

THE WITNESS

VOL. 65 NO. 1 JANUARY, 1982

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Should the Church
Divorce the State?*
Charles R. Wilson

*Death Planning:
Some Helpful Advice*
R. Charles Meyer

& Grand Juries, Again!



LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS

Theme Is Narcissism

As I read the October WITNESS, I was struck by a common theme in most of the pieces, and I see this theme more and more in complaints about society and about this administration. The theme is our growing narcissism.

The urgencies I sense in the country today illustrate a change in what people conceive to be the purpose of life. There is much more concern about oneself or one's nuclear family, and for success, fame, or personal satisfaction. This has always been a part of motivation. However, I don't see the transcendent in today's motivation. I worry that in Western Society we will have people who, as they grow older, become bitter, disillusioned and empty. Without a transcendent purpose, success, wealth, or fame are hollow.

"The American Dream" and "America as savior of the world" — these are ideas whose time is over, although they may still be conventional wisdom in some quarters. One may argue that America is better off because these ideas have died, but they did provide a transcendence for generations of Americans, a transcendence that put purpose into lives that otherwise may have seemed humdrum. This America was a religion to many and there are signs that the Moral Majority is a revival of that secular religion.

Most religions provide a transcendence with the idea of the Brotherhood of Man. I am prejudiced enough to think that the larger image of humankind, that

each person is partially divine, is the transcendence which gives people the sanity needed so that they don't succumb to the urgency to make sense of isolated human beings in an illogical world. We must see all humans as related if we hope to find real meaning in life.

Charles M. Judd
Cincinnati, Ohio

Keep Up Struggle

I was particularly impressed by the force of Canon Robert C. Chapman's piece, "God Bless America, Please!" in the October WITNESS. I share with you the belief that we need and are justified in having a deep anger against a national policy that systematically puts the comforts of the rich over the necessities of the poor.

Though I can see from your letters that enthusiasm for your approach is by no means universal, I urge you to keep up the struggle and not be swayed by set-in-their-ways critics.

Lawrence M. O'Rourke
Washington, D.C.

Name All Wrong

Your name, THE WITNESS, is all wrong. Sounds like Holy Rollers. There is good stuff inside, but many, many people are going to toss it with junk mail. I did. Read it by accident when my maid put it on my desk. Who in God's name came up with such an awful name?

Mary O. Smith
Columbus, Miss.

(Cheers to Ms. Smith's maid, who recognized that all types of WITNESS-ing are not the same. Our name goes back to the founding of the publication — Jan. 6, 1917. THE WITNESS has continued to "testify" through many wars, a depression, and the harassment of the McCarthy years. From the earliest days, the editors were united around the fact that they could not abandon the flag, the cross, and WITNESS-ing to the forces of the Right. We carry on in that tradition. — Eds.)

Abortion Articles Helpful

Thanks for the Beverly Wildung Harrison pieces on abortion. (See "Theology of Pro-Choice: A Feminist Perspective" in July, Part II in September WITNESS.) I find the writing helpful to me in that abortion is treated as part of other facets of life. Here I feel I'm not either for abortion or against abortion, but the issue is the quality of that life for all involved in the beginning of that life.

Douglas H. Schewe
Madison, Wisc.

(Theologian Bev Harrison's two-part series on abortion has become the most requested WITNESS feature of last year. Edward P. Morgan made it the subject of one of his daily radio programs, "In the Public Interest," carried by 300 stations nationwide; the Rev. Edward Batchelor asked permission to incorporate it into a book he is editing for Pilgrim Press; the AFSC's Nationwide Women's Program incorporated it into a Reproductive Rights packet; a Planned Parenthood chapter asked permission to circulate it, and Trinity Institute, New York, requested extra copies for group study, among others. — Eds.)

Need to Dialogue

Thank you for your perspectives. I rank THE WITNESS along with Maryknoll magazine. I am a Roman Catholic seminary professor very concerned about the stubborn, unjust domestic policy and dangerous and oppressive foreign policy of a certain Ronald Reagan. Elected to office by only 27% of the people, he justifies policy because of some imagined "mandate," — a gross deception and manipulation.

I deeply appreciate your struggle to aid us in becoming Christians once again with a Biblical agenda, not one based solely on "free enterprise" and "corporate capitalism." Your perspectives are for the conversion of the United States — not a manic patriotism that wraps itself in "Old Glory" and then

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THE WITNESS EDITORIAL

The Power Of Believing

Powerlessness appears in a multitude of forms, both personal and corporate. Currently in America, those in power in both government and the corporate world appear daily to acquire more power, while ordinary citizens — particularly racial minorities and women — steadily lose even an elementary control over their own lives in matters of health care, schools, adequate food and housing, and a decent job. The icy winds of January seem to blow with particular bitterness in this New Year of 1982, calling to mind the graphic despair of a vanquished Israel lamenting its captivity in Babylon:

*By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept
When we remembered you, Oh Zion.
As for our harps, we hang them up
On the trees in the midst of that land.*

* * *

*How shall we sing the Lord's song
Upon our alien soil?*

(Psalm 137)

Such is the current mood of many in our country as the forces of reaction appear steadily more entrenched, and our own land becomes alien to us.

Yet despair is not the dominant note of the Psalms, nor of the Old Testament. In the Christian religion January brings the Epiphany brilliance of a beneficent God, gracious and universal in power to bring light out of darkness.

And in fact, through the gloom, some pinpoints of light are beginning to appear as 1982 dawns:

- In Europe, massive demonstrations against nuclear weapons are making a major impact. President Reagan, say some observers, has been forced into a negotiating stance with the Soviets by this burgeoning movement. It is more than a mood of pacifist neutralism. It is a resounding "No!" to the madness of preparations for nuclear war on both sides.

- In America, the movement against the arms race led by the churches, slowly begins, like a lumbering jumbo jet, to clear the ground and take off. Even bishops — most of them in the Roman Catholic Church

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In the Matter of Marriage:

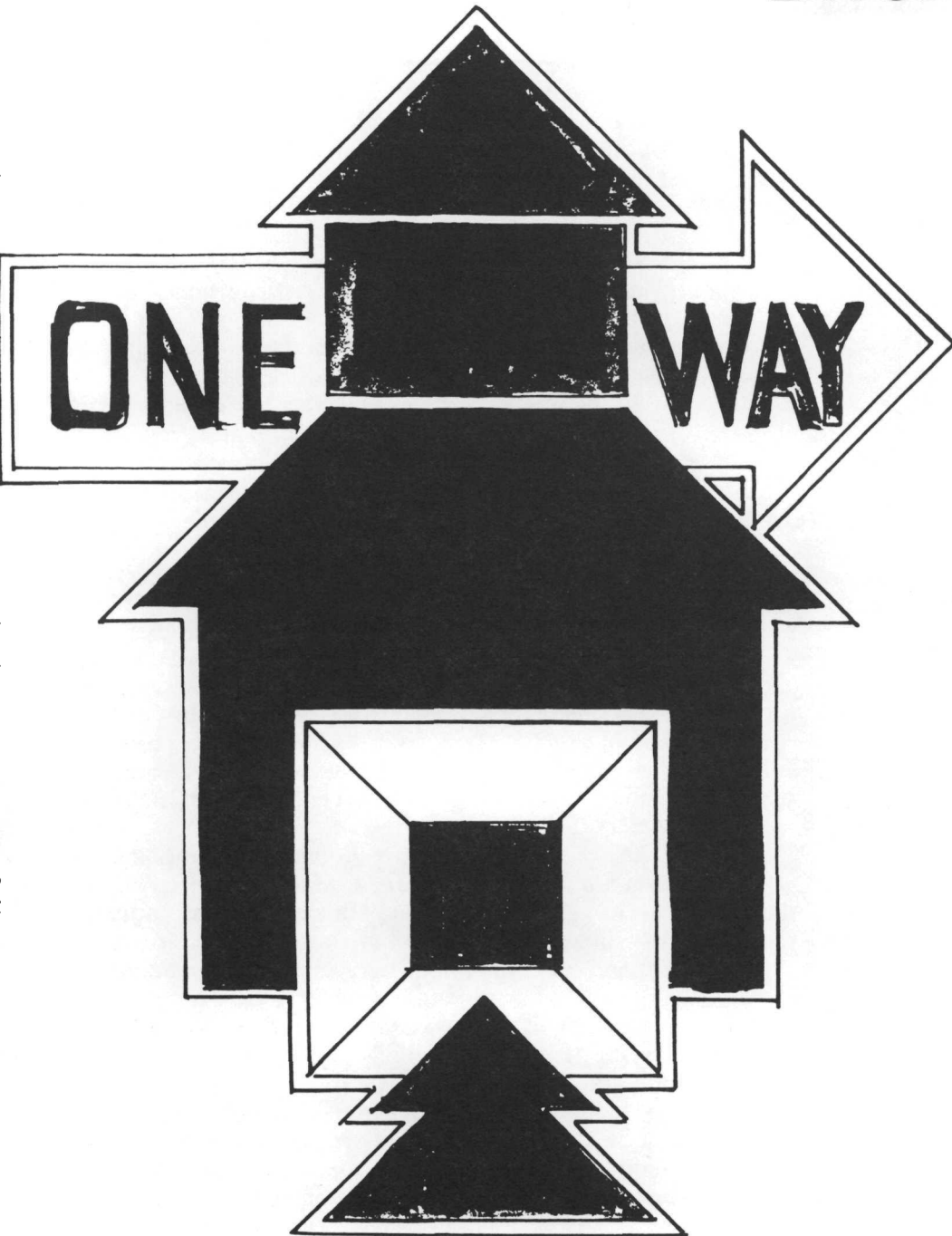
Should the Church Divorce the State?

