the vision of leadership, a church with a careful and realistic strategy for mission and evangelism will not be abandoned by the Lord. Nor by the people.

4. Serious adult education and recruitment for ministries, lay and ordained. The number of adults presenting themselves for confirmation or reception into the Episcopal Church is significantly on the upswing, as are the raw figures for baptism and confirmation. The interest in

thoughtful, disciplined adult Christian education is widespread.

It is important that the Episcopal Church claim that middle ground which is ours: a theologically conservative and Biblically rooted tradition, one which has a high respect for human learning, one which stands for active and committed involvement by its people in the life of society and of the state. We are not a sect. We are not the counter-culture. We are a reformed catholic people, holding in tension traditional values and the need to be sensitive to those who are not in the mainstream of American cultural life. That is an adult faith, and it deserves the best presentation we can give it. And, parenthetically, it calls us to stop being apologetic or defensive about those on our fringes who cannot accept that we are about our Father's business in all of this.

5. Service of the poor. The prophetic tradition of the Old Covenant thunders against persecution of the needy, and the Psalms show perplexity at the success of the ungodly and the misfortune of the godly. In fact, the phrase "the poor" acquires a religious significance in Old Testament literature, and may almost be equated with "the godly" — the *hasidim* — the humble, hardworking, pious folk who look to God for redemption, as against the idle rich and the powerful who trust in themselves.

Jesus' teaching clearly grows out of that tradition; to serve the needs of the hungry, the poor, and the outcast is to serve him. It is instructive that in the eras of great missionary expansion by the church, the effort to convert peoples to Christ has been accompanied by the founding of schools, hospitals, and a range of social services and no arbitrary distinction drawn between the effort to proclaim Christ through word and sacrament, and to live out the implications of the new way in loving service, particularly of those treated as

The Mystery of Faith

Christ has died.

Crucified, hopeless, rejected,
insulted, scandalized, taunted.

Christ has risen.

Crowned, hallowed, resurrected,
instituted, sacralized, triumphant.

Cunning we think ourselves,
happy for what we are.

Restless. We drive ourselves.

Interestingly, we're not sure where.

Sophisticated beyond our

theology, we apparently forget . . .

Christ will come again.

— Keith Raske

most vulnerable by a particular society: lepers, old people, children, the sick, aliens and strangers to a culture.

In the contemporary scene, in which whole segments of populations are marginalized by economic forces, war, and persecution, the church is increasingly summoned to stand as the advocate for the poor — in El Salvador, Brazil, South Africa and Poland, to mention widely different examples. In our own situation, there is no escaping the demand that our witness to Christ calls for the same commitment. In an era when political trends in the nation would cut back services to the poor, the church must both be ready to assume more direct responsibility herself in filling the gaps which are being created, and willing to stand up publicly as the champion of those who are most victimized, at home and abroad, by the rampant escalation of the arms race.

6. Forging a new ecumenism. Whenever Anglicans get together, we have a way of talking as though we were the whole church. The fact is that all the Christians in the world represent less than a third of the world's population, and the projections are that between now and the end of the century that will drop to 20% or 25%. Anglicans are but one family of Christians within the larger household. The growth of understanding among Christians in the

20th century has been phenomenal. It is important in everything that we do, particularly our ministry and witness in the city, to forge those linkages with other Christians which will begin at the very practical level of shared facilities, shared ministries, shared funding, and in that effort discover the practical ways in which God is calling us to leave behind the accumulated baggage of our separation.

7. Prayer in the Spirit. That which authenticates the Christian, which validates us, which motivates us, which ultimately judges us can only be, if we are of God, the Holy Spirit. A Christian community must, in the end, trust the matter to God. We have nearly consumed ourselves in our fretfulness over the ordination of women. It is time we left the matter in God's hands, and got on with other things. I personally believe that history will vindicate the decision to proceed which was made in Minneapolis. But God will take our decision and use it in any case, and our continued wallowing in self-doubts or apology for our action is nothing but faithlessness.

I mean that not as political statement but as a call to prayer. Let us take what we have, and what we are, and offer that to God as the best we have to give at a moment in time, in all its richness, in its diversity, even in its contradictions. Let us ask God to cast out that party spirit, that stiffnecked partisanship which, throughout our history, has somehow prevented us from trusting God to make us the inclusive and truly American expression of Catholic Christianity which yet remains our opportunity. ■

CREDITS

Cover, Beth Seka; p. 4, Robert McGovern; p. 10, *Radical Religion*; p. 13, Peg Averill, LNS; p. 15, *ISIS International Bulletin*; p. 16, Rini Templeton; p. 17, *Maryknoll* magazine.

Short Formula For a Resourceful Parish

by Charles Belknap & David Duncan

The technological metropolis is being developed all over the world. Our own metropolis — which extends 60 miles from downtown Los Angeles — has the largest economy of any on the Pacific Basin (Tokyo and Yokahama together may be bigger, in economic terms). These new urban constructions provide new ways to be civilized; they are as important as the development of ancient walled cities in the Near East or Greek city-states or Renaissance princely cities. It is an exciting time to be alive!

Our Episcopal tradition has had great success in that earlier urban setting, the 19th century industrial city. Our polity of mission and parish churches was creatively used to represent the American Dream: Tiffany-gothic parishes on the hills as symbols of responsible American success, and subsidized missions on the waterfront as aid in the pilgrimage toward an American “promised land.” While we participated in many 19th century evils, especially racial discrimination, we did a lot of good. The Episcopal Church and its people had power.

Now in the 20th century technological metropolis, our tradition is called to find new, creative adaptations of our polity. We are, ironically, exiles in the promised land. This is God’s judgment and God’s good

gift. Once again, in new ways, we can signal hope for the coming Kingdom. The resourceful parish community may be a useful form of ministry and mission, so that parish membership will be important to people’s life histories. While co-creating resources, each local church can be the focus for conversion of metropolitan lives and conditions of life, through the sacraments and works of Christian love.

The Urban Setting

Urban means metropolitan, and our metropolis includes most of Orange County, the San Fernando Valley, the cities and environs of San Bernardino, Riverside, Oxnard, etc. But not every square mile of that huge territory would normally be called urban. Indeed, a map of urban areas would be a patchwork quilt and not very helpful. Instead, urban may be defined by *conditions of life*.

Some of the conditions which define urban are population density, cultural and ethnic exclusions, industrial ecological damage, the separation of residential areas by class, and high rates of crime. We also point to positive conditions: cultural resources, opportunities for new livelihoods, universities, etc. One image of the coming Kingdom is of a city: the New Jerusalem.

In short, the urban setting is of huge geographical extent, through which certain conditions of life are rapidly and generally appearing.

As each locale is caught up in metropolitan developments, it may lose the capacity to direct its own way of life. For example, many small municipali-

ties contract with county government for fire and police services. This system offers practical advantages, but it signals some loss of self-determination or power in the local community.

Power in the sense of self-determination means the capacity to make a difference to one’s individual, family, or community life history, in terms of education, livelihood, housing, culture, safety, nutrition, etc. Power in this sense is neither partisan nor ideological; it is a familiar capacity to act effectively for the course of one’s history.

Clearly we all have limits on our capacity to choose our values. The narrower the limits, the less power we have. Very narrow limits, pressing in on one’s choices of education, housing, etc. define oppression. Power and oppression are opposed.

The narrowing of limits on a community’s self-determination is an underlying characteristic, throughout the metropolis, of those negative conditions we often call urban. Crowding, crime, the public education crisis, health problems, are symptoms of powerlessness — not so much *individual* powerlessness (for many of us still direct our futures to a large extent), but *community* powerlessness, evident with respect to public education, personal safety, environmental quality, drug traffic, etc. There is a deepening continuum of powerlessness experienced by all metropolitan communities. Moreover, community effectiveness in achieving its values sooner or later shapes individual lives. Thus the theme of resourceful parish communities (described below) is for all those locales throughout the metropolis where power is an issue and especially for communities where powerlessness has become oppression.

