

# THE WITNESS

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Ecumenism in China • Louie Crew

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Li Tim-Oi's Saga • Monique McClellan

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**Weep no more,  
Our Lady**  
Grant Gallup

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# Letters

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## Adds resource

I wanted to commend THE WITNESS for each of the articles published in the June issue. They offered perspectives on prisons and the law not found in many other journals. Also, I wanted to add to Caroline Malseed's fine list of resources that she recommended to the readers.

I was fortunate during my student days at Boston College to have as a teacher, Ben Alper. He and his wife, Ethel, have long been advocates for prison reform, alternatives to incarceration and community justice programs. Ben is the author of two works which I would highly recommend to everyone: *Prisons: Inside & Out* (Basic Books) and *Beyond the Courtroom: Programs in Community Justice & Conflict Resolution* (Lexington Books). Among Ben's previous positions are the first chief of the Section on Crime and Criminal Justice at the UN.

**Gene Roman**  
**Peace & Justice Ministry**  
**Baltimore, Md.**

## Prison issue to board

I was grateful to see such excellent reporting on the subject of prison ministry in the June WITNESS. I am distributing this issue to members of our Board of Directors who are not subscribers.

**The Rev. James Markunas**  
**San Francisco Jail Chaplaincy**

## Jesus not omitted

I would ask Bruce Skaug, who complained in June Letters to the Editor that the April WITNESS made no mention of Jesus, to prayerfully consider Jesus' words as recorded in *Matthew 25: 34-40*.

When a publication concerns itself with the establishment of justice, the

alleviation of suffering, the elimination of poverty — as the WITNESS has — that publication concerns itself with the work of Jesus, whether he is mentioned or not.

**Robert Lynn Kazmayer**  
**Bronxville, N.Y.**

## Confusion justified

It is a shame that Bruce Skaug must see the name of Jesus to know his presence. It is almost incomprehensible to picture him poring over the April WITNESS line by line to find the name; and you can almost feel his joy when he finds it absent. If he had looked more closely, he might have found the picture of the Lord being forcibly removed from the railroad tracks, or the story about His constant presence in the ministry of the Seamen's Institute, to name just two of the places where Jesus is obvious in the April issue.

He thinks that Dr. Church is confused about God. Of course he is. I am, and so is Mr. Skaug. How can we be anything but confused in the face of overwhelming, transcendent mystery? What concerns me is that Mr. Skaug doesn't know that he is confused, which can lead to all sorts of problems.

**The Rev. Rodgers T. Wood**  
**Pittsburgh, Pa.**

## Church to save souls

Does the saving of a person's soul have anything to do with religion? Can the fruitless task of decrying the present administration's foreign policy accomplish this? Can the illusionary goal of redistributing of the world's wealth save a soul? Can the pandering to perversion and abnormal sexual behavior bring a person to the Lord? I think not.

I believe your readers are entitled to a lot more in substantial, spiritual content before you can take pride in your parading

the name of the Episcopal Church on your masthead. The church is in the business of saving souls — not to be the mouthpiece of radical, social upheaval.

**Donald L. Adams**  
**Albuquerque, N.M.**

## Finds time for poor

I have been enjoying your magazine very much over the past year. It is very refreshing; yet still finds the time to take up the cross of the oppressed and suppressed in this world. I sometimes think that the Episcopal Church loses sight of the plight of the poor, and forgets Jesus' admonition to "feed my sheep." Keep tackling the hard areas of Christian living. There are people out here who are listening and acting on these issues.

**G.W. Bess**  
**Albuquerque, N.M.**

## Witness indispensable

For those of us who read the Bible with several newspapers, magazines and the 6:00 news close at hand, THE WITNESS magazine is absolutely indispensable!

I feel strongly that you and I, and all who are joined by the common thread of THE WITNESS, are involved in an important ministry together. I pray that we all grow more courageous and hopeful as we face the '80s with the "foolish" enthusiasm of Christ!

**Dixie Logan**  
**Ann Arbor, Mich.**

### Letters to come

*A selection of letters sent in response to the special issue of THE WITNESS commemorating the 10th anniversary of Episcopal women priests will appear in the September issue. — Eds.*

Open Letter:

## Liberation theology & contemplation

I am interested in making the connection, on a practical working level, between contemplation and social action. By social action I mean the struggle for peace and justice; by contemplation I mean access to Source. I hesitate to say why this connection should be made because I don't want to represent Source as a technique, or imply that the gesture of touching Source will make us invincible, give us solace, or even prove us right. It is true that contemplation can help us deal with stress; it can clarify the mind and deepen the intuition; it can purify the emotions; it can help us to be more alert, more energetic, more responsive to change; it can heal. But it can only accomplish these things at the price of a certain degree of creative suffering. Contemplation is one of the few situations — outside of profound personal love and the presence of death — which can bring us face-to-face with our own depths; but unlike crisis situations, or upheavals in our personal lives, it can be practiced. It can be learned.

In my own life — I've been doing solidarity work with Central American revolutions for over two years now — I've found that the more my political commitments deepen, the more I'm drawn to contemplation, because political work has faced me with my own tendencies toward panic, despair, self-righteousness and obsessive speed, and made it necessary for me to deal with them.

What I would like to see is a mutual exchange between those of us committed to a contemplative path and those of us working for peace and social justice; even better, I would like to see us as the same group. Political activists need ac-

cess to contemplative techniques and support in their practice; contemplatives need to know the world and the struggles of the world as their proper field.

In terms of the liberation theology movement, I believe that such a synthesis is about to take place, in a deeper way than ever before. Such figures as Thomas Merton, Dom Helder Camara, and Ernesto Cardenal have planted seeds of a comprehensive liberation spirituality; it is up to us, in the decade of the '80s, to transplant these seeds into the soil of North America, to nurture them in our own spiritual and political climate.

A contemplative theology of liberation shouldn't be too hard to work out, especially since our most instructive example is the life of Jesus, who spent half his ministry as a popular leader — healing, moving crowds — and the other half as a contemplative — fasting, tempted, transfigured. But we will still have to work to overcome certain prejudices that stand in our way. One is that contemplative spirituality is necessarily opposed to history. The truth is that they are complementary: contemplation opens us to the real depth of the historical moment, to the "ground of being" underlying history itself, and so makes it possible for us to experience historical pasts and potential futures as real and concrete, every bit as real and concrete as the present moment. Contemplation and history are like the vertical and horizontal beams of the Cross.

Another prejudice to be overcome is that contemplation is opposed to rational analysis and labor. Once again, the truth is that the three are complementary. Contemplation teaches us how to clear

*Continued on page 23*

## The Speech of Birds

I have an intuition of  
Harry Truman shaking hands  
with countless thousands  
of radioactive Japanese,  
kissing deformed babies.  
To each one he is saying:  
"I'm sorry. It was something we felt . . ."  
but they look away and  
move on.  
"Listen," Harry is saying.  
But they do not listen.  
They move on: restless, waiting,  
endless.  
Something has made them deaf.