by Charles R. Wilson

It is time for the church to review its partnership with civil authority in the matter of authenticating the marriage contract of couples. As a matter of fact, it may be time for a divorce; that is, a break-up of the church/state partnership. As it now stands, two people wishing to be joined in Christian marriage must meet the requirements of the civil authority, then those of the ecclesiastical authority. And the meaning of marriage in these two systems seems to have less and less in common.

The U.S. practice of having ordained Christian ministers function as civil officers in witnessing the vows of marriage is not a universal practice nor one of long standing. In ancient times Christians were simply expected to observe the civil custom where they lived. Then, the practice of providing for a Christian blessing on the marriage became popular. Still later, with some form of Christianity established as the state religion, the ordained person took on the civil responsibility of witnessing the vows. With the American Revolution and the resultant separation of church and state, religion was accommodated in this one instance by permitting the clergy to continue the practice. However, in other places this was not the case. In France, for

The Rev. Charles R. Wilson is director of Management Services, a group which enables effective church leadership, based in Lebanon, N.J. He is author of numerous articles on church management, and retains copyright on this article.



example, there now must be two complete ceremonies: a civil ceremony at a town registry and the blessing of the marriage in the church. The practice of early Christianity has virtually been reestablished, according to Charles Price and Louis Weil in *Liturgy for Living*.

I can't think of anything else that the church does that involves it in such a partnership with the state. In matters of Holy Baptism, for example, we have no understanding with government that spells out how it is to be done, or under what circumstances it is to be permitted, or what it means, or what standards must be met. This is church business. The same pattern holds true when it comes to ordination, confirmation, or absolution. As a matter of fact, absolution is a good case in point. In a given situation the church may pronounce God's forgiveness, and the state may condemn. No one seems to feel that this is inappropriate.

Yet, in this business of "marrying people," the situation has become a mess. State regulations are increasingly making marriage more of an economic contract. There may still be some sense of social accountability, in divorce settlements, for example. But even there

the whole business finally gets spelled out in economic terms. A young couple, madly in love, desiring to enter into Christian marriage, should receive the church's premarital counseling but probably should also, today, look into some of the other marriage-related state issues. They are contracting for a lot more than a lifetime of mutual love and support. They are contracting for peculiar tax and inheritance treatment as well.

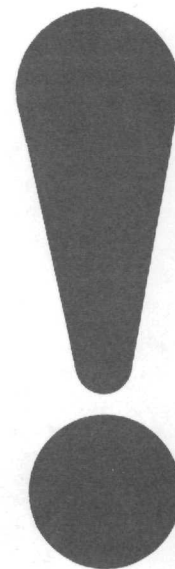
When I was more involved in parochial ministry, I used to caution people in premarital counseling about "side contracts." I felt that it was important to explain what was in the marriage contract and what was not; to even question and to surface side arrangements, or at least help people see that there might be something implied which was improperly considered part of the contract:

"We decided to get married, but we've agreed that there will be no children."

"Well, that's okay if you both agree, but it's not in the contract (the declaration of intention or the service itself). And if one of you has a change of mind later, then it is up for reconsideration by both."

There can even be third party side contracts. I remember, for example, the mother who agreed to sign for her underaged daughter's marriage if the daughter promised that she would live near her parents. I had to point out to the mother that she could decide to sign or not to sign, but she could not be party to the contract after she signed. Actually, what I said was, *"Look at it this way, you are not gaining a son, you are losing a daughter."* She signed.

Now, however, one can't ignore the side arrangements. If two retired people marry, they are likely to lose some of their Social Security benefits. If two wage earners marry, chances are they will be stuck with a higher tax bracket. According to James and Elizabeth



Duran, in an article entitled "Federal Sin Subsidy," this higher tax bracket produced \$10.9 billion in tax revenue in 1978 and is projected to generate \$28.2 billion in 1984. The arrangement is commonly referred to as the "marriage penalty."

In "Your Money or Your Wife," one judge is quoted as saying that if you divorce and cohabit you can enjoy the blessings of love while minimizing your forced contribution to government, and can thus "synthesize the forces of love and greed." Another judge tried to explain: All the law does is "change the relative attraction of different prospective spouses. For the tax-minded young man or woman with a substantial income, . . . the Internal Revenue Code adds to the attractiveness of a prospective spouse without taxable income and detracts from one with it."

The attitude of Congress, the IRS and the court appears to be, "You don't *have* to marry . . . figure out the tax angles and act accordingly." Suppose a couple decides to share their lives and not marry, then their future Social Security program may be jeopardized, and the inheritance and gift laws enter



into the picture and must be considered. In short, there are so many economic considerations related to age, income, changing work situations, and so on, it really does make sense to sit down and run the calculations. None of this has much to do with Christian marriage — the joining of two people who intend to love, support and be faithful to each other until parted by death.

If we were to divorce the church's responsibility for proclaiming God's blessing on those entering Holy Matrimony from government's need to regulate a couple's "economic partnership" or whatever it might be called, perhaps we could get back to thinking through the real meaning of marriage.

The Anglican Church of Canada has been involved in a hard look at marriage recently. In a major article in the *Canadian Churchman*, some of the new thinking on divorce, on cohabitation and other phenomena of our time was thoughtfully examined. "Where does marriage begin?", the authors asked, " 'Living together' . . . is a widespread fact of life today: it is found among

young and old, rich and poor, believer and unbeliever. There are many difficult situations and many motives." There is an obligation, say the authors, "to examine the historic meaning of marriage and ask whether some kinds of 'living together' do not constitute real attempts at informal marriage." They go on to wonder if such questions might "undo the ties between the church . . . and the social order around us."

If the church declared itself on marriage and in the process divorced itself from the arrangement wherein it functions as an agency of government in performing the marriage, it might indeed find a new connection with the social order around us. Let the state worry about the state issues and the church deal with the couple strictly in terms of Christian marriage:

- Does the couple intend to be joined in Christian marriage, to love and support till death? Then bless the marriage and let them decide otherwise how they want to deal with the civil contract and all the economic considerations that go into that.

- Do they want a civil divorce because of some economic consideration, while still intending to live together in faithful Christian marriage? Why should we recognize a civil contract or the dissolution of one as anything more than an economic arrangement? Let them proceed and let the church recognize their marriage anyway.

- Do they want both a civil contract and a church blessing? That's fine too. But why be bound with all the ramifications of a civil contract as far as

the administration of the church's sacrament is concerned?

Maybe it is time for a divorce . . . the Christian sacrament of Holy Matrimony from the civil contract. At present we are involved in an unfair partnership. We (the church) pronounce God's blessing on the union, while they (the civil authority) determine the advantages, the benefits, the conditions and the regulations without consulting us. Why should we continue in such an unequal arrangement?