The Goal

The goal appropriate to our metropolitan setting is a parish polity which fits the new “city limits”: certain conditions of life and the issue of power

The above is a position paper developed by a group of clergy in Deanery Six of the Diocese of Los Angeles, and put into form by the Rev. Charles Belknap, priest-in-charge of Holy Family Mission, North Hollywood, Cal., and the Rev. David Duncan, urban missionary.

(community and personal self-determination). This polity may be called a resourceful parish community: the local focus for transformation of metropolitan lives and conditions of life.

Specifically, six things resourceful parish communities would do are:

1. Ever and always give thanks and break bread, advancing the full sacramental life of our Anglican tradition;

2. Get to know their metropolitan environments, listening to their people and sharing their hopes;

3. Develop the power which actually creates new resources, i.e. the housing, schools, credit unions, arts workshops, farmers' markets, etc. which can provide the local church with institutional viability and its community with renewed livelihoods;

4. Discover the means for ongoing congregational change as metropolitan locales evolve and as culture itself changes through genetic research, mass media persuasions, international mass migrations, etc.;

5. Evangelize by offering hospitality; we ourselves are guests at the Lord's table, we can offer our churches and homes to *all* Jesus' honored guests in explicit invitation to communion.

6. Cultivate the arts, for "urban" has always meant sophisticated or urbane, and metropolitan ministry may well be filled with beauty and artistic excitement.

The Means

The means of resourceful parish community can be summarized in a short formula:

Gospel & Sacraments

+

Emergency Service

**Community Organizing
& Economic Development**

+

**Evangelism or Hospitality
Equals**

Resourceful Parish Community

Service, organizing, and development are a progression, linked by stewardship. To spend some resources providing emergency service is a necessary part of parish life. The offering of food, clothing, counseling, etc. enables others to have a greater capacity to chose their life histories. But to create further resources, to co-create with the Spirit, is the stewardship of the resourceful servant who returned the master's talents and more. (*Luke 19:11-27*) This co-creation has two aspects.

First, ecumenical community organizing aims at the achievement of power in that community — the capacity to make effective choices for Christian values in ordinary life. Issues taken up by an organization are all examples of self-determination, of people making a difference on *their* terms to *their* life histories. Emergency needs become community goals.

Second, economic development moves beyond organizing for values to the creation of resources expressing those values, especially in that economic sphere which is so much a part of our culture. A resourceful parish community builds the financial, housing, nutritional, cultural, and production opportunities through which the community can set the course of its own history.

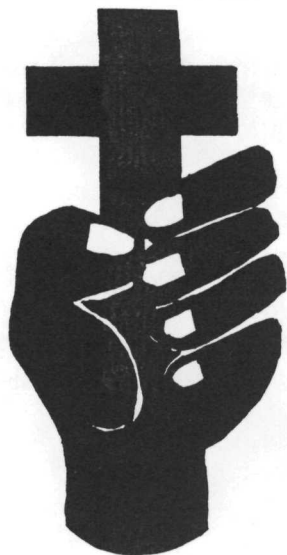
No one parish, much less one priest, can do organizing and economic development alone. Resourceful parish communities are necessarily ecumenically linked and facilitate lay ministry. Through the co-creation of livelihoods, Christians will be finding their vocations in direct connection with parish worship and charity.

Evangelism or hospitality is also a matter of power — the power of the Spirit. This is not "tacked on" to service, organizing, and development. Rather, evangelism is the bridge over which people move into the parish congregation while new resources are being created and as part of that process. The active offering of hospitality means explicit invitation to communion; it actually occurs in the co-creation of resources by which people make effective choices about their life histories, especially the choice of life over death; the choice for our Lord. Therefore, resourceful parish communities are spiritually intense. Life histories take a different turn — we are reborn — when the Spirit comes and we become resourceful stewards, building bridges to the church. At the practical level, the victory of new life won by our resurrected Lord cannot be separated from local victories of communities for their new lives. ■

Resources

The Diocese of Newark and its Department of Missions has developed a policy statement on urban parish revitalization. As the Diocese seeks urban parishes for renewal, it applies several criteria spelled out in the document. Those who would like to read about the diocese's two-year experience with the revitalization process can write for the statement to the Ven. James H. Gambrill, Vicar General, Cathedral House, 24 Rector St., Newark, N.J. 07102.

THE WITNESS magazine carried related articles on the urban church in February: "The Urban Church," "Choosing Between Two Gods," by Charles Belknap; and a series of articles on "The Urban Apocalypse" by Bishops John Burt, Otis Charles, John Spong, Paul Moore, John Krumm and Ted Scott in the March and April issues, with responses in the June issue by the Revs. James Lewis, Martha Blacklock, Joseph Pelham, Gib Winter, and Sister Helen Volkomener.



Is This Ministry?

by Nell Braxton Gibson

I am a Black woman, a wife, mother, homemaker. I have fought for human rights all my life. I volunteer my time as a member of the Board of Theological Education, the Episcopal Commission of Black Ministries and the Berkeley Board of Trustees at Yale Divinity School. I have served on the Episcopal Consortium for Theological Education in the Northeast (ECTENE), ISTEM (Inter Seminary Theological Education for Ministry) and the Bishop's Committee on Minority Unrest. I have been a vestry member, Sunday School teacher, parish secretary, GFS (Society for Girls) leader and camp counselor. I have counseled and taught seminary students, sung in church choirs, been active in Canterbury, and done hard physical labor building classrooms and a chapel in the African bush of Tanzania. I've tested Fair Housing Laws in California, registered Black

Nell Braxton Gibson lives in Manhattan. The Black Ministries Office of the Episcopal Church is planning to use this piece as part of its position papers, "The Black Church's Agenda for the '80s," to be published at a future date.

voters, picketed and been jailed in Georgia. I grew up in the South and spent my formative years living in Mississippi.

I am a Christian.

Sometimes when people (who know I don't work at a paid 9 to 5 job) ask me what I do, I tell them I am an unordained minister. They don't always believe me. Maybe it's because I don't always believe myself. Ministry is a difficult business which can leave one with many self doubts and feelings of inadequacy. Lay ministry is harder in many ways than ordained because it isn't always recognized.

There are times when no one asks me what I do and times when I go about the business of living without much thought of God or ministry. Like the day I left my sick 10-year old son home alone so I could attend a meeting. I promised I'd return as soon as I could and bring him a special hamburger lunch treat. But I ran into a friend on my way home and she was in tears, so I called home, explained why I'd be late and bought *her* lunch. She told me her ex-husband was late with the child support payment, her lover was leaving her for

another woman, there was an eviction notice on her front door and her children needed shoes. We talked of many things that day — our families, our responsibilities, our aging parents, our getting older. Toward the end of lunch we found ourselves singing the praises of Black women; women who have supported their men, nurtured their children — just hung in there and survived. We talked about the burden laid on us always to be strong, and how hard it was to live up to that image. We acknowledged that there are times when we want to be taken care of, held, loved and understood. We admitted to having cried during these times and then come out on top again, stronger and more determined than ever. I left her feeling a new surge of life.

I took Bert III his special hamburger treat then played backgammon with him. When 8-year-old Erika came home from school I drove her to track practice and worked on a book I am writing while she and her teammates got ready for the Colgate Women's Games. After track practice I drove several of the girls home and picked up my husband's suit at the cleaners for his forthcoming

business trip. Then I went home to prepare dinner, stopping to help Erika with homework. I gave young Bert another dose of medicine and ironed a week's supply of shirts for Bert's trip. Within minutes he came through the front door dejected and tired. He is Financial Vice-President of a non-profit organization and that day he'd discovered his projected budget was \$1 million over. His staff had to work overtime and he was going to have to work during the weekend. His boss was out of town and he would have to call her to break the news. After unleashing all his angry feelings, he turned to me accusingly and asked if I had forgotten to pick up his suit. I put my arms around him, told him I hadn't forgotten and suggested he change his clothes while I made two gin and tonics and played our favorite Chuck Mangione album.