At Gettysburg, in the tour bus,  
the good folk say:  
thank God  
the bombs are being built. This will  
protect our children.  
Harry tries to speak to them. Something  
has made him speechless. Outside  
the vultures circle  
in a descending gyre,  
some of them old enough to remember  
(for buzzards live long)  
but most anticipating.  
Harry eyes them with suspicion.  
It is more than a century passed  
in their downward spiral and  
they are precise, artistic and  
businesslike.

—William Hodges

## THE WITNESS

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## Give me your poor, unless . . .

**T**he flow of immigrants north into the United States from Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean has become a flood. An estimated 2 million persons entered the United States illegally last year. They were fleeing desperate poverty in Mexico and Haiti, and war and brutal repression as well as poverty in Central America. In the case of El Salvador, an estimated 600,000 have fled from war and political persecution. Of these, over 300,000 persons have settled in the Los Angeles area alone.

There is a second cause of the recent sharp rise in immigration. The global recession, rippling outward from its progenitor, the United States, became a depression in other countries. There is a correlation between the recent downward swing of the American economy, and the rate at which people from south of the border migrate here. "If the United States catches a cold, we catch pneumonia," the saying has it in Latin America. Unemployment in the United States is scandalous enough, reaching a high last year of 10%. But while reportedly dropping here to 7% range, unemployment in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean now ranges from 25 to 40% and is not declining. Add to that, Mexico's devaluation of the peso, three times since 1980, and you get in sheer human terms, a vast human and social tragedy.

Another dimension to this story is that the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, with increased personnel and expanded authority given it by the

Reagan administration, has been rounding up record numbers of people. If you happen to be Salvadoran and apprehended without documents, say in Los Angeles or at the border, you may be sent back to your death. In much the same way Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe were rounded up and put on death trains to Auschwitz or Buchenwald, so upon your capture you may be put aboard a TACA (Salvadoran Airlines) flight at Los Angeles Airport. Then you may be met at San Salvador's International Airport and turned over to the National Guard or Treasury Police — many of whom are death squad members, skilled in the ways of torture, rape, and murder. Already, in a preliminary correlation made by human rights organizations, about 50 returned Salvadorans have reportedly met their deaths at the hands of these infamous *esquadrões de muerte*. Ironically, the United States is supplying right-wing governments with the military assistance and — say some authoritative reports — with intelligence information systems to enable the death squads to function.

It is in this wider international context of human migration, extreme poverty, and brutal repression that the Simpson-Mazzoli bill, a landmark immigration reform measure, passed the House of Representatives in June. Masquerading as a humane and pragmatic piece of legislation purporting to protect some aliens already here while safeguarding jobs for U.S. citizens and establishing a new guestworker program, it would in-

stead punish undocumented immigrants yet another time. Employers found hiring undocumented workers would, in the House bill, be fined \$1,000 for each alien hired after a first warning by the INS. Also should the bill become law, it would encourage employers to discriminate against all persons of Latino appearance, since they would not want to risk mistakenly hiring an undocumented person. Indeed, even *before* the bill has become law, management at a tuna cannery in Los Angeles fired nine workers suspected of being undocumented aliens, several of whom had seniority of 10 years or more. (After widespread adverse publicity, the cannery rehired them.) In another instance, the personnel director of a Los Angeles plant admitted that since the move to pass Simpson-Mazzoli, "If I have four applicants for the job, I would naturally incline toward the one that's not Latino."

A House-Senate Conference Committee is scheduled to iron out final differences in the Simpson-Mazzoli bill in late summer. Latino groups are making a final push to defeat the bill in conference committee.

"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses," says the poem inscribed upon the base of the Statue of Liberty, "Your wretched refuse yearning to breathe free." Perhaps it is now time to add a footnote: No "wretched refuse" from Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, or other similar areas need apply.

(R. W. G. and the editors)



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## Weep no more, Our Lady

by Grant M. Gallup

A few years ago, a young man who was a member of our parish brought back from his visit to Tanzania the beautiful carved mahogany image of Mary with the infant Jesus that hangs near the entrance of our church. A couple of Sundays after we put it up, a parishioner came to me breathless with the news that the image of the Virgin Mother was weeping. Tears were dripping from the poignant features carved into the wood. For a wild instant I thought, "That's the end of all our financial problems." Our poor little inner city mission will become a shrine. People from all over the midwest will flock here in pilgrimage.

Then the bishop's warden asked me, "Tell me, Father, has that linseed oil dried yet, that I treated the statue with?" He had laid on the oil a few days earlier, to preserve the wood, to keep out insects and moisture. Since the face of the image

was the most heavily carved part, the most deeply incised, it was there that the oil would naturally exude. What we had was a good cry of linseed oil. And there went all my wild fantasies and my Anglican miracle to rival Fatima or Lourdes.

Recently on the south side of Chicago, at St. John of God church, they found their statue of Mary as the Mystic Rose weeping. It's a new wooden statue, that arrived from Italy in mid-May with bright glassy eyes. The newspapers and the television people have been duly informed, and the local episcopal overseer, and some anonymous theologians have been consulted. Apparently no one has as yet invited in a biochemist to test the tears. We are told that someone has, however, laid a few hankies on the face of the image to collect the tears.

Our age is an age of superstition. It is not surprising that the number of newspapers carrying astrological horoscopes has tripled since World War II. School children, seeing my clerical collar, do not ask about religion, but they ask what is

my sign. It is an age of gullibility, with evangelists and hokum preachers captivating the vast wasteland of television. It is an age when piety means the gullible running to see weeping statues.

The Church of St. John of God stands in a neighborhood no longer so full of its faithful supporters as it was a generation ago. The neighborhood has changed, and the new people no longer flock to rosary and novena services there. The news accounts say that thousands from surrounding parishes and from the suburbs have come to see the miracle. We are assured by some of the eyewitnesses that "she is weeping because she wants peace, and the world is full of sinners." A practical looking nun, interviewed on the 6 p.m. TV news, assures us that the phenomenon means we are to return to the commandments and the rosary.

The people who do visit the weeping statue must drive past many neighborhoods, and through this one, where, if they would look into the homes and the

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hospitals, the police precincts, and the missions, they could find, not statues weeping, but real women, real Mothers of Sorrow, weeping real tears, of real anguish, over their murdered children. Their sons, on the cross of gang warfare. Their daughters, on the gibbets of heroin and prostitution. If they want to see women weeping for peace, let them go with Secretary of State George Schultz to Nicaragua, or with Ronald Reagan to Ireland. In those lands, there have been weeping Madonnas for generations, weeping over their children engaged in murdering each other in the name of their gods. If statues were given to weeping, all the statues of Ireland would be awash, all the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary hemorrhaging, at the hypocrisy of Ronald Reagan's denunciation of terrorism there, so far away from the harbors of Central America.