In any case, it's time for a review. Who knows, maybe just talking about it would shock our partners into taking another look at the situation. And if we really got into some good dialogue, we might even find a resolution that would be preferable to a continuation of the present situation or to a divorce.

Resources

Charles P. Price and Louis Weil, *Liturgy for Living* (The Church's Teaching Series, New York: Seabury Press, 1979).

James A. and Elizabeth Duran, "Federal Sin Subsidy," *America*, Vol. 144, January 24, 1981.

Julian Block, "Your Money or Your Wife," *USAir Magazine*, June 1980.

Canadian Churchman, Jan. 1980. ■

One Turn Past

Son of God, please find me again;
seek me with your flashlight and truck.

I've fallen just outside my map's perimeter,
one turn past the old road home.

Please bring your stretcher like the first time
when I crashed among the berry trees:

out of control,
my stomach heavy with unkind thoughts,

I was gluttoned and lost,
and you rescued me then.

O Son of God, I know you will greet me,
not weighing my knapsack, but kissing my hands,

and gently disengaging the rickety bicycle
which carried all my other plans.

— Leslie M. Williams

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Mace for the Child Molester

"What a big chemistry set Santa brought!"
I exclaimed to Michael, 10,
son of the chemist turned dean
when we went nextdoor
for spicy Christmas cake.
Michael beamed as his dad peered proudly
over half-rims.

Mary, 6, nudged to show me her gift:
"And what a cute nurse's kit,"
I added with a patron's smile.
"Doctor's kit," the housewife intruded;
"tell him it's a doctor's kit, Mary,"
Mary's mother repeated,
even as she fetched for me
a piece of her best mince meat pie.

— Louie Crew

Death Planning: What We're Afraid to Ask

by Chuck Meyer

We stand by the bed, his wife and I, watching him breathe and listening to the gurgling in his lungs. Hanging onto life is such work. She holds his hand and gently strokes what remains of his once beautiful, thick white hair. The chemotherapy has reduced it to strands; but she lovingly pats him, kisses him, tells him she loves him.

The interval between gasps for breath lengthens. Ten seconds, 15 seconds, 30 seconds — forever. We call for the nurse who searches for and cannot find a heartbeat. The nurse leaves to summon a doctor to make the medical pronouncement. The dead man's wife breaks down and sobs.

Then the questions begin.

What plans have you made for the body? Do you have a funeral home in mind? Do you want cremation? What kind of service do you want? Was he a veteran? How much do you want to pay for funeral home services? What kind of container do you want with the casket? What about embalming? Have you talked with your clergy about the plans? Will you sign this form to release the body, please?

And the answers are usually the same.

"I don't know. We never talked about it. Does our church allow cremation? I wonder what his wishes were. My church never taught me about funerals. I wonder if I need to call the clergy? What do I do next?"

As a hospital chaplain, I see the above scenario repeated at least twice a week. Patients come into the hospital quite ill, in the final stages of disease or in the midst of cardiac, lung or other crisis, and die quickly or unexpectedly. Their family members are then at a total loss about what to do.

The Rev. R. Charles Meyer is Director of the Department of Pastoral Care at St. David's Community Hospital, Austin, Tex. He has also served as a prison chaplain and pastoral counselor, and is the author of several magazine articles.

Often, conflicting wishes or beliefs lead to serious arguments at a time when closeness, consolation and mutual support are important. Sometimes decisions are made in the rush of the moment that are later regretted (embalming, cremation, make-up, closed casket). Frequently, no one has previously talked to the deceased about specific wishes concerning funeral arrangements, even though the person has been sick (although coherent and talkative) for some time. The conspiracy of silence regarding the family member's illness/dying then

results in far fewer options from which to choose — options usually presented only by the funeral home director.

There appear to be at least two reasons for the death planning dilemma:

- **Non-affiliation.** The majority of patients (and staff, for that matter) in the hospital have no church or clergy affiliation. While it is true that most patients state a religious *preference* on their admissions data sheet, very few have any current or on-going relationship with a particular church or clergy. Even in my area of the "Bible

Belt,” the clear majority of persons are “unchurched.” Often the hospital’s Pastoral Care personnel are the first contact with religion the patient/family has had in years. It seems obvious that the real spiritual needs of individuals and families are not being met in the parish church. This non-affiliation issue itself is a major indictment of parish programs; it pales, however, before the next reason for the death planning dilemma.

• **Church Supported Denial.** One could rationalize that unaffiliated persons having no church contact would obviously be less knowledgeable about what to do before, during and after the time of death. It is interesting, however, that even those persons who are weekly attenders, devout Christians, and whose clergy come to visit regularly in the hospital are *equally* frustrated, uninformed, and unprepared for the onslaught of questions to be answered and decisions to be made. It seems clear that the church has, both overtly and covertly, participated in reinforcing its parishioners’ denial of death. Furthermore, by failing to deal with the issues of death planning and dying through education, preaching and witness, the church has denied its own powerful message about how to live. This failure of the church has taken three forms: practical, theological, and sacramental.

Practical Failure

Few persons have been taught by their local parish the practical details of what to do when they or someone they love is about to die. As a result, people seldom know their particular church’s rituals or liturgies surrounding dying or even what prayers are appropriate at the time of death. When and how to call for clergy, which funeral home to use, whether or not to embalm or to consider cremation, and whether to have the service (if there is to be one) in the church or funeral home are practical

matters that have largely been ignored by the church. Organ and body donations, extraordinary means of life support (Living Will), and when or whether to discontinue other than palliative medical treatment are practical issues that could be spoken to by informed clergy and laity *before* the need for definitive action arises. Although local physicians, memorial societies and funeral directors would welcome the chance to provide such information along with clergy, they are seldom asked to do so by the church. Thus the practical matters surrounding death remain a mystery to most parishioners until such time as they are forced to discover them.



Theological Failure

The theological failure of the church is perhaps more obvious and deleterious than its failure to deal with the practicalities of dying. It is primarily due to the church’s poor theologizing that most people (churched or unchurched) believe the Bible teaches that good is always rewarded and evil always punished. This “truism” is then used to support the necessity for good behavior, defined as the particular denomination sees fit. Problems arise, however, when someone is sick or dying and the converse of the alleged theological truism comes to mind: If good is rewarded and evil punished, then those who are prosperous and healthy must therefore be living good lives while those who are sick or deter-

ioring must have done something wrong.

Every chaplain has been asked a variation of the question “If good is rewarded and evil punished, why is my good, kind, Christian wife lying here dying in excruciating pain?” One answer, of course, is that the Bible does not promise any such cosmic insurance policy, at least not penultimately. Few clergy, however, choose to deal with this theological issue either educationally or from the pulpit.

Concomitant with the good/evil issue is the sickness/punishment issue. As a variation on the former theme, people frequently assume (again due to inadequate church training) that their sickness is a punishment for something they have done or not done. They then feel frustrated and angry at God, but are further thwarted by poor theologizing from the church (it’s not O.K. to tell God how angry you are at God). They end up feeling guilty about feeling angry about feeling punished. A woman whose mother was dying experienced just this emotional cycle. After much discussion she was relieved to have her feelings affirmed and to acknowledge that she could indeed feel angry and frustrated at God while trusting God at the same time.

There is indeed a wealth of theological literature available on the subjects of sickness and death. The parish church has almost universally ignored it to the detriment of patients and their families who are in crisis.

Sacramental Failure

The failure of the church to teach its people to deal with death sacramentally is the direct result of the expropriation of power and authority from religion to medicine. In the overwhelming presence of “miracle drugs,” microsurgery, and biomedical technology, the church has largely discounted the efficaciousness of its own sacraments. Holy Communion, anointing and laying-on-of-hands,

intercessory prayer, confession, absolution, and baptism into the covenant community are, or rather could be, powerful resources for patients and families to confront the reality of dying.