I don't know a great deal about balancing budgets but I do know what administrative changes might help prevent a situation like that from recurring, so I suggested some. He agreed and by the end of the evening he had figured how to cut the deficit in half. He felt that with a good night's sleep he'd probably be able to present to the Board, figures close to his originally projected budget.

Several days later I was off to the mountains with the ISTEM seminary students for a retreat. I led a group exercise on racism which proved devastating to the Black and Hispanic students because of the attitudes expressed by many of their White colleagues. Heated discussions and verbal attacks left everyone upset. We came together after dinner again to wrestle with the problems. We ended the night with prayer but without having resolved the issues. Several of us poured drinks, others played ping pong, went for walks or sat around and talked. The other Black staff member and I asked a couple of students to join us in a game of bid whist. In the middle of the

game a Black male student used the word, "priestess" to describe one of the female students. Tempers were still running high, and she lashed out at him calling him a "closet sexist." He became defensive and verbally fought back — yelling about what society had done to him as a Black man and of all seminary had done to him by demanding an education which alienated him from his own people. He talked about the White minister he worked for who was continually saying he was aggressive, impatient, arrogant and too anxious to express the Black point of view. Tears welled in his eyes when he told how he had tried to commit suicide two years before. As he talked I took both his hands in mine and when he had finished I said, "I've been there." He was astonished! I told him I'd felt the same pain, known the same hurt, cried the same tears for all the same reasons. I had lived through it and he would too.

A few months later I found myself at a Board meeting asking whether or not the accounting firm we had chosen had any Blacks or women working as accountants, whether our donors were also supporting apartheid in South Africa, and why there were so few Blacks entering seminary. At another Board meeting a priest whom I love and care about got up and walked out in the middle of a report. I worried about him all the way home. When I had a few minutes I called to ask if everything was all right. He told me he'd been going through a painful divorce and was feeling low. He was the second priest I'd talked with in less than a year who was struggling through a divorce. I let both of them know of my deep concern, and told each I'd be praying for him.

In a book called *Monday's Ministries*, Nelvin Vos says that ministry is performed in the struggles of human life; that those struggles include:

Living with a hassle
Caring, no matter what the cost
Responding, with no strings

attached
Seeing others' needs
Being vulnerable
Being open
Perceiving suffering
Responding nonverbally

Our tradition as Blacks is to "tell the story." That is why I find illustrations better than any other means of sharing my ministry. I know Christ works through me, healing my brokenness as he helps me heal others. I know I am sustained through prayers as God helps me comfort and support others through prayer. I know I need the love and support of those around me in order to carry out my ministry and that support and love come from the people I serve most — my family and friends.

Two weeks after I underwent major surgery, the friend I took to lunch came to clean my home. She also cooked dinner for my family and kept me company while her own children ate at their home alone. She said she did it because she did not have money to buy me flowers or candy. My daughter, who taught me "The Rock" and the "Patty Duke," urged me to swallow my pride at her father's office party and get out on the dance floor to show them what she had taught me. She reminded me that I'm always telling her she must overcome her shyness and that I had to overcome mine too. My son took me to Central Park and helped me field baseballs so that I wouldn't be embarrassed by missing easy pop-ups when I pitched for his Saturday ball game. My husband leaves love notes pinned to my pillow when he goes away on trips, reaches out to me with understanding when I am discouraged and strongly supports my independence by encouraging me to be my own person, do my own thing, live my life fully. That is how they minister to me.

The true meaning of ministry is service. The meaning of *laos* is people. I am a lay minister because I am one of the people who serves. ■

The Black Church in the '80s:

A Call to Rebellion ... and the Cross

by Julius E. Del Pino

To contemplate the future of the Black Church in America is fully to understand its origins; to comprehend the tenets upon which it was established; to recognize its centrality to the black experience. The progress of black people in this country from the era of slavery — the period from which

the black religious consciousness had its origins — is a chronicle of pathos, despair, courage, loyalty, defeat and triumph inextricably woven into the fabric of a people bound together by distinct physical characteristics, common cultural heritage and an oppression virtually unequalled in

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human history.

The early Englishmen's view was that the Africans' religious condition distinguished them as "heathen" by English standards and accounted for an antipathy toward converting black people which persisted for more than a century. This attitude was further fostered by the puritanical notion of depravity of humankind and the selectivity of salvation. Paradoxically, the concept of racial superiority drew much strength from Christian doctrine. This stance toward blacks was gradually replaced with the more universalist Christian view that all should be given spiritual care while on earth, and that conversion finally be made a priority for all. The resultant imposition of religious ideas upon social practice had the effect of blacks entering churches in increasing numbers — some gaining reputations as preachers and claiming, along with some of their white counterparts, that the word of God declared all people brothers and sisters and that Christian theology demanded love, justice and equality.

In light of the historical facts, let us examine these decrees two centuries later. Let us assess where we have been, detect where we are and, finally, determine where we are going.

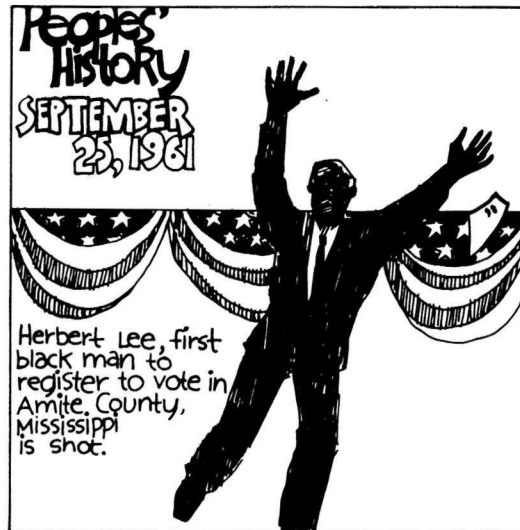
The black community, historically, has leaned heavily upon the church as that institution, peculiarly independent, which establishes its mores, determines its life styles, formulates its opinions and articulates its societal needs. How does the church measure up, then, in raising the moral consciousness of a country which is politicized to the point where its citizens are more concerned about matters of the economy, military strength and the national image than about programs and services designed to meet the basic human needs of America's poor and powerless? Has the voice of the Black Church been raised when the so-called "Moral Majority" of

this nation is allowed to forsake Christian social principles for limited self-interest? How sinister is it when a religious conglomerate can cite pressing moral issues that do not recognize poverty and hunger as Christian concerns and goes unchallenged?

Some political analysts evaluate the results of the recent national election as a nostalgic wish to return to a time that was. This very desire makes it critical for black Christian leadership to seize upon the opportunity to develop a Christian strategy for living meaningfully in the midst of chaos. No generation has lived free from problems and suffering; and ours will be no exception. Jesus promised to be with us and for us despite tribulation. From the world, we may expect sorrow, anxiety and danger, but God's presence gives us vision, compassion and hope.

The racial violence that befell Miami, Atlanta and several other cities has resulted in renewed efforts by black pastors to cooperate in the attempt to "heal dissension and promote the interests of ghetto dwellers in most big cities." As the late Dr. Martin Luther King so sagely predicted, "the more there are riots, the more repressive action will take place, and the more we face the danger of a Right-wing takeover and eventually a fascist society."

Salvation from such an end comes from God's grace as revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Christ, and we experience that grace manifested in the yearning and courage to be whole. God is active in history to convict us of and free us from the shackles of apathy, greed and complacency. Our role as black religious leaders in the '80s is to stimulate the church to move toward the reality of a ministry to and in the world "with" all of God's people, and particularly people of color and poor people, exhorting the church not only to put its own house in order but to confront oppression in all dimensions



of human activity.