### Tears in neighborhood

There's plenty of suffering in the world, plenty of tears in the neighborhood of St. John of God, and in our neighborhood here at St. Andrew's, for all the truly pious to venerate. The Psalmist remembers that God has put all the tears into a bottle, and has recorded them in a book. The Bible has a lot about tears and weeping — the people of Bible lands are given to public weeping, a lot more so than the people of the West. It is not shameful for Bible people to weep. The Psalmist says "I water my couch with my tears . . . tears have been my food day and night." The Bible says that God sees the tears of the oppressed, and that there shall be in the coming age no more weeping, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Hagar wept, and Esau. Jacob wept, and Samson's wife. Jonathan and David wept with each other, and David over Jonathan's death. Elijah wept, and in Babylon, the whole people of Israel sat down and wept, when they remembered thee, O Zion. A sorrowful woman washed Jesus' feet with her tears, and Jesus wept

at the grave of Lazarus, his friend, and over the whole city of Jerusalem, whom he would have gathered as a hen gathers her chicks. Peter wept bitterly when he denied the Lord. Jesus, when risen, found the Magdalen weeping at his tomb.

Tears and weeping there are, aplenty, in the Bible, and in human life. Miracles there are in human life as well as in the Bible. But Bible weeping and Bible miracles have to do with human suffering, and human triumph, and with the bringing in of justice and the renewal of the human community and with the strengthening of faith in the faltering, and of hope in the hopeless, and of wiping away the tears from human eyes and the restoration of the vision of a human community.

The first epistle of Peter says we should not be astonished at the occurrence of suffering in the Christian community. If we are reproached because of our name, "Christian," we should consider ourselves blessed. Peter says it is in this way that the spirit of glory rests upon us. In John's Gospel, too, Jesus thanks God in his final prayer of consecration, his "high priestly prayer," that he is about to enter into his hour of glory — his mounting of the cross of suffering. John identifies the suffering of the cross with the glory of the eternal Christ. So suffering has meaning. Human suffering has real meaning — it is lifted up and it is seen by God, and it is felt in the eternally human heart of an eternally human Christ.

### Suffering redemptive

Suffering, undeserved suffering, as Dr. Martin Luther King learned from Jesus and from Ghandi, is redemptive. It changes the sufferer by its being offered in union with the suffering of all the righteous in all ages, and it changes, we hope as well, the ones who inflict the suffering. It is hard for us to hear Peter and John and Martin King on the subject of suffering.

What is it that we believe, that we are willing to suffer for? To shed our tears

for? The tears God wants to see are not those of glassy eyes in a painted wooden doll, but the tears of joy at a sinner turned from a life of futility. God will wipe away tears from the eyes of those who weep and mourn now, for a world gone mad, a city gone astray, a church gone awry. The anguish and weeping of a people willing to turn around their lives, and the lives of the community, and the life of the nation: these are the tears that God will collect in the bottle, and record in the book. The miracle to pray for is that Ronald Reagan will shed some tears over the thousands dead in Central America, that George Schultz will break down in weeping for the crimes of a bully nation.

The final mention of the mother of Jesus in the New Testament occurs in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. After the Ascension, she is gathered with the Twelve, and with the other women who have come up from Galilee. She is not weeping, but she is praying with them — praying for the coming of the Spirit. "Why do you stand gazing into heaven?" they were asked, at Bethany, when Jesus left them. He's not in orbit over Palestine. He has been taken "out of our sight," but not out of our midst.

Just as Mary is found in the midst of the believing community, for she is one of us, so Jesus promises to the whole believing community a nearer presence than before. "Why do you stand gazing" into the glass eyes of a wooden doll, for a message from the heavens? We can find Mary, and Jesus, and their tears and laughter, in our human community — not in the clouds and skies, not in a wood and glass image of suffering or of joy, but in our brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers, praying with us, staying in the city with us, until we receive power from the highest, to have a vision of the new heaven, and the new earth, where we shall hear no more the weeping of the oppressed, and where God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. ■

# Public sanctuary: call to an option

by Henry L. Atkins

Those who opt for security and domination do not understand those who opt for freedom and openness. Witness Jesus in the presence of Pilate or the centuries of struggle of Latin Americans against colonial domination.

Christopher Columbus wrote at the end of his first voyage, "God has reserved for the Spanish monarchs, not only all the treasures of the New World but a still greater treasure of inestimable value, in the infinite number of souls destined to be brought over into the bosom of the Christian church." In 1492 there were between 20,000 and 30,000 such souls in Hispaniola, the place from which Columbus was writing; by 1548 people doubted if there were 500 native people left. The native leader in Hispaniola, Hatuey, as the Spanish were preparing to burn him at the stake, was asked by a Franciscan Friar if he wished to repent, to go to heaven. He asked if there were any Spaniards in heaven. The friar told him that only the good ones were there. Hatuey then said, "The best are good for nothing, and I will not go where there is a chance of meeting one of them."

Officially, the church which came with Columbus would not make an option for the Hatueys of Latin America until 1968 in Medellin, Colombia, when the Catholic bishops spoke out for the poor. Even then this decision would be resisted by those both inside and outside of the church.

Those nations that have sought to colonize Latin America, either in the

name of the cross or flag, or both, have always met with resistance and have almost always responded with violence — a violence that seeks to destroy both life and the will to live. A violence which means in El Salvador today that at any given point 75% of the children do not get enough to eat; 50% of the population are unemployed; 8% of the population receives 50% of the national income; 30% of all children die before the age of five from hunger-related disease; 40% of the peasant families have no access to land of any kind; thousands of civilians are murdered each year; thousands are tortured and thousands more have to flee for their lives. This is the present reality of both El Salvador and Guatemala. In Guatemala at one point in 1983, church officials were reporting the killing of some 800 native people a month by the army. The Roman Catholic Bishop's Conference has estimated that as many as 1 million Guatemalans have been made refugees by repression and warfare in that country.

Against this background, the church in

the United States is now located in a critical historical position. One way in which U.S. churches have responded is through the public sanctuary movement. Jim Corbett, whose moral courage gave birth to the movement in this country (see January WITNESS), has stated in relation to the church, "We can take our stand with the oppressed or we can take our stand with organized oppression; we can serve the kingdom of love or we can serve the kingdom of money, but we cannot do both." The sanctuary movement allows the church a means of saying no to U.S. intervention and foreign policy in Central America and an opportunity to stand with our sisters and brothers in that region. No one knows for sure just how many refugees are presently in the United States from El Salvador and Guatemala, but we do know that the figures are in the hundreds of thousands. Some estimate that in the Los Angeles area alone there are nearly 300,000 refugees from El Salvador.

Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees meet the requirements of the Refugee



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**The Rev. Henry L. Atkins, Jr.** is a former missionary in Latin America and is presently Episcopal Chaplain at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J.