The church's witness to the spiritual/sacramental presence of God in whatever form God's healing may take (death is also healing) could be a valuable tool in treatment of illness and in sustaining and nourishing those who are dying. Unfortunately, the religious community does not take its sacraments seriously enough to proffer them with the assertiveness that the medical community proffers theirs. It is interesting in this respect to note that most of the referrals to Pastoral Care come from physicians and nurses, not parish clergy. Far from being competitive or critical, the medical community seems to be calling on the church to BE the church, to exercise its function and do what mere medicine cannot — support, sustain and transcend. What a meaningful thing it would be if the church believed in the power of its own sacraments as much as its medical colleagues do.

What's Going On?

The reasons behind the church's failure in death planning rest basically with the clergy. The first issue to examine is the clergy's own denial of death. In order to offer programs, seminars, workshops or sermons about death and dying, the clergy must be somewhat comfortable with their own finitude. To talk about *your* death raises the issue of *mine*. To get into specifics about funeral planning for you and your family raises the spectre of my own demise. Frequently clergy do not offer practical procedures for dealing with dying because they have not yet carefully dealt with their *own* mortality and wish to keep the reality of death a secret for just a while longer.

A second consideration to explain the

current dilemma is the clerical focus on "resurrection theology" to the point of denying the fact of Jesus' death. The constant promulgation of belief in the "pie in the sky in the great by and by" where "we all will meet up yonder" is in effect a discount of the sadness, brokenness and finality of an end we must all face.

Nowhere is this discount more pronounced than on Good Friday. On a day appropriate for mourning, for anger at injustice and for sadness and grief, the focus of the clergy meditation is almost always on the resurrection to come, when it is not yet a fact on that broken Friday. In our hurry to resurrection we, clergy and laity alike, blindly skip over the painful transition of Christ Jesus' — and our — death.

Capitulation of responsibility to cultural caretakers is yet a third means by which clergy and the church have arrived at a death denying stance. By acquiescing to cultural norms dictating that death occur only in a sanitary hospital setting and funeral services be done only in a plastic funeral home, the church has excluded itself from witness at two important times of impact. Fortunately, the recent growing interest in hospice care coupled with the rising concern for simple burial and/or cremation may force the church to regain its position of priority and responsibility in informing the place of the rituals of death.

What To Do

Both clergy and laity alike have a number of available avenues to explore. The following suggestions will encourage search and study for your own death planning.

- Read about death and dying. The subject is "in" now, and you can find a multitude of paperbacks in the bookstore or library to begin raising your consciousness on the subject. Read about the various options for death planning including burial, cremation,

and simple funeral. Read about the ethics of dying, of euthanasia, of suicide, of discontinuing all but palliative medical care. Read whatever interests you on the subject, and as you read . . .

- Talk with friends and family about what you've read. Talk with your physician about how medical decisions are made. Talk with your clergy about the church's position on abortion, life support, dying at home, funeral practices such as embalming, cremation, scattering of ashes, or burial. Talk about your church's funeral service, about sacraments and their meaning in life and death, about the theology of guilt, forgiveness, sickness, punishment, healing and death. Talk with your loved ones about their wishes and as you talk . . .

- Decide on your own funeral plans. Do you have a will? If you are dying, do you want to be told? What about extraordinary life support? Have you registered with The Living Bank in Houston for body part donations? What hymns, readings, etc., do you want in your funeral? Do you want your funeral in the church or funeral home? What about processing the body? You and your clergy may make a visit to a funeral home to make pre-arrangements. In any case, when you decide, be sure to write down your wishes and go over them with other members of your family so they will know what to do when the time comes. After you decide, or as you are deciding . . .

- Encourage others in the parish to do likewise. You will find that many people share your concern and have simply not had the opportunity to discuss their own death with someone who was willing to listen and take them seriously. Encourage the formation of a study group whose goal would be to have members plan their own funerals. Encourage a conference or workshop

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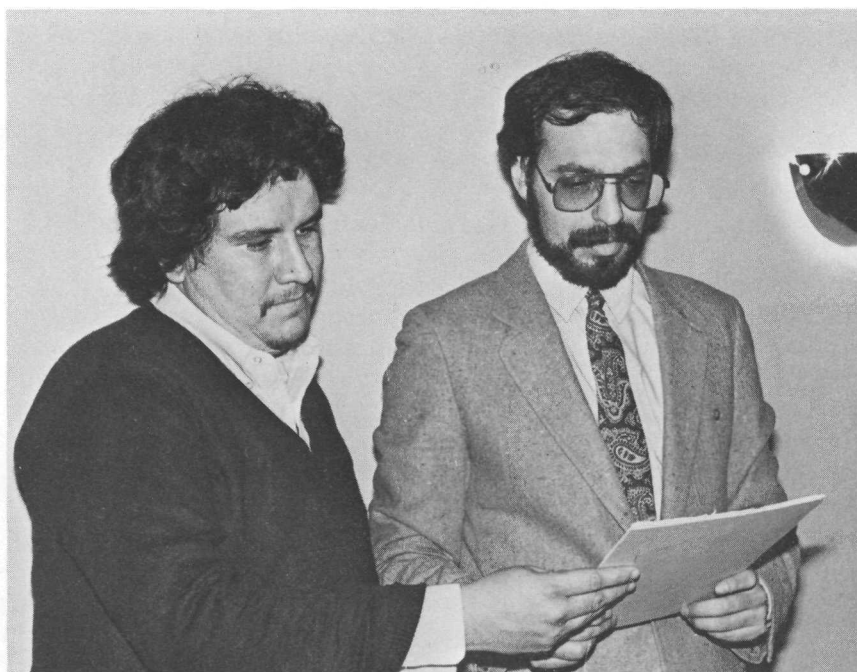
New Grand Jury Subpoenas Cueto Again, Guerra of ECPC

by Mary Lou Suhor

As THE WITNESS went to press, Maria Cueto and Steven Guerra, two Hispanics with a historical and programmatic relationship to the Episcopal Church Publishing Company, faced the possibility of spending Christmas in jail for refusing to testify before a Federal Grand Jury. Cueto and Guerra had been subpoenaed, along with three others, to appear before Judge Thomas Platt in Brooklyn on Dec. 16.

Guerra, a Puerto Rican community organizer, serves on the ECPC Board of Directors; he also served on the Policy and Action Committee of the Episcopal Urban Caucus, having testified at the Urban Bishops' hearings in Chicago. Cueto, along with Raisa Nemikin, received the Vida Scudder Award at an ECPC-sponsored dinner during General Convention in 1979 for their stand in refusing to testify before a Grand Jury, charging harassment of their people. When jailed 10 months for contempt, Cueto and Nemikin were Director and Secretary, respectively, of the National Commission on Hispanic Affairs of the Episcopal Church.

The plight of Cueto and Guerra has a certain *deja vu* for readers who followed THE WITNESS articles around events which began in 1976, when the Episcopal Church allowed FBI agents access to its national program files after office hours. The precedent-setting event caused alarm bells to go off in Episcopalian and ecumenical circles.



Steven Guerra, left, of the ECPC Board of Directors, reviews points to be covered in court Dec. 16 with his attorney, Michael Deutsch.

Three others who were jailed at that time for refusing to testify before Grand Juries in Chicago and Manhattan had been subpoenaed again to appear on Dec. 16 before Judge Platt. They are Ricardo Romero, a Chicano, of Alamosa, Colo., and Andres and Julio Rosado, Puerto Ricans of New York. Of those subpoenaed, only Guerra had not been jailed during the previous investigations. The five faced a possible term of nine months, the time remaining before this Grand Jury expires.

No indictments were returned in that earlier Grand Jury investigation, called to probe the relationship of the FALN, an alleged Puerto Rican terrorist group, and the Fraunces Tavern bombing in 1975. At the end of the 18-month-life of two Grand Juries, in New York and Chicago, nine people had served an accumulated time of six years, all pointing to the chilling effect of incarceration upon their work in church and secular communities.

It is anticipated that U.S. agents will

try to prove links of a conspiratorial nature between Black, Hispanic and White radicals, and that they will use information obtained from Alfredo Mendez, one of the FALN members captured last year, who has opted to turn state's evidence. The current Grand Jury is seeking information about fugitives.