The costly, over-crowded, substandard housing facilities available to the poor of this nation are, and will continue to be, the breeding ground for violence and racial unrest. Poverty and second class citizenship result in the development of a permanent underclass. As black people continue to surge into urban areas, choosing the squalor of the city to the more familiar rural life, there will be no abatement of the problem.

In the eyes of the white majority, violent crime has become synonymous with "ethnic minorities" and has revitalized extremist groups whose sole reason for being is to promote hatred and repression. The Ku Klux Klan has gained new respectability by replacing hoods with three piece suits and ties, and is becoming increasingly successful in recruiting new members through its opposition to such issues as school busing, loss of political power by the white population and welfare. In some areas, this group has offered to provide arms to "good white citizens" recommending that they begin a campaign of shooting young gang members in order to "handle the problem." In other communities, "hate lines" have been established, on which there are recorded messages

encouraging "white pride and solidarity" and delivering slanderous comments about various ethnic groups. The phrase "reverse discrimination" is another ploy on the part of many whites to perpetuate their own warped sense of identity.

In circumstances such as these, we must not luxuriate in religious piety. Our belief is costly and our faith high risk. It is not enough to proclaim the Gospel, the church must bear tangible witness to it. Human dignity and integrity are at stake — their preservation must be inviolate! The church must not be absent from the struggles of the poor, blessing entrenched power and ignoring issues of economic justice.

Black religious leadership has no alternative other than to make a relentless effort to regain its influence among those for whom hope has ceased to exist. Leadership must bring purpose in uncertain times; it must gather the people of God into meaningful worship; and it must seek to transcend the divisions of the church and the world in ways which transform and renew the spirit of those people who have eyes to see but have chosen not to because of political favors and false promises.

Church leaders must remain vigilant, determined and well informed on crucial issues. A Carnegie Institute study in 1979 determined that we "are in danger of developing a permanent underclass" by virtue of what is becoming a dual system of education for the poor and the non-poor. Twenty-six years after the landmark Supreme Court decision of 1954, the question of "separate but equal" is still being debated while generations of black youth continue to be deprived of equal educational opportunity and other benefits which may guarantee them possibilities for human development. John Hope Franklin in his book *From Slavery to Freedom* suggests "that the treatment of the Negro is America's

outstanding denial of its own profession of faith in the equality of (humankind)."

Stereotypes, including beliefs that blacks are biologically inferior to whites and are ignorant, dirty, lazy, pleasure-seeking and sexually loose still prevail and must be counteracted unceasingly by a strong and unified protest in order to assure that black people might have the opportunity to develop a self-concept in which there is esteem and fullness of life. Frequently, racial ethnic minority groups accept the views of them held by dominant groups, especially when they have occupied a low status for generations and see no prospect of equality.

Today, black women are perceived and related to as objects of pleasure and ornaments of beauty by black men as well as white men. Indeed, this is an indication of the pervasiveness of sexism and the tragedy of the adoption of white values and attitudes by the black community. In the name of God, the black church takes a so-called "untenable" and irreconcilable stance in relation to women. Many declare, as do our white brothers, that "we need women in ministry but our congregations are not ready to accept them." "We need time to prepare laity for such risks and challenges." "There are not enough good appointments for black men much less for black women." And so the rationales continue to be echoed across the church without realizing that these same pronouncements have been and still are said by whites to denounce and deprive black men of alternatives and options within the church. For black religious leadership to be passively accepting of these attitudes is, by default, to be in concurrence.

Is it any wonder that so many are wandering without meaning and direction? The American Dream has deteriorated into a life void of feeling, congeniality and authentic appreciation of human worth and dignity. It has

become a life where the cost of a product, size and quantity are the values which are prized by culture. These same values define and to no small degree determine how the black religious experience is interpreted and communicated in an age where forms of indigenous religion are being abated and ignored.

The church, and more particularly the Black Church in the United States, must deal as candidly as it knows how with its responsibility to the poor and the oppressed. It cannot depend on, and neither should it expect, whites to design and develop strategy for alleviating poverty and depressed conditions in the black community — the past has taught us that! Increasingly, the Black Church is being questioned and challenged by its own constituents as well as by those who have chosen to leave. There can only be one understanding of faith in the Black Church if it is genuinely to promote justice and mercy for God's people. The Black Church cannot gather in the name of Jesus when its leaders in reality cling to politics, pious traditions and exalted titles, as a way of promoting and advocating their self-interests.

Now that some blacks have reached a plateau of acceptability, influence and affluence within the church it becomes increasingly difficult and risky for them to confront the drift of the church. Instead of criticizing dogma which is oppressive to a large portion of the human population, we seek too often our own positions of authority with the elite. Instead of scrutinizing basic assumptions of the church which place a few at the top and masses at the bottom of the hierarchy, we exhaust ourselves struggling to get a few more to the top.

Once again, as in the Old Testament account, we, the women and men of God, are called to lead the "Exodus" — to be the prophetic voice of this nation and to call our church and the world

into accountability. We must decry social, economic and spiritual repression; we must actively denounce those elements in our world which tend to promote violence and hatred; we must stand at the vanguard in observable and unequivocal support for justice and human rights for all persons. The church must live its faith and stand prepared to serve the people of God now! Time is not on our side. Church leaders cannot afford to pretend that they do not have power. Silence implies that we assent to things as they are. The salvific mission of the church in the world must be actualized with a profound sense of integrity.

In the words of William Howard, president of the National Council of Churches of Christ, (see THE WITNESS, April 1980):

The Black Church which teaches that upward class mobility, the acquisition of things, and electoral politics are the best signs of hope against the lingering ravages of slavery, is a Black Church which is doomed to be judged by its own sermons.

That is precisely where our whole Black Church tradition hangs in the balance: will it continue to preach the coming of a new day without taking up its cross and ushering the new day in?

Our challenge is actively to confront a socio-economic system, as well as a religious-philosophical system, which keeps poor people, and more particularly, people of color, impoverished, dependent and inundated with despair. Let the 1980s find us rebellious in the name of the One who lived, died, and lives again. Let us be remembered more for the judgements that we make in Christ's name than for those we fail to make! Let us be remembered more for the battles we lose than for those we refuse to fight! ■

Face to Face With a Crucified People

by Julio Torres

This summer I went to Nicaragua to visit the largest Salvadoran refugee camp in the country in Leon, a provincial city 90 kilometers west of Managua. The camp is named after the martyred Archbishop of El Salvador, Monsignor Oscar Arnulfo Romero.

My request to share the life of the refugees in the camp for several days baffled the authorities, but perhaps because I am a Salvadoran, they acquiesced. I was given a small room in a barracks which also housed a small clinic, a kindergarten, two elementary grades, and an adult literacy class. From the beginning, I clarified my role as not only that of a journalist, but also that of a person preparing for the ministry.