Act of 1980 which accords refugee or asylum status to persons who cannot return to their country of origin because of persecution or fear of persecution due to race, religion, nationality, or membership in a particular social group or political opinion. However, the U.S. State Department and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) have refused to grant these refugees their proper status. Instead, they claim that almost all of the refugees from El Salvador and Guatemala are economical refugees, people coming to the United States mainly to seek employment, and thus can be deported. Refugees by the hundreds are returned monthly to Guatemala and El Salvador where many face torture, imprisonment or death.

In the face of this form of institutional violence by the U.S. government more than 130 churches across the country have opened their doors to these refugees.

The action is a simple one. A church, as a community, makes the decision to take refugees into its midst. The church houses, feeds and provides a place of sanctuary for those who would face torture or death if they were returned to their countries. However, according to the present INS ruling this is against the law and may be punished "by a fine not exceeding \$2,000 or by imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years, or both, for each alien."

On May 6, the people of St. Michael's Chapel, the Episcopal Campus Ministry Center at Rutgers University, voted to become a public sanctuary. As their chaplain, I was overjoyed. The decision involved a process begun in January when I suggested in a Sunday sermon that St. Michael's become a public sanctuary for Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees. I proposed that people interested in this possibility meet with me after the liturgy.

The group that met that first Sunday had many questions and concerns. Most

had never really considered that their faith might lead to being fined or jailed. Many wondered if they were willing to make that option and what it would mean for their families and careers. Some wanted more information about the reality of Central America. Others wondered if we had the resources to provide sanctuary. Still others wondered if a positive decision might not split the congregation.

From the end of January until early May we met almost every week to study, pray, reflect and struggle with the decision before us. We were joined by other people from the university community, especially from the Latin American community, who had heard of what we were doing. These meetings turned into moments of learning, struggle and grace. We also took readings of the larger community to see if there were those who would be willing to support by their actions a positive decision to become a public sanctuary. We were also in contact with other churches that had become public sanctuaries, especially St. Francis House in Madison, Wisc.

At our last meeting, shortly before we made our decision, we viewed a video tape from St. Francis House. After witnessing the powerful experience of the people there we talked about what we should do. One of our brothers from Puerto Rico said that the decision before us was whether we were willing to do what we said we believed. One by one others spoke, describing their fears and hopes. Here we had Christian education at its best as women and men talked about what they had learned during the process and what they now thought housing a Christian meant in the face of this present confrontation regarding refugees from El Salvador and Guatemala. We then counted the ballots and discovered that the vote was overwhelmingly yes.

As our decision became public, support began to materialize. It came from the diocesan office, the Council of Churches, our local Congress person,

Dan Berrigan, other campus ministers, faculty and staff at Rutgers, other churches in our area and the Hispanic community. Two weeks after our decision I was in Managua, Nicaragua in the barrio of El Riguero attending mass in the church of St. Mary of the Angels where the Rev. Uriel Molina, a strong supporter of the Sandinista Popular Revolution, is pastor. I was leading a group of church people in higher education on a visit to the churches in Nicaragua. At the end of the Mass, which was attended by hundreds of people from the barrio, Molina offered a prayer of thanksgiving for those churches in the United States that had become public sanctuaries. He spoke of these churches as being servants of life rather than death, of being the church of the resurrection.

Gustavo Gutierrez has said that "The glory of God is that the poor live." My guess is that the soul of Hatuey is filled with joy at this possibility and would want to meet those who have opted for public sanctuary. ■

## Los Refugiados: A Salvadoran Love Story

The night they swam the Rio Suchiote  
rings of moonlight spun in mud pools.  
They watched the banks for ticks of light,  
hushed for the border's  
sinister sounds . . . the human voice.  
When search beams cracked open,  
a mantle of light fell  
over the swimmer's shoulders.  
Jose's voice trembled and broke,  
"Corre! Compa, corre!"  
A fish tearing the line, he pulled the light  
to his own thrashing body  
to save hers.  
Her final memory was Jose walking  
deeper into that thick mesh of light.

In Mexicali she gave away  
her Papa's life savings.  
Forty years of field work  
rolled like sweat  
into a "coyote's" Judas palm.  
The price of safety, these betrayals.  
Who watches such acts in the world?

— Renny Golden

# That God might remember the good times . . .

by Edward P. Ross

Sometimes you hear some funny things in church.

Consider the reading from Exodus 32:2-11, 13-14, that comes up once every three years in the lectionary of both the Roman and Reformed tradition. I'm not sure how often it is read in the fundamentalist churches of the Anabaptist tradition, but when it does it must make for some interesting theological speculations.

According to that passage from Exodus (and I'm using my own free and somewhat modernized translation), God saw Moses as a pretty dependable guy; but what God thought of the Jewish people (and their golden calf) was virtually unprintable — even for a translator like me. So God had a serious God-to-man talk with Moses, telling him that his people would have to be destroyed.

*"Leave me alone," God said, "so I can work up a really good hate."*

Then, perhaps to reassure Moses that nothing personal was meant, God said that after these people were wiped out, a new one would be created, more worthy of a leader like Moses.

Now that's a good one — a God who gets mad, just like me. But it gets even funnier. Exodus also portrays a God who can be reasoned out of anger. For Moses, using arguments that apparently God hadn't thought of, convinced God to give

the Jewish people another chance. He didn't use any sacrificial lambs or hard-driven bargains. Moses just looked up at God in the cloud, and yelled:

*"Look, Lord, don't destroy all that you have built up. These people come from good stock. Remember Abraham? He was a great guy. And Isaac? Remember Isaac? Those were good days you had together. And don't forget, you gave them your word, your sacred word, that you would look after their kids. You can't go back on a promise! So those kids made a few mistakes. Who's perfect?"*

Then, in a line our lectionary-builders skipped (verse 12), Moses made a subtler point. In that verse he reminded God of what the Egyptians would say if they found out God had taken all those Hebrew slaves out of Egypt, only to issue an enormous recall campaign on the Sinai. Now that's a telling argument and I can't see why it was left out of our liturgy. It is the sort of thing we all say to our children — and then feel a little guilty about the next day: "What will the neighbors think?" It might not be the sort of high-toned stuff you expect to use effectively on a burning bush, but it worked. God was talked out of vengeance.

For the more sophisticated theologians among us, for those used to thinking of God as an "Uncaused First Cause" or in more modern terms as "Ground of Being" (in any event as all-knowing and all-perfect) this reading from Exodus can bring a smile to the lips. But, except for

the fundamentalists among us, we don't get too excited when we hear readings like this. We know that the Book of Exodus could not have been written by Moses himself; that it does not have the force of an eye-witness account; that it is an elaborate rationalization written in the form of a story and, more importantly, that although it reveals some basic concepts about the nature of God (freedom and covenant) it tells us much more about the sort of people who wrote the story.