Michael Deutsch, attorney for Guerra, said that this summons of five Hispanics at one time marks the broadest use of the Grand Jury to date. Defense attorneys say that the Grand Jury is being used as a tool of investigation for the FBI, with agents asking the prosecuting attorney to subpoena whomever it wants. Past experience has shown this tactic to be disruptive to the Puerto Rican and Mexican-American community, and severely punitive to families of activists and organizers who are jailed. The defense is expected to argue that there have been no indictments from the first investigations and that the five who have been called have been operating publicly, speaking and organizing around Grand Jury abuse and/or Puerto Rican independence. All have been under heavy surveillance over the past three years, and therefore incapable of clandestine activity. The five are one in that they will not be coerced into testifying against their people, which is the purpose of incarceration. The defense notes that four have spent previous jail terms as proof. Moreover, it claims that exemplars called for (fingerprints, handwriting, etc.) are superfluous since they were taken during the earlier imprisonment.

In addition to challenging the nature of the investigation, the defense is challenging the Grand Jury itself as presently constituted, claiming that it under-represents Hispanics. Judge Platt will rule on the challenge on Dec. 16. The outlook was only cautiously optimistic, since Judge Platt is the

official who jailed the head of PATCO early on in the Administration's hardline stand on that strike.

The new developments call attention once more to the potential of Grand Jury abuse, and the fact that reform legislation has never seen the light of day in Congress. In this instance, Hispanic activists face the possibility of repeated jailings for contempt for refusing to testify before Grand Juries, when new Grand Juries are called into being.

Meanwhile, the chilling effect, which Maria Cueto and Raisa Nemikin warned about in testimony in 1977, takes its toll on church and secular communities. Coincidentally, as the subpoenas were delivered, the Rt. Rev. John Allin, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, had asked that Episcopalians use the first week of Advent as a time of "prayer and concern for Hispanic vocations" as the church continues in an effort to recruit, train and support ordained and lay ministries among Spanish-speaking people in the United States.

Ironically, it was the women's claim to lay ministry and confidentiality of their files that was at issue in previous court sessions. Their stand, although unsupported by the Episcopal Church administration — was applauded by the National Council of Churches.

As THE WITNESS went to press, ecumenical groups were scurrying to resurrect coalitions which had formed in previous incarnations of Grand Juries, to prevent the "chilling effect" from spreading further. And church agencies were once again dusting off the National Council of Churches' guidelines on what to do when the FBI knocks at the door. ■

Maria Cueto





A Letter From the Country

by Charles Hawes

I am a city-born, city-raised-and-educated priest living and working as a planner for an anti-poverty agency in one of the "countriest" counties in North Carolina. Two events occurred recently to make me aware that the church seems to be losing touch with the national rural scene. The first happened at a clergy gathering during which an appeal was made to start a new Diocesan Urban Task Force. Reference was made to the cities currently being "places of great population growth" (not true; the growth is away from the cities) and "centers where everything is happening" (except life and living where they most count for over half the people in my state).

The second event was the appearance of an article in the weekly newsletter of one of my favorite inner-city churches, which has a deservedly high reputation as an effective champion of grass-roots causes among the poor. The author, a man I greatly admire, had delivered himself of a vacation essay on how much easier it is to be poor in the country than it is in the city. He went on about how simple it must be for country people to go out and cut their own firewood, to grow and preserve their own garden vegetables, raise their own stock for meat and milk; about how neighborly they all are and how naturally close to God. The following letter was my response to him.

Dear City Jack,

Being a longtime admirer of the work of your parish and the Gospel of your newsletter, I cannot let pass your recent homely rumination about "how much easier it is to be poor in the country."

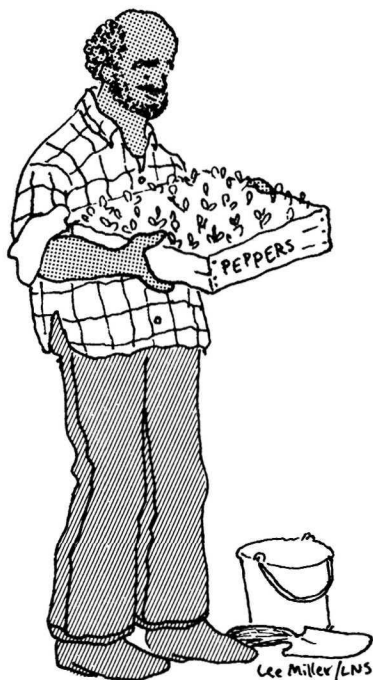
Please, Reverend sir! I take at face value your wisdom regarding your being "back where you belong"—in the city—and not in the country, where a tired man on a well-earned vacation may be permitted to write philosophy and not have to burden himself with history.

The country is where 43% of the nation's poor live. Of the nearly 3½ million Americans who lack running water in their homes, 90% live in *the country*. Eighteen million Americans

presently served by highly contaminated self-supply water systems live in *the country*. Those Americans most likely to have severe and disabling health problems, higher rates of job-related injuries, transportation and housing problems all live in *the country*. And 60% of America's substandard housing is located in *the country*.

The country is where I live, too. In Johnston County, North Carolina, a little down and to the right of the Piedmont Region, a long way from the bucolic paradise you suggest rural America really is, and centered in the deprived grace and wisdom that elects and re-elects Senator Jesse Helms.

Let me tell you a little bit about my part of *the country*. We have a lot of



good folks around here but we have a few problems, too. Here we burn kerosene in poor people's heaters, not wood. Wood is for the middle and upper classes, more a matter of aesthetics than for really keeping warm, for lowering the heating bills of those who can afford the full price of oil but who would rather not. The poor have to pay that price and probably chew on wood to ease their hunger. The only wood they're apt to burn is when their badly insulated kerosene stoves catch their dry, wood-frame houses on fire.

It's true some of them plant and keep little gardens in the summer, but not many of them preserve what they grow nor could they afford the necessary equipment even if they knew how to use it. The greater fact about farming these days is that less and less people can make a living at it. Between 1960 and 1970, in just 10 short years, nearly 60% of all our local family farmers went out of business. Farming is getting to be big business out here in *the country*. Federal laws and local lending institutions tend to favor big spreads that offer a lot of security against loans over the family 50 acres that offer

nothing but a century of backbreaking effort. Earl Butz, Secretary of Agriculture under Richard Nixon, once said farmers should "get big or get out." Around here most of them got out.

Most of them had also dropped out of school when they were young, left the classroom because they were needed in the fields and because they were sure they could learn all they needed to know about farming on the job. Now that they can't turn a dollar that way, they're in a whole lot of trouble when it comes to finding other work. If they're lucky, they end up sweating for minimum wage on a mindless, indoor assembly line in one of the new industries that's come South for no unions and cheap labor.

I have to tell you, City Jack, that if a family keeps a few cattle for meat and milk, if they've got chickens and a hog or two, the fact is they're not poor by our standards. Hell, they're doing damn well for themselves!

And relationships around here aren't all you suggest, either. We're civil enough to visitors, that's so. After all, they give us something new to talk about in our largely monotonous lives and they even put a few extra bucks into our economy. But we don't get along all that well among ourselves, truth to tell, and crimes of violence among us rival on a per capita basis the best you've got to offer in the big cities. In these parts, reasonableness isn't our strong suit, and we're inclined to shoot first and repent ourselves at leisure. In my county we've got an active chapter of the Ku Klux Klan and a paramilitary training camp for the American Nazi Party. C.P. Ellis, business manager of the International Union of Operating Engineers and a former Klansman now living up in Durham, was quoted not long ago as saying, "The majority of Klansmen are low-income Whites. They have been shut out as well as the Blacks. They had to hate somebody." True and sad enough.

You suggest prayer is easier out here. Maybe so, but religion isn't. Too much of it is hard, unforgiving, life-denying, impossible to live up to, and hence wretchedly guilt—and sickness-afflicting. Better not to pray at all at these prices.

Actually, I'm not surprised you had a hard time seeing our country-brand of poverty, City Jack. It's a quiet number, doesn't stack up on itself and wave for attention as it does in the cities. We spread it out all over the place around here. Our country poor people quite commonly live at a distance from one another, don't even know their kind of misery's got plenty of company. Devastating loneliness may be the worst of their problems.