The first evening, Mariano, the acting administrator, assembled a group to participate in a "Celebration of the

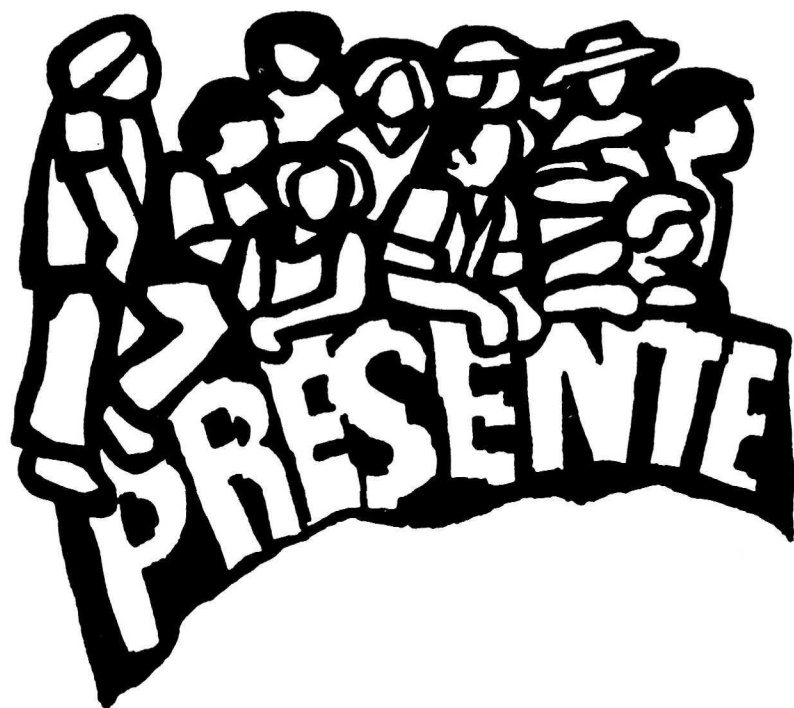
Word." He had impressed me immediately as a bright and dynamic young man in charge of camp business and of stimulating the people. The camp had approximately 300 refugees, most of whom are *campesinos* (of peasant background). But there were others from middle and lower middle urban classes as well. Those participating in the Celebration were all *campesinos*. They read from the Scriptures, commented on them with great insight and wisdom, applied them to their real life situations, and finished with prayer. While attending that celebration, I felt I was present at a ritual making history in Latin America.

The recent interest in the Western Hemisphere in Base Communities (*Comunidades de Base*) has inspired many to take a closer look at the way these communities are instituted among the poor and frequently illiterate population. In them, the people through prayer and reflection on the Scriptures begin to form bonds and identify and find solutions to common

problems. In a relatively short time in Latin America, these communities have become a force for change and improvement of the lives of the poor. In fact, persecution of the participants in base communities is growing and leaders are often arrested and subjected to torture. Sometimes they "disappear". Watching Mariano and the others reading and commenting on the Word with such insight made me realize why the Base Communities suffer repression. They function as instruments of liberation and "conscientization" (becoming conscious of one's oppression). Such activities attempting to meet the needs of the majority of the people in Latin America are labeled "subversive" and repressed.

That night, before falling asleep, I heard gentle voices of the elementary school children singing the Sandinista hymn, "Onward as we struggle against the Yankee, enemy of humanity." Was this indoctrination? Was this blind anti-Americanism? Or, is it the only way these people can see the policies of a

Julio Torres is presently a senior studying for the priesthood at Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, Mass. He wrote this article for THE WITNESS after visiting Nicaragua in June.



government which has co-operated to drive them from their land, forcing them to seek asylum in other countries?

Before going to Leon, I had spoken with Placido, a Spanish priest who told me about some Roman Catholic religious women who worked at the camp. I met Sister Gladys and Sister Odilia during their customary rounds of visitation. They belong to the Little Sisters of Charles de Foucauld, a religious order inspired by the life of the French holy man who lived in the Sahara sharing the life of the Nomads. Their spirituality consists primarily in sharing the life of the poor wherever they are.

Sister Gladys is a Salvadoran and Sister Odilia is from France. They conduct sewing classes, prepare young people for teaching Christian doctrine, mediate disputes between families and most of all, try to be present as friends to everybody. They lead a life of prayer amidst the people.

My second day at the camp, a group of people volunteered to tell their stories. We sat with the tape recorder, under the shadow of a big tree. Several

men and women, some of them widows, spoke. They were very consistent about one aspect: They had fled their land and homes because of persecution by the Salvadoran Army. Older men and women cried as they told me how their relatives had been tortured and killed, dying horrible deaths. Bodies were left as bait, and were sometimes seen rotting and eaten by dogs, since any attempt by families to rescue their beloved for proper burial is punishable by death. Sometimes their emotions so overwhelmed them during the telling of these stories they were unable to continue.

Men told how military operations were carried out. Entire villages would be surrounded by combined military and paramilitary forces then attacked, with indiscriminate killing of men, women, and children — all civilians. Additional military outposts were often established to carry out periodical military operations against the people. I was reminded of Jesuit theologian Jon Sobrino's words, "This is not just repression; we are facing the extermination of an entire people."

I was astounded by the incomprehensible capacity for sadism exhibited by the torturers, themselves mostly *campesinos*. I could not but ponder the mystery of evil revealed by the cruelty some humans perform on their fellow humans — the forces that are at work in such iniquity and destruction. Chopped limbs, genitals and breasts; gouged eyes; crushed testicles, rape followed by impaling and dismemberment. I was face to face with a crucified people. That night, my heart physically ached in pain that had enveloped me as I listened to the agony they related. It was a time of most painful, authentic prayer, "*From the depths I cry to you, O Lord*" — from the depths of the misery of the world incarnated in the suffering of my sisters and brothers.

The next few days I spent in more informal dialog and in participating in the daily and weekly activities of the camp. I began to realize that these people were already anticipating, in a way, the type of life they hoped to live once our country is liberated. Nicaragua offers them peace and security and a space where they can carry out constructive activities and prepare for the anxiously awaited return to the homeland. All of the refugees with whom I talked appreciated and were thankful for Nicaraguan hospitality. But they were all waiting to go back to El Salvador as soon as the military dictatorship falls — the only condition that can permit their return. They are not economic, but political refugees.

The refugees for the most part are industrious people, who suffer from not being able to find jobs. They were anxiously waiting to be hired during the approaching cotton harvest. Nevertheless, they are busy at the camp — a place which bustles with activity all day long. The refugees did complain about some middle class "senoritos" (those considered well-to-do) whom they referred to as parasites, who did

not want to get dirty and cooperate with camp work. While I was there, the refugees were busy planting trees for shade, building new latrines and school benches, teaching literacy classes, catechism, or helping with the kindergarten. Others tended a small garden. There was also time for sports and practicing and playing soccer with local Nicaraguan teams.

Young people also take part in the life of the camp. I was invited to attend the rehearsal of a play which they called a "sociodrama." When I said that I had been in theater, they asked that I contribute ideas, which I did. The play was a love story between a guerrilla woman and a National Guardsman. The theme was love triumphant over deception and evil. Their dramatic talent was considerable, and it was a fulfilling, constructive afternoon. What a difference, I thought from the bored consumer-oriented teenagers I have met in the United States.

Another unexpected surprise was to find an old friend who was serving as a volunteer physician in the camp. Ricardo and I had been close friends and neighbors. One day I just came upon him in front of the dispensary. We shared memories and news about mutual friends. That night I was hit by the reality that my country was torn apart by a war caused by the greed of a few and orchestrated by those in power in the United States. To quote the eloquent Archbishop Romero, "The cause of evil here is the oligarchy, a small nucleus of families who do not care about the hunger of the people . . . to maintain and increase their margin of profits, they repress the people."

During the few days I spent at the refugee camp it was evident to me that the refugees were already living a new life and anticipating a new society. They were striving to create a "new person", dispossessed of egotism and self-centeredness. Their Christian orientation was alive in their hospitality, their concern, and the love

with which they related. Visits from priests who identified with the people were significant to them, but they were not dependent upon the priests. There was a clarity about their own priesthood



and of the necessity to carry on by themselves.

It was the finest example of empowerment I have ever witnessed. Here, I saw the work of many dedicated priests and religious men and women who opted for teaching the people how to assume leadership roles and how to carry on themselves instead of remaining dependent on the hierarchy as advocates and ministrators of ecclesiastical goods and services. The people *are* the new church in Latin America. And they are a beacon for the people of all nations. Their community spirit and effort to build solidarity and cooperation is a living paradigm and parable of the new order they are awaiting. It is a living out of their hope.