What we are reading is not so much a book about God as a book about a relationship with God. "Here we are," it is saying, in its backward look at history, "now let's figure out how we got this way. We know, because of what has been handed down to us orally, that we used to be slaves in Egypt; that we were freed; that we came to this place and took this piece of land and built a nation on it. God helped us do all those things. And we know that grandfather says that there were long periods of backsliding — even idolatry. How could we have kept God on our side? Well, Moses led us out of slavery. And promises . . . promises are powerful things. All of our dealings with one another are based on promises . . . not pieces of paper but the word of one to another. If God had made a promise to us, that would be the most powerful promise of all. I'll bet *that* was it."

Today we smile at the similes (or, more accurately if less consonantly, at the metaphors). We feel perhaps a trifle smug in our urban churches (those of us who are still in any churches at all) as we

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look at the searchings of those nomads settling down in their promised land. But how much more do we really know of God than they did? What right do we have to feel smug? Most theologians write papers in a jargon that only other theologians can pretend to understand.

Not even in those papers can we come close to expressing the inexpressible. In the last analysis we are all still striving to free ourselves from some form of slavery — whether of war or wealth, of racism or sexism — and God is still our hope in that struggle for liberation. We still think

of God in fairly primitive terms, even though we have lost some of the daring that Moses had in his conversations with God. But we hold onto the promises, and we trust, when we fail (as we do periodically) that God will remember the good times. ■

## SHORT TAKES

### Prophetic church not club

The church's prophetic word must be heard in the public sector, in searing judgment against those actions, both individual and systemic, which continue patterns of oppression based on strength or race or sex or tradition. A church that talks of salvation but does not battle for social justice will be dismissed as phony. A church that shuns controversy for fear of upsetting its membership has ceased to be the church and has become a club. No program of evangelism will save it.

— John Shelby Spong  
*In The Whirlwind*

### Stimulus for renewal

The main stimulus for the renewal of Christianity will come from the bottom and from the edge, from those sectors of the Christian world that are on the margins of the modern/liberal consensus. It is coming from those places where Christians are poor, especially Latin America; from areas where they live as small minorities surrounded by non-Christian cultures as they do in Asia; from the churches that live under political despotisms as they do in the Communist world and in parts of South and Central America; from the American churches of blacks and poor whites; from those women who are agonizing together over what it means to be faithful and female in a church that has perpetuated patriarchy for two millennia.

These are disparate peoples; but what they have in common is that they were all dealt in and dealt out, included and excluded from modernity and its religious aura. Their forced removal to its sidelines (or better, its basements, kitchens, slums, and colonies) is what now enables them to offer a version of Christianity that is liberating because it has not been squeezed through the concordat or distorted by the straitened function

### Choir strikes back

**Dr. Thomas Grissom, pastor of Salem United Methodist Church, Harlem, told this anecdote while preaching at Riverside Church recently:**

**A certain pastor was having confrontation upon confrontation with his congregation, and after a long series of clashes, it was mutually decided that he should leave. The congregation agreed that the decent thing to do was to let the pastor have his final say in his last sermon.**

**And so the preacher had the last word with his disgruntled flock, ending his elocution with the assurance that he was not dismayed, because "the same Jesus that sent me here will at the end, come to take me away."**

**As he concluded, the choir went into a lustily rendered version of "What a Friend We Have in Jesus."**

the modern world has assigned religion and theology.

— Harvey Cox  
*Religion in the Secular City*

### Washington humor

A friend of mine was recently asked, "What's it like to be living in Washington these days?" He answered with a story: "It's standard procedure in wartime to have a runner who moves among the platoons gathering intelligence. On one occasion this particular runner returned to report to the commander. 'Well how does it look?' he was asked. The runner, an irrepressible optimist, replied enthusiastically, 'We can attack in any direction, sir; we're surrounded.'"

— Larry Rasmussen  
*Laos Newsletter*

### Going to work, office?

Stephanie L. Certain, a business consultant, sends along this reflection:

As a writer, I am intimately aware of the power of words, even those words we take for granted, to express subtle nuances of belief and meaning. For example, I have noticed how rarely in a professional environment one hears the word "work" in reference to the task or occupation at hand. Professionals do not go to work in the morning, but to the "office." They ask one another not, "What are you working on?" but, rather, "What's up in your neck of the woods?" They are busy, not with work, but with "projects," "cases," or "clients."

The examples go on and on, and the answer is simple. Professionals don't think of themselves as "workers." Stated simply, to be a professional is preferable — and carries more status — than to be a "worker."

In my experience with employees, the man or woman on the line doesn't often think of the boss as a worker either. A college degree is often the distinction, though position in the organization is more likely to be the dividing line. So, this separation is perceived by both sides and it is reflected in our language. Assembly line workers don't think of themselves as having careers — just jobs. Executives don't have jobs; they have careers or professions. In some ways, the Marxist charge of class distinctions does exist today in the United States, though in a more subtle form.

If we are to dream of a society based on a spirituality of work — and we must not only dream, but strive to make that dream a reality — it seems to me that a start must be made in bridging the distances workers perceive between themselves.

— Quoted in *Initiatives*  
National Center for the Laity

*If you thought the Philadelphia 11,  
the first Episcopal women priests  
in the United States  
had a hard time getting ordained, meet . . .*

# Li Tim-Oi: the first woman ordained Anglican priest

by Monique McClellan

**I**magine China in the winter of 1944. The whole country is at war. Under Mao Tse-Tung the Communists are defending their territory in the north. Assorted war lords and Chiang Kai-Shek's troops are fighting the rapidly advancing Japanese armies — and each other. At the southern tip of the mainland, Hong Kong is already under Japanese occupation. There are only pockets of unoccupied territory. And hundreds of thousands of refugees from all over China, seeking to escape war, form a steady stream of human misery.

Somewhere in the midst of all this death and chaos a small, determined woman in her thirties is headed north — the wrong direction. She has left the Portuguese colony of Macao, just south of Hong Kong, to make her way to Xingxing. This journey, exhausting in the best of times, becomes a perilous expedition in war-time China. Crossing Japanese lines several times under cover of darkness, travelling in sedan chairs, crossing turbulent streams in small boats or trusting

strange guides to take her over steep mountain passes to avoid the Japanese soldiers, she will need one week to reach Xingxing.

The woman is Li Tim-Oi and she is going to her ordination. No obstacle will stop her. Taking shelter wherever it is reasonably safe, she sleeps on the floor in a police station and another time in an outhouse. Her only concern is to meet the bishop who has sent for her and who will be ordaining her. Miraculously, she arrives in Xingxing on the appointed day, as does Ronald Hall, the Anglican bishop of Hong Kong and South China. He, too, had travelled undetected from Chungking.

"We arrived 30 minutes from each other. We were so overwhelmed that both of us had arrived safely. We knelt together and prayed for a long time. We prayed and discussed a lot during the next few days to get God's guidance, and I had to answer many questions — about my vocation and call to God's service — to myself and to the bishop and to the priest of the Xingxing church. And after that I was ordained. I made my way back to Macao."