Most socialization for them takes place at the family level. Which on the face of it sounds okay, maybe even desirable, until one looks closer and finds a couple of flaws in the design. In the first place, the caste system is real and palpable around here. Membership in the "wrong" family puts a person in a box from which deliverance, even on the day of the Lord's coming, is a fairly doubtful thing. Through family a person inherits a particular station in life and he or she is taught early on that



it's very poor form to question it.

The second problem relates to the first. The family is the principal institution of learning hereabouts. As is generally true the whole world over, it tends to be a school staffed by well-meaning incompetents. The real rub comes, however, from there not being any other serious claimants to the authority of knowledge. In the cities I know, the impressionable child is besieged on all sides by forces good and bad that at least challenge the wisdom of the hearth, that make him think and offer him opportunity and responsibility to pick and choose a way of his own. The very existence of all these visible choices encourages him to believe there is more to life than what he already has. Here the catechism claims

to truth that children learn at home amount to a given immutable reality in their social context. Youthful rebels soon blunt themselves against that wall and fall beaten and bloody into line and submission.

The net effect of all this tends to be a stupefying passivity in and among our country poor. City poor people pushed hard enough by intolerable conditions and injustice, may finally turn and fight. Country poor people, pushed hard by equally intolerable conditions and injustice, are more likely to curl up and die.

Hope lives hard here. And it attaches itself not at all to systems old, reformed, or even new, but rather to flesh pressed tenderly in the darkness with the fond

dream that come the dawn it may not get up and go away. Here I have learned to disbelieve in systems almost as much as any native, to follow kindness and pursue justice as best I'm able for the ones at hand and not for everyone else out there. No, of course I have not become apolitical but rather just put politics in another place. It is a very necessary passing means to a necessarily always passing end. But the Kingdom of God is not at the end of it.

God bless you and your's, City Jack, in your continuing ministry to and among Christ's "little ones" of the city. And please keep in your prayers your poor country cousins who are truly poorer than you think.

Faithfully,
Country Charlie Hawes

Meditation: Poor Mrs. Job

by Abbie Jane Wells

People commiserate with Job . . . and all he lost . . . and all he bore . . . but hardly anyone ever gives a thought to Mrs. Job.

Mrs. Job lost all that Job lost, except her health. Mrs. Job, too, lost 10 children — children of her body — and no one came to mourn with *her*. And when Job's fortunes were restored, even unto seven sons and three daughters, Mrs. Job got to bear those 10 children. *Twenty* children that woman bore for Job — 10 in her middle age, too! Her health may not have been so good, either, by the time Job had a second set of children.

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

Satan isn't nearly as smart as people seem to think. Had Satan been really smart, when God said, "Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life," Satan wouldn't have spared Job's wife as well as his life. Without Mrs. Job to scrounge for the food and do all the work while Job sat among the ashes, scraping his sores with a potsherd, Job would *really* have been in a bind. Satan missed playing his trump card when he didn't take Job's wife away along with everything else, leaving Job *completely* alone to contemplate.

Mrs. Job had to go after the food Job ate, and for the wood to cook the food, and carry out the garbage and do the cleaning. And when Job's three friends came to sit with him for days, she got to scrounge up food for three extra mouths, for I doubt if they

brought their own sack lunches.

If Job had had to do for himself all that Mrs. Job did for him, he, too, might have been driven to her words, "Curse God, and die."

Well, next time you are commiserating over Job's sad plight, give a thought to all that Mrs. Job did, behind the scenes, that made it possible for Job to sit in the ashes, talking to his friends for days on end. Moreover, on top of this, she bore for him a second set of 10 children — 20 children that woman bore in order for Job to end up with seven sons and three daughters.

And nobody ever gives Mrs. Job credit for anything except her foolish remark in *Job* 2:9. Nobody mourns with her over her losses at the hand of Satan. No one gives thanks for all she did for Job. And it's about time somebody did.

Christians and Jews in Context

by Barbara Krasner

I mean to write about Jewish-Christian dialogue. "Jewish-Christian relations." For me the phrase resonates with emptiness, pretense, disappointed expectations, unspoken accusations, mutual exploitation and invisible, insidious and chronic polarization: Us versus them, gospel versus law, love versus justice, faith versus works, messiah come versus messiah yet to be, deicide versus genocide, the establishment of a Palestinian state versus the survival of the Jewish state, Andrew Young diplomat versus Andrew Young partisan, Menachem Begin head of state versus Menachem Begin terrorist. Which side are you on, friends?

Answers prematurely concluded, questions go unasked. To what is a person loyal? What forces shape his or her life? Do we differ, and how? What do we hold in common, and what difference does it make? Can I trust this person to hear my side? If not, what gets in the way?

Before which Jew do we stand? Believing Orthodox? Liberal Reform? People-centered Reconstructionist? Agnostic Conservative? Zionist? Member of Neturai Karta, resisting an Israel created by the hands of men?

Dr. Barbara Krasner is co-director of the Center for Contextual Family Therapy and Allied Studies, King of Prussia, Pa., and an associate clinical professor of psychiatry at Hahnemann Medical College. She also teaches pastoral counseling in the Graduate Division of Religious Studies, LaSalle College.

Chasidic vigilante patrolling the streets of Brooklyn? Jew for Jesus? Illiterate Sephardi? Academic Ashkenazi? Enterprising Russian immigrant? Terrified Damascus resident? Member of the JDL? Cuban refugee twice-fled, the first time from Poland? Zealot of Gush Emunim, settling on disputed land? Israeli military veteran demonstrating for Shalom Achshav (Peace Now)? Blue collar worker? Arthur Ochs Sulzberger? Convert from Roman Catholicism, fearful of another Holocaust that could claim his Jewish son? Israeli physician transplanting a kidney from a Jew killed by terrorists into an hostile Arab girl?

Answers prematurely concluded, questions go unasked. Will the past always be our measure? How long do children have to pay for their grandparents' sins? Is estrangement forever? What do we owe each other, and why? Is competitive behavior to preempt mutual consideration indefinitely? Is power the only resolution to colliding life interests? Can trust ever be merited? Is interhuman justice anybody's goal?

Before which Christian do we stand? Churchman voicing his suspicion that the Holocaust was justified? ("Where there's smoke," he confided, "there must be fire.") Judeophile who claims to love Jews under all and any circumstances? Coptic Christian in Cairo, anticipating genocide by Moslems? Lebanese singing Arab lullabies to a Jewish child on Sabbath? Tenant in Harlem raging at her dunning Jewish landlord? Fundamentalist

Protestant urging an ingathering of Jews to Jerusalem, on behalf of the Parousia? Palestinian in Amman, feared by Jordanians and cut off from his family and roots in Israel? Black power advocate in Hebron finding ways to talk with Arabs, arm-in-arm with a Jewish friend? German man at the Arab League overtly hostile to all things Jewish, working out unfinished Nazi business? German woman in an Israeli kibbutz, working out unfinished family business? American Baptist in Syria offering consolation to an American Jew shaken by Quneitra's utter desolation? Which side are you on, friends?

Thirty-five years after the end of World War II, most attempts to establish equitable relationships between Christians and Jews continue to founder. To be sure, we share the same world. That, alone, seems to provide sufficient motivation for making common cause. Instead, our relationships, or lack thereof, seem to function like a magnet in their capacity to draw particles of suspicion and mistrust. Enmeshed in this complexity, proponents of Jewish-Christian dialogue have all but abandoned their efforts to penetrate and demystify the historic estrangement between our peoples.

Liberal activists, clergy and academicians (and I count myself among them) have all but quit the fray for areas that promise greater compensation, or at least less aggravation. Acceding to a split between the intensity of their private

convictions and the blandness of superficial public positions, they have lent themselves to the stagnation and indifference that currently prevail. Through their withdrawal, Jews and Christians in search of equity have helped create a justice vacuum that has readily been filled by the power-based reductionism of professional ecumenists. And why not?

The naked reality of mistrust and injustice in our world would make any effort at dialogue seem useless and absurd. It may be that the best we can manage is a shadow existence in which the redemptive forces of the human spirit perish *in utero*. On the other hand, life lived in shadows exacts its own pound of flesh.

Sculpted by shame and guilt, charged with helplessness and rage, and veneered with pseudomutuality and a tendency to blame a shadow existence results in a condition of personal captivity. Noted for its inertia and for evasion as a way of life, it is usually associated with a chaotic state of heart and mind that requires no personal courage, takes no personal position, and tolerates no personal disclosure.