They made another message clear to me before I left. Since I lived in the United States, they wanted me to tell the people how important it is that the U.S. Government stop helping the military in El Salvador. Their knowledge of the solidarity movement in the United States was not extensive; they really did not know how much support they had from people there. Yet they knew it was not enough. I felt charged with a responsibility, with a task. "Please tell them," the refugees said to me. "Tell them what we have gone through and that they have to stop it."

I felt very sad when it came time to leave. While it was possible to stay longer, I did not want to be an additional burden to them. They were feeding me with their best food, and taking care of me with great generosity. There are shortages to be sure, but the camp at Leon is also a sterling example of the solidarity of the Nicaraguan revolution, which in spite of shortages, manages to share what it has with the Salvadoran brothers and sisters in need. Above all, the refugee camp is living proof of the spirit of a people determined to create something new by transforming the oppression, violence and pain into a reality of sharing, cooperation and peace. ■

Part 2

Theology of Pro-Choice: A Feminist Perspective

by Beverly Wildung Harrison

The greatest *strategic* problem of pro-choice advocates is the widespread assumption that “pro-lifers” have a monopoly on moral factors which ought to enter into decisions about abortion. “Moral legitimacy” seems to adhere to *their* position in part because traditionalists have an array of religio-moral terminology at their command which the sometimes more secular proponents of choice lack. But those who would displace women’s power of choice by the power of the state and/or the medical profession do not deserve the aura of moral sanctity. However, we must do our homework if we are to dispel this myth of moral superiority. I want to reiterate that professional Christian ethicists and moral philosophers give support to the so-called “pro-life” side of the debate not merely by equating fetal or prenatal life with human personhood in a simplistic way, but also by failing

seriously to rethink the issue in an appropriate historical context. (See July WITNESS.)

What we need to remember is that even in Roman Catholic natural law ethics, the definition of the status of fetal life has shifted over time and that the status of prenatal life involves a moral judgment, not a scientific one. The question is properly posed this way: What status are we morally wise to predicate to prenatal human life, given that the fetus is not yet a fully existent human being? Those raised under natural law have been required for the last 90 years to believe that a human being exists from conception, when the ovum and sperm merge. This answer from *one* tradition has had far wider impact on our culture than most people recognize. However, other Christians come from traditions that do not offer (and could not offer, given their conception of the structure of the church as moral community) a definitive answer to this question.

Even so, some contemporary Protestant medical ethicists, fascinated by the recent discoveries in genetics (DNA, etc.) have all but sacralized the moment in which the genetic code is implanted as the moment of “humanization” — which leaves them close to the traditional Roman position.



Protestant male theologians have long let their enthrallment with science lead to a sacralization of specific exciting scientific discoveries, usually to the detriment of theological and moral clarity. (*Moral* here is defined as that which makes for the self-respect and well-being of human persons and their environment.) In any case, I would like to make two responses to the claim that the fetus in early stages of development is a human life or, more dubiously, a human person.

(1) Whatever one’s judgment about the moral status of the fetus, it cannot be argued that it deserves greater moral standing in analysis than does the pregnant woman. This matter of assessing the value of prenatal life is where morally sensitive people will make differing judgments. What I cannot believe is that any morally sensitive person would fail to value the woman’s full existent life less than they value the life of a fetus. Most women can become pregnant and carry fetal life to term many, many times in their lifetimes. The distinctly human power is not our biological capacity to bear children, but our power actively to love, to nurture, to care for each other and to shape each other’s existence in cultural and social interaction. To equate a biological process with full normative humanity is

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.

crass biological reductionism, and such reductionism is never practiced in religious ethics except where women's lives and well-being are involved.

(2) A second point is that even though prenatal life, as it moves toward biological individuation of human form, has value, the equation of abortion with murder is always dubious. And, the equation of abortion with homicide — the killing of human life — should be carefully weighed. We should also remember that we live in a world where men extend other men wide moral range in relationship to justifiable homicide. For example, the just war tradition has legitimated widespread forms of killing in war, and Christian ethicists have often extended great latitude to rulers and those in power in making choices about killing human beings. Would that such moralists would extend equal benefit of a doubt to any woman facing life-crushing psychological and political-economic resources to support her childbearing! Men, daily, make life-determining decisions concerning radiation, for example, which affects the well-being of the fetus, and our society expresses no significant opposition, even when such decisions do widespread genetic damage. When we argue for a woman's right to choose an abortion, moral outrage rises.

The so-called "pro-life" position also gains support by invoking the general principle of "respect for human life" as foundational to its morality in a way that suggests that the pro-choice advocates are unprincipled. I have already noted that pro-choice advocates have every right to claim the same moral principle, and that this debate, like most debates that are morally acrimonious, is in no sense about basic moral principles. I do not believe that there is any clearcut conflict of principle in this very deep, very bitter controversy.

It needs to be stressed that we all have an absolute obligation to honor any moral principle that seems, after

rational deliberation, to be sound. This is the one "absolutism" appropriate to ethics. However, there are often several moral principles relevant to a decision and many ways to relate a given principle. But for most Right-to-Lifers, only one principle has moral standing in this argument. Admitting only one principle to one's process of moral reasoning means that a range of other moral values is slighted. Right-to-Lifers are also moral absolutists in the sense that they will admit only one possible meaning or application of the principle they invoke. Both of these types of absolutism obscure moral debate and lead to less, not more, rational deliberation. The principle of respect for human life is one that we should all honor, but we must also recognize that

"If we are to be a society genuinely concerned both to enhance women's well-being and to minimize the necessity of abortions, thereby avoiding the danger of becoming 'an abortion culture,' what kind of a society must we become?"

this principle often comes into conflict with other valid moral principles in the process of making real, live-world decisions. Understood in an adequate way, this principle can be restated to mean that we should treat what falls under a reasonable definition of human life as having sanctity or intrinsic moral value. But even when this is clear, other principles are needed to help us choose between two intrinsic values; i.e., between prenatal life and the pregnant woman's life.

Another general moral principle from which we cannot exempt our actions is the principle of justice, or right relations between persons and between groups of persons and communities. Another relevant principle is respect for all that supports

human life; i.e., the natural environment. As any person knows who thinks deeply about morality, moral conflicts, as often as not, are due not to ignoring moral principles, but to the fact that different principles lead to conflicting implications for action or are selectively related to decisions.

One further proviso on this issue of principles in moral reasoning: there are several distinct theories among religious ethicists and moral philosophers as to what the function of principles ought to be. One group believes that moral principles are for the purpose of terminating the process of moral reasoning. Hence, if I tell you always to "respect human life," I am telling you to stop reflection. By contrast, others believe that it is better to refer to principles (broad, generalized moral criteria) than to use mere rules (narrow, specific moral instruction); that principles can function to open up our processes of reasoning rather than closing them. A major difference in the moral debate on abortion then, is that some believe that to invoke the principle of respect for human life settles the matter, stops debate and precludes the single, simple act of abortion. By contrast, many of us believe that the breadth of the principle opens us up to reconsider what the essential moral quality of human life is all about.

Two other concerns related to our efforts to make a strong moral case for women's right to procreative choice need to be touched upon.

The first has to do with the problems the Christian tradition creates when we try to make clear why women's right to control their bodies is an urgent and substantive moral claim. One of Christianity's greatest weaknesses is neglect of respect for the physical body. Tragically, women, more than men, are expected in Christian teaching never to take their own well-being as a moral consideration. I want to stress then, that we have no moral tradition in Christianity which starts with body-

space, or body-right, as a basic condition of moral relations. Hence, many Christian ethicists simply do not get the point when we speak of women's right to bodily integrity. They seem to think that such talk is a disguise for women to plead self-indulgence.