In the winter of 1944 in the midst of war-torn China, Li Tim-Oi had become

the first woman ever to be ordained a priest anywhere in the worldwide Anglican communion.

Sitting in the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva 40 years later, Li Tim-Oi, now 76 years old, makes nothing of the fact that she has just come from an anniversary celebration in London's Westminster Abbey of her historic ordination. Invited by the Movement for the Ordination of Women, a dozen bishops had gathered, together with 100 deaconesses, women priests from overseas, clergy and other well-wishers, packing more than a thousand people into England's most famous church building.

The turnout astonished the organizers. But, insists Li Tim-Oi, "I am nothing special, just a mere worm." She recalls a moment during her travels in China during the war: "Bishop Hall had ordered protection for me in one of the towns. One day I was cared for by four armed guards. The people there of course were expecting a very important person. They were so surprised when they saw it was only me . . ."

She was then and is now genuinely taken aback by the attention showered on her. And after hearing about her achievements one might well be sur-

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prised on first meeting Li Tim-Oi — a mere slip of a woman, small and thin and plainly dressed. But her handshake is firm and her eyes are bright and she holds herself very straight, not resting her back.

Yet she has carried many burdens. Her ordination in 1944 caused a tempest back in England. What had seemed a natural development during the strained war years in China was not acceptable to the post-war Anglican establishment back at Lambeth Palace in London. And throughout the Anglican communion angry voices demanded to know what had caused Bishop Hall to initiate the unheard-of priesting of a woman?

Born in Hong Kong, Li Tim-Oi was brought up in a Christian family. As a young woman, she attended a service at St. John's Cathedral in Hong Kong where an English deaconess was ordained. Sitting in the front row, she felt directly spoken to when the presiding priest said, "Today we have here an English woman who wants to give her life to the Chinese church. Is there any Chinese woman who would want to give herself to our church?"

Li tried to escape from those words, worried that she was not the right person; but she could never forget them and she began to devote herself to service in the church through teaching. While she was still in her twenties, she studied theology at Union Theological College in Canton, taking the same courses as the male students and graduating with full honors. She was then planning to work as a lay-person in the church.

In 1940 after the outbreak of the Second World War, the Japanese had increased their hold on South China. Macao was the only free enclave in the region, since the Portuguese were not at war with Japan. Priests were increasingly at risk traveling to and from the tiny, mostly Roman Catholic colony. Li Tim-Oi, who had been ordained a deaconess, was asked to serve in Macao in the oldest Protestant missionary church in China.

Li Tim-Oi on a recent visit to the Ecumenical Center in Geneva.

Soon refugees began to pour into Macao from Canton. When Hong Kong fell to the Japanese in 1941 another load of Chinese and Eurasians arrived. Li's church grew far beyond its capabilities to function — but she managed to serve the whole community, both Chinese and non-Chinese, preaching both in Cantonese

and English. Once a month the Hong Kong bishop sent a priest from wherever it was safe to travel to Macao for a communion service. But the time came, as Li Tim-Oi says, "when no man priest dared to run the risk of coming to celebrate communion in our isolated colony."

Since Bishop Hall had not been in



WCC/Peter Williams

Hong Kong during the Japanese invasion, he had avoided internment, and he was working out of Chungking, in China. Again and again refugees had told him of the incredible work Li Tim-Oi was doing in her evergrowing church in overcrowded Macao. And so he wrote her a simple letter: I would like to ordain you a priest if you are willing to risk the voyage to Xingxing.

She read it to her church members and received much encouragement, spiritual and material; and satisfied with their support, she left on her perilous voyage. Returning ordained to Macao, she continued her work, resuming all of her other duties as before and now celebrating communion services as well.

When news of Li Tim-Oi's ordination reached England, it created an uproar in the Anglican Church. Under wartime conditions, word of what Bishop Hall had done did not get to England until six months later, and then only by way of the children's page in a missionary magazine. A July 1944 editorial in *Church Times* condemned Bishop Hall's action in no uncertain terms: "Before committing himself unilaterally to this flagrant breach of the working principles of the Church to which every bishop is supposed to be a permanent guardian, it seems that he neither considered the wider implications of his action, nor consulted wiser heads than his own. He preferred to play a lone hand: not like a civilized leader who is himself subject to constitutional authority, but like a wild man from the woods."

The editorialist for the then-exclusively Anglo-Catholic newspaper concluded, predictably, by calling on the church in China to undo what had been done. Failing that, the Anglican Church everywhere should express its opposition. And the *Church Times* reaction clearly reflected the general attitude of the church hierarchy.

A few days earlier the editor had re-

ceived a confidential letter from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. William Temple. Temple expressed his regret that Bishop Hall had not merely authorized Deaconess Li to celebrate Holy Communion as an emergency measure only. For ordination, if it were to be regarded as valid and effective, was for life. Temple went on to say that, in agreement with the provinces of the Anglican communion as a whole, he was himself strongly opposed to the ordination of women. The letter ended with the odd confession that he would be immensely comforted "if we could find any shadow of theological ground for the non-ordination of women."

Despite the absence of such theological reasoning, the concerted pressure of the Anglican Church was on Bishop Hall back in Hong Kong. And when the provincial bishops met for the first time after the war in Shanghai in early 1946, Hall was censured for his action. Clearly, he needed to do something. Li Tim-Oi, innocently fulfilling her priestly functions in Macao, received a letter inviting her to Hong Kong "to discuss an urgent matter regarding her vocation."

Now, in 1984, she tries to remember her thoughts as she sat there in Hong Kong, two years after her ordination, listening to the whole story of the uproar she had caused. "I tried to stay very calm. Then I told the bishop that I wanted him to be able to continue with his work, with my strong support. I wanted to work for the church, never mind any title, my work needed no name. I told Bishop Hall how much we needed him to stay. So we agreed, and I continued to serve the church happily for many, many years."

Li Tim-Oi had officially returned her priesthood, as it were. She sits very straight with hands folded as she talks about this. Then a conspiratorial smile and a wink suddenly light up her face: "But you know, although I didn't use the title, my work went on as usual. I celebrated holy communion in other churches on the invitation of the priest there. In my

own church back in China after the war, bread and wine were always sent to be blessed by the archdeacon. But when Bishop Hall once visited me and my church near the Vietnamese border, he told the whole congregation that I was really a priest, and you know, they were all so happy to hear that."

One special occasion remains important from those years. Just before China's Cultural Revolution in the late 1950s, Li Tim-Oi was teaching at her alma mater. On Christmas eve the principal asked her to be the celebrant. She wore the robe, cassock and stole of the Anglican Church and gave communion to the whole college. It turned out to be the last Christmas celebration before the college was closed. The Red Guards first sentenced her to cut wood in the hills. Later she worked together with other pastoral workers in a factory, waxing candy wrappers.