In moments of passing condescension, I like to think that some people are more entitled than others to live out a shadow existence — but it doesn't seem to be so. Over the past year, the intolerable costs of living half a life have been shared with me again and again. In one instance that I'd like to recount, the context was Israeli and revolved around Nurit who is a psychologist. For two years she came to classes in family therapy but in all that time, she never said a word. When I asked her to present her family, as other students did, she seemed reluctant and shy. But in the end, she agreed. Entering the class on the day assigned to her, I was unsettled by the large number of stars of David which she had put on the blackboard above her relatives' names. Each of them, it turned out, represented

a family member killed in the Holocaust.

Nurit is the only offspring of parents who are 70 years old. Her parents have taken care not to interfere in her life, and took no exception to her service in the Israeli army. Nurit sees herself as a good daughter. Still, she struggles with guilt over who she wants to be. Reflecting on her situation, she said,

"I was never aware of the weight of my legacy because of the special way we used to deal with the Holocaust at home. The Holocaust was always confronted as an intellectual issue. It was important for my parents that I know about what happened. We spoke about it and I read about the subject. But it was never confronted as a personal issue..."

"I know nothing about what really happened to my relatives during the war; and I don't know what my parents know about it. Many years ago, my mother made a personal comment about her brother, and said that when the Germans came to Poland, he wanted to run away. But he didn't succeed. I was deeply touched. Suddenly, it wasn't 'the Holocaust' anymore, or 'the six million people' that were killed. It was a personal tragedy in my family legacy. Suddenly, the Holocaust was not something removed from my life. It was something that happened to my uncle."

"I still don't know much about my parents' family. Was it because of the way that they used to talk about it? Or was it because of the way I used to listen to them? I never saw any real expressions of sad feelings from them. We were not used to sharing at the level of emotional give-and-take..."

Loyal to her family's ways, Nurit feels stuck in her own situation. Unable to

console her closest friend whose husband's plane was shot down in the last Arab-Israeli war, she blames herself. "I have friends," she said, "but I'm helpless to deal with emotional demands. I remain loyal to my parents' taboo, never to evoke pain in the aftermath of personal loss."

"But now, something new seems possible. I think that our family has the resources to test and to work on changing things. If I can learn what the Holocaust really means for my family and me, I could find relief. I could deal with emotions. I could know their pain. I could cross boundaries. I could be free..."

Freedom from captivity in our own specific context is everybody's dream. Making the dream come true begins with rejecting the assumption that things have to stay the same. The process is furthered through learning to ask questions, and finding the courage to say our own side. But it's never won cheaply, if it's won at all. Ask an Israeli like Nurit. Ask a German too.

Ask Brunhilde who left her country to visit areas populated by large numbers of Jews. Spending time in the United States, she realized her worst fantasies of what some people think about Germans. She vividly recalls the trauma of the first time that she met a Jew who rolled up his sleeve to show her the numbers tattooed on his skin at Dachau. "History," she says, "is a very heavy package. Whenever I leave Germany, I'm converted into the person who did all of that to the Jews." And more: "We're not just a horrible, brutal, efficient, emotionless race. My family suffered too. The Versailles Treaty forced Germans to their knees. Their humiliation provided fertile ground for extremists. Would other groups have reacted differently?" And still more: "Israel is the only place where I've been treated as a guest. There I've met Germans who take me into their homes.

We have a common language, we have a common bond. I found people there who understand me in my terms. I learned to trust myself in Israel.”

Like other people, many Germans have learned to trust themselves in the world. But I wonder if there are Germans, Christians and Jews, who have discovered the courage to trust themselves with their parents, to pose the questions that simply refuse to go away: *Why? How? Did you know what was happening? Did you choose to be silent? Was it business as usual? How could that be? Why didn't you leave when there was time? Were you afraid? Were you sorry later? What would you do differently now? Can it happen again? What did the Holocaust mean to our family? What does the Holocaust mean for me?* I suspect that only the painful reconstruction of guilt and shame-laden human stories have any likelihood of holding the rest of us to account. Answers prematurely concluded, questions unasked.

A long time ago, I learned the efficacy of manipulation: Use the Holocaust, use the Palestinians, use the death of God, use the inevitability of God's grace, romanticize, idealize, criticize,

challenge, refute, negate, polarize, intellectualize, label, be distant, be intimate, be conformed by guilt, be driven by shame, be judged, be indignant, be righteous, be expectant, be disappointed, be triumphant, be contrite — make use of any available instrument to hide me from myself. A long time ago too, I learned the uselessness of blame. Losing my most expedient techniques along with all its sophistries, I was forced into a dialogic context.

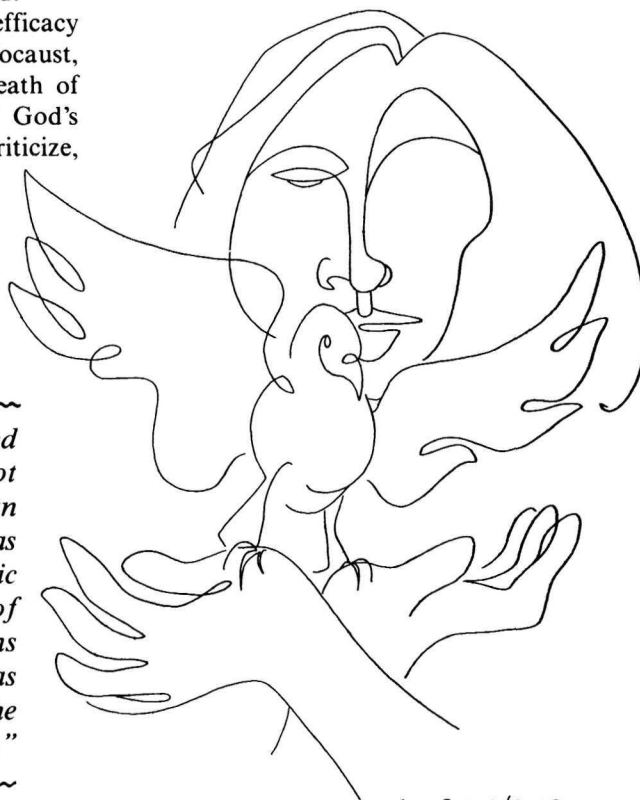
It was at the point when blame no longer served me well that a recognition of my own limitations began to teach me what should have been an obvious fact: That at best, I might know my side. But short of asking questions and getting a response, there was no way on God's earth that I could grasp another's side. Afraid to trust the dialogic process, I could guess, I could fantasize, I could wish, I could anticipate, I could

psychologize, I could intuit, I could affirm, I could condemn. But I simply could not know. Not knowing before whom I stood and disinclined to take risks that might result in rejection or pain, I could try to delegate my priorities to someone of like-mind who could raise my side, state my concerns, project my anger, and ask my questions. But I soon discovered that my questions belonged to me! Moreover, the capacity to surface my questions and to act on answers provided the only way I could find to respond to God's query, “Adam, where art thou?” (Gen. 3:9)

Here, finally, I can end at the beginning, in acknowledgement of the current state of bankruptcy in Jewish-Christian relations — bankruptcy created by a mutual willingness to enter into evasion, denial, flight and blame as acceptable modes of investment and exchange.

Human estrangement need not be forever. We cannot rework history, but we can refuse to let history function as our God. Like other dialogic efforts, the outcome of dialogue between Christians and Jews can be determined as much by the resources as by the pathology that people bring to it. Given courage, there are still ways to convert mistrust into trustworthy relating. There is still a place for individual merit that can mitigate the thrust of national and international power. There is still time to redeem past horror and injustice, through transforming them into reliably just give-and-take. There is still room to draw strength from the given context and tradition into which each of us is born, and which we learn to embrace, without having to distort them into cheap proofs of our own superiority. There is still reason to believe that dialogue, real dialogue — words spoken and heard in trust — has saving and healing power; and can still lead to the truths that over the generations, have set men and women free. ■

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*“Human estrangement need not be forever. We cannot rework history, but we can refuse to let history function as our God. Like other dialogic efforts, the outcome of dialogue between Christians and Jews can be determined as much by the resources as by the pathology people bring to it.”*  
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Cindy Fredrick/L.N.S.