We must articulate our view that body-right is a basic moral claim and also remind our hearers that there is no analogy among other human activities to women's procreative power. Pregnancy is a unique human experience. In any social relation, body-space must be respected or nothing deeply human or moral can be created. The social institutions most similar to compulsory pregnancy in their moral violations of body-space are chattel slavery or peonage. These institutions distort the moral relations of the community and deform that community over time. (Witness racism in the U.S.) Coercion of women, through enforced sterilization or enforced pregnancy, has great distortive potential, and cuts to the heart of our capacity for moral social relations in much the same way. As we should recognize, given our violence-prone society, people learn violence at an early age when women's lives are violated!

Even so, we must be careful when we make the case for our right to bodily integrity, not to confuse right with mere liberties. To claim that we have a moral right to procreative choice does not mean that we believe that women can exercise that right free of all moral claims from the community. For example, we need to teach girl children that childbearing is not a purely capricious, individualistic matter, and we need to challenge the assumption that a woman who enjoys motherhood should always have as many children as she and her mate wish, regardless of the consequences upon the community. Population self-control is a moral issue, though more so in high-consuming, affluent societies like our own than in

nations where a modest, simple and less wasteful life-style obtains.

A final point which needs to be mentioned is the need, as we work politically for a pro-choice social policy, to avoid the use of morally objectionable arguments to mobilize support for our side of the issue. One can get a lot of political mileage in U.S. society by using covert racist and classist appeals ("abortion lowers the cost of welfare roles or reduces illegitimacy," or "paying for abortions saves the tax payers money in the long run"). Sometimes it is argued that good politics is more important than good morality and that one should use whatever arguments work to gain



political support. I do not believe that these "crassly utilitarian" arguments turn out, in the long run, to be good politics — for they are costly to our sense of polis and of community. But even if they were effective in the short run, I am doubly sure that on the issue of the right to choose abortion, good morality doth a good political struggle make. I believe, deeply, that moral right is on the side of the struggle for the freedom and self-respect of women, especially poor and non-white women, and on the side of developing social policy which assures that every child born can be certain to be a wanted child. Issues of justice are those that deserve the deepest moral caretaking as we

develop a political strategy.

Only when people see that they cannot prohibit safe, legal, elective surgical abortion without violating the conditions of well-being for the vast majority of women, especially those most socially vulnerable because of historic patterns of oppression, will the effort to impose a selective, abstract "morality of the sanctity of human life" upon all of us cease. This is a moral battle par excellence, and whenever we forget that we make it harder to reach that group most important to the cause of procreative choice — those women who have never suffered from childbearing pressures, who have not yet put this issue into a larger historical context, and who reverence women's historical commitment to childbearing. We will surely not reach them with pragmatic appeals to the taxpayer's wallet! To be sure, we cannot let such women go unchallenged as they support ruling-class ideology that the state should control procreation. But they will not change their politics until they see that pro-choice is grounded in a deeper, tougher, more caring moral vision than the political option they now endorse.

Most people fail to understand that in ethics we need, provisionally, to separate our reflection on the morality of specific acts from questions about how we express our moral values within social institutions (i.e. social policy). When we do that, the "morality of abortion" appears in a very different light. Focusing attention away from the single act of abortion to the larger historical context enables us to make clear where we most differ from the "pro-lifers"; i.e., in our total scepticism that a state-enforced anti-abortion policy could ever have the intended "pro-life" consequences they claim.

We must always insist that the objective social conditions which make women, and children already born, highly vulnerable can only be worsened by a social policy of compulsory

pregnancy. However one judges the moral quality of the individual act of abortion (and here, differences among us exist) it is still necessary to distinguish between how one judges the act of abortion morally and what one believes a society-wide policy on abortion should be. We must not let those who have moral scruples against the personal act ignore the fact that a just social policy must include active concern for enhancement of women's well-being and for policies which would in fact make abortions less necessary. To anathematize abortion when the social and material conditions for control of pro-creation do not exist is to "blame the victim," not to address the deep dilemmas of female existence in this society.

Even so, there is no reason for those of us who celebrate pro-creative choice as a great moral good to pretend that abortion is ever a very desirable means of expressing that choice. I know of no one on the pro-choice side who has confused the desirability of the availability of abortion with the celebration of the act itself. We all have every reason to hope that safer, more reliable means of contraception may be found. Furthermore, we should be emphatic that our social policy demands include higher standards of health care for women and children, better prenatal care, reduction of unnecessary surgery on women's reproductive systems, increased research to improve contraception, etc. Nor should we draw back from criticizing a health-care delivery system which exploits women. The abortion industry thrives on the profitability of abortion, but women are not to blame for that.

A feminist pro-life position is a position which demands social conditions that support women's full, self-respecting right to procreative choice, including the right not to be sterilized against their wills, the right to choose abortion as a birth-control

means of last resort, and the right to a pre-natal and post-natal health care system which will reduce infant mortality and infant and maternal illness, and which will also reduce the now widespread trauma of having to deliver one's babies in a rigid, impersonal, health care system.

The so-called "pro-lifers" do best politically when we allow them to keep the discussion narrowly focused on the morality of the act of abortion and on the status of the fetus. We do best politically when we make the deep-level connections between the full context of this issue in women's lives, including a society's dubious patterns of justice for women.

Here as elsewhere it is well to remember that it has been traditional Catholic natural law ethics which has most stressed a distinction between the morality of an individual act on the one hand and the policies which produce the optional moral social order on the other. The strength of this position is probably reflected in that even now most polls show that slightly more Catholics than Protestants believe it unwise for the state to attempt to regulate abortion. In the past, Catholics, more than Protestants, have been wary of using the state as an instrument of moral crusade. Tragically, by taking an untypical approach on this issue, the Roman Catholic hierarchy may be risking the loss of the deepest wisdom of their ethical tradition precisely by failing to acknowledge a distinction between their moral teaching on abortion and what is a desirable social policy to minimize abortion, as well as overemphasizing this issue to the neglect of other social justice concerns.

If we are to be a society genuinely concerned both to enhance women's well-being and to minimize the necessity of abortions, thereby avoiding the danger over time of becoming "an abortion culture," what kind of a society must we become? It is here that

the moral clarity of the feminist analysis becomes most obvious.

How may we reduce the number of abortions due to contraceptive failure? By placing greater emphasis on medical research in this area, by requiring that producers of contraceptives behave more responsibly, and by developing patterns of institutional life which place as much emphasis on male responsibility for procreation and long term care and nurturance of children as on female responsibility.

How may we reduce the number of abortions due to childish ignorance about sexuality among girl children or adult women and their mates? By adopting a widespread program of sex education, and by supporting institutional policies which teach male and female children alike that girls are as fully capable as boys of enjoying sex and that both must share moral responsibility for avoiding pregnancy except when they have decided, as a deliberative moral act, to have a child.

How would we reduce the necessity of abortion due to sexual violence against women in and out of marriage? By challenging vicious male-generated myths that women exist primarily to meet the sexual needs of men; that women are "by nature" those who are "really fulfilled" only through their procreative powers. We would teach feminist history, as the truthful history of the race, stressing that historic patterns of patriarchy were morally wrong and that a humane or moral society would be a fully non-sexist society.

The technological developments which may reduce the need for abortions are not entirely within our control, but the socio-moral ethos which makes abortion frequent is within our power to change. And we would begin to create such conditions by adopting a thorough-going feminist program for society. Nothing less, I submit, expresses genuine "respect for *all* human life." ■

Letters . . . Continued from page 2

on the villages of Deir Yassin on April 2, 1948 and the earlier attacks on Al-Sheikh and Sa'sa' in January and February of that year, and the continuing conflict with Zionists filled them with terror and fear for their lives.

About the Jews who were driven out of their homes in Arab lands: At the time of partition there were about 400,000 Jews in Palestine, about one-third of the population. In 1881 there were only about 25,000. In 50 years the Jewish population rose by 375,000. Most of these were immigrants and their children. The pressure on the land of this many immigrants was indeed part of the problem of Palestine. But they were not indigenous Palestinians. Those who left Arab territory went to Israel where they were citizens.