Through the fourteen years of the Cultural Revolution Li Tim-Oi knew that she could help keep the church alive. True to her faith, she was the priest of the first church to reopen in Canton in the early 1970s.

But by then — although the church in China itself is now non-denominational — Li Tim-Oi had gained official recognition as a priest in the rest of the world. In 1971, she was reconfirmed in absentia, after Hong Kong's diocese voted to ordain women to the priesthood. The provincial outpost had again taken the first step in the worldwide Anglican communion in support of Bishop Hall's action.

To the Movement for the Ordination of Women in England Li Tim-Oi's life has become a beacon and at the same time a reminder of their own situation. Although there are now many ordained women in the Anglican communion around the world, deaconesses in England are still waiting. ■

(Reprinted with permission from *One World*, publication of the World Council of Churches, Geneva, April 1984.)

# Ecumenism in China

by Li Wenxin and Louie Crew



**T**oday, Protestants in China are united. Denominations have virtually disappeared, even though many current members and most clergy were originally trained in one of the several denominations which still compete in the West.

This unity has greatly pleased some Western observers, among them the Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie. Preaching in Beijing in December 1983, the Archbishop noted that the first missionary arrived in China around the time that the first missionary arrived in England. St. Augustine became the first Archbishop of Canterbury. When the Pope sent St. Augustine in 597, Runcie reminisced, "He gave some very good advice: 'Teach them the essentials, but don't worry too much if their customs are different from ours. Let them follow their own customs.'"

The 102nd Archbishop went on to confess: "Now you know and I know that in the spread of Christianity around the world, that good advice has not always been followed." The Chinese Christian Association which invited the Archbishop has been delighted with his support of their unilateral ecumenism and with his respect for their independence of

all Western Christian hierarchies.

Chinese Christians urged genuine ecumenism as early as 1921, but the Western Christians, who then controlled most of the churches of China, balked. Even after the foreign Christians had departed — all by the time of the creation of the People's Republic in 1949 — religious divisions persisted. The Gang of Four, who ruled during the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76, suppressed all religious activity and most intellectual endeavor. Traumatized, the Protestants united.

The Beijing Christian Association illustrates the unification. In 1979, it combined what had been five different Protestant sects before the Cultural Revolution. Two of its clergy, the Rev. Mr. Yin Jizeng and the Rev. Liu Zhonghe, recently explained to us the results. Yin was trained in the Church of the Brethren tradition (also known as Little Folks Brethren). Liu, 76, was trained at Central Theological Seminary in Nanjing and was ordained an Anglican priest long before the revolution of 1949. With six other male clergy these two minister in two separate churches, and each preaches about twice a month.

## New wine skins

Like all other Protestant congregations in China, the Beijing Christian Association Church is both physically and theologically autonomous, not responsible to any higher ecclesiastical authority. It has no bishops or other overseers; and those

elsewhere classified as bishops, such as the five Anglican bishops, exercise no material authority, only spiritual influence over their flocks.

In many ways the evangelical majority exercises the strongest influence on the polity, liturgy, and doctrine of the church united. The hymns sung are often evangelical, as are most sermons. The church does not baptize infants. Converts choose their own form of baptism. No one follows a liturgical calendar nor do the ministers usually vest. Most in the congregation bring their Bibles to follow the texts, and they expect their preacher to cite the text often in sermons, which the congregation prefers to be long. At the Chong Wen Men location, ministers' chairs obscure a plain altar; the pulpit centers the service. The ministers wear a microphone to assure that they will be heard even in the outer reaches of the large room.

The church does practice some diversity. For example, on every third Sunday, Liu holds in the adjoining chapel a service of Holy Communion using an Anglican prayer book. Normally about 20-30 attend, only two or three under 55 or 60 years. Several hundred attend most of the services in the main room.

People at the Holy Communion are friendly with an informality compatible with that of the evangelical majority. Recently, for those who remained after Communion, Liu illustrated and discussed Anglican chant; but one would

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**Li Wenxin and Louie Crew** teach English together in Beijing. Li is a Chinese communist atheist. Crew is a U.S. socialist Episcopalian and has frequently written for THE WITNESS.



not expect to hear anything of that sort in the main services. Nor would one feel welcome to genuflect. Liu rarely makes the sign of the cross in his benediction, and he serves from Baptist-styled individual glass thimbles, not from the common cup, to which people objected on health grounds back in 1958. Liu vests for the Eucharist, but at other times dresses like any other person.

"The idea gets vaguer and vaguer about the different groups," Liu explained.

The Beijing Christian Association meets its material needs, such as clergy salaries and the expenses of operating the building, mainly through revenue from rent derived from church properties. Clergy receive 70-90 yuan (\$35-\$45) per month, or roughly the salaries standard for teachers and many other professionals with similar training. As in the United States, most government workers (here called "cadres") and most farmers receive more money, but few salaries in China are large. Physicians, for example, receive \$50-\$60 per month.

The Beijing congregation, like Christian groups all over China, reports enormous revival. For a long time after the 1949 revolution, the majority of China's religious buildings — Buddhist, Christian, and Muslim alike — were either closed or reopened as schools, hospitals, or during the Cultural Revolution, even as coal bins. By contrast, last Christmas one of the two Beijing congregations had to move to its present large quarters at Chong Wen Men to accommodate the crowds.

Church-going in Beijing is not the dressy, show-off affair which it is in much of America for poor and rich alike. Most wear the grays and blues ubiquitous in China. With white robes trimmed in scarlet, the choir adds a touch of the pagentry one can find at only a few local public activities, such as sports events or the Beijing opera. Some members of the choir sing professionally elsewhere, one with the Central Broadcasting Group.

All who sing at the church are unpaid volunteer Christians.

Liu stresses that prominent citizens — physicians, college presidents, and others — are in the congregation every week, not just as observers, but as Christians. Even as early as 1954, the nation's constitution guaranteed religious freedom for everyone. Chinese Christians were in the People's Congress which prepared that constitution. While officially atheist, the Party guaranteed the liberties of all people in China. The Gang of Four subverted the constitution by arguing that "religious liberty" gave them the right to fight against any religious beliefs.

### No barriers to women

Women and men make up about equal portions of the congregation, sometimes as couples, often singly. As in America, however, women are not visible in most pulpits, though soon more will be. The Chinese Christian Association recognizes no barriers to women as ministers, and several women are now in training at the seminary in Nanjing and in local centers. In Shenyang, capital city of the northeast Liaoning Province, Lu Zhibin and Wu Ai'en already pioneer as the first official women ministers in their part of the country. Wu ministers to a congregation of people who, like herself, are of Korean descent.

Women also maintain their own Sister Committee, which tends primarily to women's specialized needs, arranges

visits to the sick, organizes transportation, etc. Wang Yiaoqing, a woman in her 70s, leads in this group at Chong Wen Men Church.