Editorial . . . Continued from page 3
— are getting aboard.

- Likewise in this country, organized labor is slowly and fitfully beginning to remember once again its proud heritage of struggle for justice against corporate exploitation, and is becoming more militant. And there are signs here and there that the churches and synagogues are beginning to recall their historic role as advocates of working men and women.

- And, contrary to assessments that by this time the Equal Rights Amendment ratification drive has been stopped dead, the voices for its passage seem to grow weekly in number and intensity. With six months and three states remaining for its passage, might ERA yet be ratified?

We are not as powerless as we might first appear. Historically, significant change has always traced its source to a dynamic minority, advocating with clarion insistence a new course in the face of an intransigent (or indifferent) and even growing majority. Our difficulty as church people may not be principally in our organizing strategies (although we are overwhelmingly deficient there) but simply in our lack of faith in the promises of the God of all love, power

and justice: the God of the Exodus, the God of the Prophets, the God of the carpenter of Nazareth. Writing in last month's issue of THE WITNESS and speaking of the movement to peace, the Rev. Jack Woodard said, "Peace movement leaders must emerge and be accepted who actually believe in the *possibility* of world peace under the sovereignty of God — not only the necessity of it to avoid a nuclear holocaust, but the realistic possibility of it . . ."

We in the churches seldom write such sentences, much less believe them, so languid are we in our beliefs that the promises of God will bring peace and justice to the earth and all its children. Yet the Epiphany text, from Isaiah, heralding the promise of the universalizing of God's love in Christ, boldly proclaims:

*Arise, shine, for your light has come
And the Glory of the Lord has dawned upon you.
For behold, darkness covers the land,
Deep gloom enshrouds the peoples.
But over you the Lord will rise,
And God's Glory will appear upon you.*

— R. W. G. and the editors

Planning . . . Continued from page 3

on options for dying to raise the consciousness of other parishioners. Encourage your clergy to preach, teach and witness to the practical, theological, and sacramental aspects of dying. Finally, in the midst of all the experiences of death . . .

- Live one day at a time. Live hopefully, not optimistically. The smiling cosmic insurance policy resurrectionists want to promote optimism. That's fine as long as it is not confused with Christianity. Christianity is not optimistic about life and death; it is hopeful — hopeful that death is an end but not the end, a last word but not the last word, the end of one life and beginning of another. Optimism denies death and discounts disease; hope affirms death and transcends disease.

In the Episcopal tradition, there is a wonderful prayer in the funeral service

that encourages us to "live as those expecting to die and to die as those expecting to live." In spite of the organized church's failure, let us make our funeral/dying plans *now* in order to come to terms not only with our death but also with our everyday life.

Resources

The Living Bank, P.O. Box 6725, Houston, Texas 77005. Provides pamphlets and means for registering organs with nationwide network for retrieval at time of death.

The Sting of Death, James R. Adams, Seabury Press. Excellent church group study guide.

Death and Ministry, J. Donald Bane, editor, Seabury Press. Collection of articles on all aspects of care for dying patients/families.

A Manual of Death Education and Simple Burial, Ernest Morgan, The Celo Press, Burnsville, N.C. (\$2.50) A

practical manual for exploring inexpensive burial. Includes national listing of memorial societies.

To Live Until We Say Goodbye, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, Spectrum Books. Pictorial experiences for patients choosing to die at home.

Biblical Perspectives on Death, Lloyd R. Bailey Sr., Fortress Press. Biblical/historical summary with bibliography.

The Business of Dying, Yaffa Draznin, Hawthorn Press. A practical approach to the mundane aspects of dying.

About Facing Death as a Christian, Channing L. Bete Co. South Deerfield, Mass. Scriptographic booklet useful for patients/families and study groups.

As Long as There Is Life. Film available from The Hospice Institute, 765 Prospect Street, New Haven, Ct. 06511. Explains hospice home care concept. ■

Letters . . . *Continued from page 2*

continues the process of deepening the red stripes on our flag by soaking them in the blood of the martyred in Latin America.

I am a patriot, I am a citizen of the United States. Communism is not the answer, but our corporate capitalism is not the answer either. We need to dialogue, give and take, in building together a new economic order. Please continue your critical task of informing and educating.

The Rev. Dennis J. Steik, S.M.
Berkeley, Cal.

Critique: Bishops' Letter

I heard the recent Pastoral Letter (October, 1981) of the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church in the United States on "Apocalypse and Hope" as it was read from the pulpit of Christ Church, Cambridge, Mass. The letter was described as excellent. However, the real issue is whether the letter is of any value in bringing good news to the poor, release to the captive and oppressed, and in inducing the proud and arrogant to walk humbly.

My judgment is that the letter will have little, if any, value in achieving these religious goals as set forth by the prophet Micah and reiterated by Jesus. I may be wrong in this assessment because of the limits of my theological understanding. Nevertheless, I will share these ideas on the random chance that in part they may be right and of some value to some who may read them.

In their letter, the bishops 1) urged business and industry to increase their charitable giving; 2) pledged to increase their own giving; 3) committed themselves to a weekly act of fasting and prayer for peace; and 4) promised to challenge repeatedly the leaders of the United States and of other nations in the world against reliance on military threats as a peace-making method.

The primary action-targets of the House of Bishops were the leaders of business and industry and the leaders of governments. The economic leaders were urged to increase charitable giving

to the poor and the political leaders were challenged to abandon violence as a way of resolving differences. To induce these leaders to act, the bishops promised to increase their own giving, to fast and to pray. The bishops described their actions as reflecting "a new resolve of leadership" and they invited communicants to act as they will act.

It may appear that the issues discussed by the House of Bishops are unrelated to issues of the ordination of women as priests and their full participation in the affairs of the church. But I see a connection.

Over the years I have heard religious leaders say — during the period in the worship service when finances are gathered to support the works of the church — that one should first make amends to others whom one has offended before offering gifts to God. The implication is that the gift to God is no gift at all unless the giver confesses that prior actions have harmed another, repents, and asks the offended for forgiveness.

Some bishops who opposed the ordination of women, who have not taken affirmative action to elect a woman to the House of Bishops, have not confessed their actions against women or their failure to act affirmatively in behalf of women. Their negative action is a form of human oppression and a denial that all are equal in the sight of God; they have not repented and asked women to forgive them.

It strikes me that until the bishops who opposed full participation of women in the church (or who have not acted affirmatively to enhance opportunities for women in the church) confess, repent, and make amends to women, their gifts to God of more money, fasting and prayer are no gifts at all.

Some may interpret the Pastoral Letter of the House of Bishops as a way of putting behind us preoccupation with the church and our internal affairs and getting on with our outreach work. The problem is that those to whom we of the church reach out and of whom specific actions are requested may ignore us

because in our own house we will not do what we ask them to do. In effect, the House of Bishops asked political leaders to confess that they had attempted to secure our nation by the threat of violence to others, to repent for holding such a self-centered and inappropriate national view, and to make amends by way of the discipline of military restraint and negotiations for arms control. In like manner, the House of Bishops asked governmental and business leaders to confess that spontaneous and private caring for the poor is outdated and unworkable, to repent for attempting to return to such a simplistic arrangement apart from serving institutions, and to make amends by continuing organized governmental help and increased charitable giving by business and industry.

Government and business leaders know that the defunct General Convention Special Program was an institutional way of achieving "a higher level of involvement with the poor" by the Episcopal Church that was called for by the House of Bishops in the recent letter. They also know that the church refused to continue this program. How, then, can the House of Bishops ask the economic and governmental systems to do what the religious system would not do? The fasting of individuals and the advancement of personal tax refunds for the care of the poor is an example of the one-on-one pre-institutionalized caring for the poor that the House of Bishops said the nation had outgrown. Yet, these are the gifts the bishops would offer without confession of their inadequacy, repentance for killing the General Convention Special Program that had as one of its goals the empowerment of the poor, and making amends by finding an alternative institutional approach.

We cannot put behind our internal problems and walk away from them through the gifts of our prophecy about apocalypse and hope in the economy and the government without first making amends to those whom we have harmed in our own household.

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