I am a Christian, and assume that requires me to be open to those who I am told are my enemies as well as to those thought to be friends.

I was interested in the question Mr. White raises: How *can* we extend the hand of friendship to those who are known to use terror tactics? After the bombing of Beirut this July we might ask the same question of Israel. What I tried to indicate in the article is this: The charge of terrorism, founded or unfounded, is not sufficient grounds for denying the validity of the supposed "enemy's" claims for justice. In that sense, terrorism is a tactic — desperate, to be sure — to cause one to take notice. Too often, of course, we take notice only of the rage. The article proposed that we look beyond the rage to the source of injustice.

Tu quoque is perhaps inadmissible as an argument in ethics, but I am not trying to condone the wrong. Mr. White is correct: Terrorism is never in itself a good. It is always a means, a tactic, whose ultimate value is veiled behind the immediate horror. God, I wish it were over.

To Paul Nathanson: I don't contend that Christians have the right to protect Judaism. That *would* be condescending. I wrote that I am supportive of the effort to protect Judaism from the excesses of a secular and European

movement. It is partially the fact that we Western, European peoples have been clearly oppressive to Jews that makes the attraction of a Jewish State so great. I am suggesting that Western Christians have been caught up in the ideology of Zionism as a way out of our collective guilt. I consider that a great wrong. Christians, too, sometimes identify *place* and God's Kingdom as one and the same. The radical right and its worship of America is as wrong as the "substratum" of Zionism which I believe misuses the true spiritual longings of the Jewish people as a justification for any and all actions of the State of Israel.

I don't read the present into the past. In the near present we observe the rapid growth of immigrant European settlers in Palestine and see that injustice was in the making. The decision to found the State of Israel, a state that has become more and more theocratic, was made with no regard for the wishes of the non-immigrant peoples of Palestine.

And who, in modern Israel, will be driven into the sea? All persons, including Christians, followers of Islam, or non-Orthodox Jews who think that a democratic state ought to stand respectful of, but cowering before, no particular religious doctrines.

Mr. Nathanson suggests prayer rather than partisan politics. What makes him think that prayer that cries for justice is not partisan? Or that political action that serves justice is not prayer in the full flower of its being said and answered? Mr. Nathanson thinks I am partisan to the Palestinians and the PLO. He is wrong. I am partisan for something too little seen in Palestine or elsewhere. I am for the establishment of societies free and at peace, and for reconciliation.

The Rev. Mark Harris
Newark, Del.

Sexism Fundamental

The March issue of THE WITNESS arrived the same week that five young black men raped a black woman, a white male had raped seven elderly women, I received a letter from a white woman raped by a white man and attended a

prayer service for the rape and murder of the women in El Salvador. One does not need great perceptive or analytical skills to conclude that *sexism is more important and more fundamental than other forms of oppression*.

Rape is the logical conclusion of sexism and as long as those men oppressed by racism rape their own women, and the women of the oppressed; as long as those men oppressed by classism rape their own women, and the women of the oppressed; the intrinsic evil of sexism becomes very fundamental!

Perhaps the revolution is that we women will free ourselves from the chains of sexism. Here's to breaking the evil chains.

Rosalie Muschal-Reinhardt
Fairport, N.Y.

Liked March Issue

We subscribe to THE WITNESS in order to be aware of how the "other half" thinks. As active Episcopalians, presently in a small rural parish, we find the manner of expressing many of the ideas espoused quite irritating. However, we found the excerpts of comments by Bishops Burt, Charles and Spong as presented in your March issue to be outstanding.

Irving S. Heath
Ft. Morgan, Col.

From Episcopal Church

My first issue of THE WITNESS arrived yesterday noon and I have spent two hours since lunch today reading, thinking, and rejoicing. What a joy this magazine is going to be! I didn't know how I was going to get back "in touch" with current worldwide Christian thinking and devotional reading and Bible study.

The April issue is manna. And I didn't dream it would come from the Episcopal Church!

Katherine M. Hasbrouck
UCC & Society of Friends
Norfolk, Conn.

Worker Critiques

After reading your April issue, especially the letters column, I must comment, first, on the plant closure letter by Claude Spilman, Jr. and the response by Richard Gillett: I'm a recently laid off auto worker. Prior to that I worked as a machinist and in textile plants as a weaver and loomfixer. I also was quite active in three trade unions (both on the floor as shop steward and also on negotiating teams for contracts).

Also, I've survived two plant closures where I lost jobs because of some decision in a corporate board room. I well remember how during one of these moves, we were asked to up productivity which we did to the satisfaction of management, and still the plant closed. My most recent lay-off was due to a "consolidation" of three other plants to a location some 80 miles away.

Gillett makes the point that labor has stressed more and more "bread and butter" issues in their negotiating, and

the rank and file keep demanding them over more democratic work conditions in the plants. Many a time within union halls I was booed down for pushing for modifications of plant rules rather than going back to work as soon as the pay raise and fringe benefits were gained. This took place in contract after contract in the auto industry until some of the local shop rules were so bad that two strikes were called. When these injustices were rectified, it was amazing how management took the credit for how humanely the work force was being treated. But we were forced out on strike to get this humane treatment. And how many battles did we have to fight with our own rank and file who were willing just to settle for bread and butter raises.

Secondly, from the time I was a child (I'm now 59) I've read scriptures. My interests are more geared toward social action in theological discussions. So when I read Donald L. Adams' letter and his interpretation of *Romans 1:28* with regard to homosexuality, I had to double

check this passage. I did not get the harsh interpretation Mr. Adams got. On the subject of homosexuality, I've read four books — two completely anti and two more compassionate. Also, after six years in the Marines and all these years in industrial plants, having seen the harsh treatment of homosexuals by society (including the church) I wonder just how my brothers and sisters in Christ can continue to be part of this treatment and try to justify themselves through scriptures, no less.

Robert Keosian
Hawthorne, N.J.

Getting Better

Your magazine is getting better each month. I read and re-read every issue — then give it to someone else to enjoy. Thank you for your continued excellence.

Ann P. McElroy
Cupertino, Cal.

Editorial . . . Continued from page 3

during which a man was crushed beneath the wheels of a police van.

On the other side of the Atlantic the U.S. announced it will send arms to the repressive regime of Guatemala, where another priest met death yesterday at the hands of right-wing execution squads; Fathers Daniel and Philip Berrigan and other peace activist members of the Plowshares Eight received jail sentences for damaging equipment in their effort to shut down a nuclear missile plant; the Welfare Department of Siskiyou County, California announced that it would henceforth refuse aid to any destitute person or unemployed worker who declined to join the military; and the President twisted a speech to cruelly mislead retired Americans into trusting that their Social Security benefits will not be cut.

Like the court of Marie Antoinette, will the British Tories and the American Moral Majority "Let them eat cake" while the world burns?

— Mary Jane Brewster

Shareholder Conference Oct. 16-17

The Rt. Rev. Paul Moore, Bishop of New York, will deliver the keynote address entitled "The Faithful Steward" at the Conference on Shareholder Responsibility at St. Thomas Church, Whitemarsh in suburban Philadelphia, beginning Oct. 16.

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Workshops will be presented on plant closings, energy, transnational corporations, militarism, infant formula, and alternate investments. Chairing the event is Mary Jane Baker of Philadelphia, who is a board member of the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility.

Sponsors of the event include the Episcopal Church Publishing Company, the Committee on Social Responsibility of the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church, and Bishops Robert Appleyard of Pittsburgh; Robert Atkinson, West Virginia; John Spong, Newark; Lyman Ogilby and Brooke Mosley, Pennsylvania; William Clark, Delaware, and Moore of New York.

Descriptive brochures and registration forms can be obtained from St. Thomas Church, Whitemarsh, Ft. Washington, PA 19034.

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