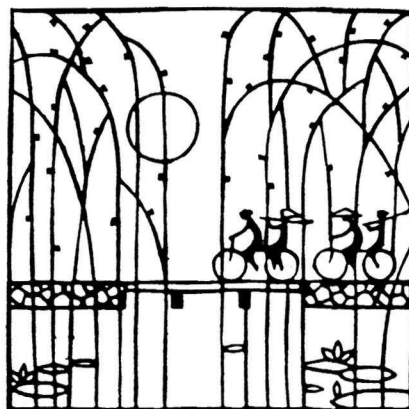
Liu noted that the Chinese church supported the rights of women and children long before the welcome national drive currently reaffirming them.

Age disparity often startles the outside visitor to the church in Beijing. Most in the Sunday congregation are over 60. The young prefer the service on Saturday nights. Some non-Christian students drop in to inspect out of curiosity but usually don't join. The young who do join, work mainly as clerks. According to Liu, most "converts" are children of Christians. Even so, Liu predicts that with new churches opening now almost daily somewhere in China, the church should be a more visible presence in 10-20 years.

Prodded to explain how one might distinguish a Chinese Christian from any other Chinese person, Liu acknowledged: "It would not be easy." Pressed to explain whether religion then makes any difference in the lives of the believers, Liu said that yes, "Christians will make even better workers, even with tasks that are harder and dirtier. Christians work not just for themselves and for the state's modernization drive, but also for God."

Liu said that he does not feel the young will be jeopardized in employment or educational opportunities if they are known to be religious: "Most employers recognize that the religious would make more faithful and dedicated workers."

We asked Liu whether he fears that the new national concern over "cultural contamination" marks a return to the religious suppression of the Gang of Four. "No," he assured us; "The acts during the Cultural Revolution were mostly the work of the four people, but the new acts are a political consensus duly arrived at within the full Party." Liu believes that China would not likely repeat the bitter lessons of that earlier time, that the na-





tion has learned just how evil it is to suppress religion.

In autumn of 1983 Zhou Yang, chairman of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, criticized himself publicly for his paper on "alienation," saying that after he had published it he feared the "adverse effects it would have on the Party." Members of the federation "agreed that while remarkable progress had been made in literature and art in the past five years, writers and artists had failed to heed the Party Central Committee's opinions on fundamental issues aimed at overcoming tendencies toward bourgeois liberalization" (*China Daily*, Nov. 12, 1983).

Minister Yin Jizeng feels that regarding the new charges of "cultural contamination," the Christian community agrees substantially with the government and opposes the importation of Western pollution like pornography.

Both ministers stress that religious people enjoy much more liberty now than they did during the Cultural Revolution. During that time, the clergy who now serve the Beijing Christian Association went to orchards in the suburbs to pick fruit. Liu explains that they did not dare risk communion services even privately, but did read the Bible together. In his recent visit the Archbishop of Canterbury praised the Chinese Christians for the work that they had done to rebuild their church.

### Outer limits

The Beijing Christian Association is affiliated with the China Christian Council which hosted the Archbishop, but most of its ministers stay put and are not itinerant, not even for short-term exchanges of pulpits. The Jin Ling Concord Seminary in Nanjing trains many of the new Protestant clergy in the country; but its space is limited, with only three students there now from all Beijing, a city of 11 million. Thus the clergy in Beijing, as do many clergy elsewhere, themselves train

most of the candidates for the ministry.

Chinese ecumenism does not extend to the local Catholics, who meet only a few kilometers away in stark isolation — not from the Protestants only. Chinese Catholics still say the Mass in Latin. They have reconstituted their hierarchy regardless of Rome. Yin said that he and other Protestants have almost no dialogue with the Catholics. Nor do Christians of any sort align themselves with Chinese Buddhists and Muslims, who also suffered under the same religious repression of the Cultural Revolution.

Nor do the people at the Beijing Christian Association connect with liberation theology, popular in many other Marxist settings, especially in Latin America. Liberation theologians address the needs of the poor and the oppressed. Like many of their counterparts in the United States, Chinese Protestants who address those needs tend to do so in their roles as private citizens or as government workers, not as religious prophets. The only politics one is likely to hear about from the pulpit at Chong Wen Men are celestial politics, or questions of theological hegemony. One Sunday last December a minister trained by the Salvation Army explained for over an hour Jesus's pun on St. Peter's name, "rock." The congregation seemed wrapt with that ancient conundrum.

Possibly even more than in the United States, church and state are separate in China. Meeting the material needs of the poor, locating and redressing injustice, healing the sick, championing the causes of the ignored or the forgotten — these tasks in China, as in America, are the responsibility of the state and of individuals working within the state.

Though there are 2 to 3 million Christians in China, religious people of any sort are a very small portion of this society, now numbering 1 billion 200 million. In many ways Chinese Protestants are still discovering for themselves who they are, still building their union. ■

## Resources: Books

*A New Beginning: An International Dialogue With the Chinese Church.* Edited by Theresa Chu and Christopher Lind. Friendship Press.

An historic meeting in Montreal in October 1981 brought Western Protestant and Catholic leaders face-to-face with the first delegation of Chinese Christian leaders allowed to travel abroad since 1949. The Montreal conference celebrated the new beginning of a public life for Christianity in China, as well as the initiation of relationships between the church and the rest of the worldwide Christian community on a new basis of equality and mutual respect. As the record of that meeting, *A New Beginning* offers a moving account of the survival of the Christian Church in the People's Republic of China. Among all the books published on China in recent years, this one is unique. It deserves a place in every library.

*Households of God on China's Soil.* Edited and translated by Raymond Fung. Orbis Books.

This is a useful supplement to the above. When the communists came to power, the regional and denominational structures soon disintegrated but the church as a worshipping community did not disappear. It continued in thousands of villages and towns in a great variety of forms. Some of the remnants survived, others did not. New fellowships grew up where none had been before. Some sought linkages with other Christian groups, others remained staunchly separatist. In the end Christianity was more widespread than ever, more numerous in its membership, and for the first time truly rooted in Chinese soil.

This book records the stories of 14 such "house churches" told in the words of their own leaders.

— Charles H. Long  
*The Review of Books and Religion*



Lucy Poulin

H.O.M.E.

## Forging new ministries in Appalachia

by Robert L. DeWitt

**H**.O.M.E., Inc. is a community organization in Maine. It is chic only in its name, one of those innumerable acronyms which dot the language of this century. "Homeworkers Organized for More Employment" translates and accurately describes the original thrust, though not fully the present reality of its efforts.

Orland, Maine is the home of H.O.M.E. Orland is on U.S. Route 1, about four miles east of Bucksport. On a clear day the Penobscot Bay is within sight. Orland lies in the northerly extension of that picturesque but oppressed and depressed section of America known as Appalachia. Preponderately Anglo-Saxon, as the more southerly reaches of Appalachia, that basic demography is here tintured with traces of Amerindian and French-Canadian stock. Orland, characteristically for its region, has been apart from the mainstream of American life, both safeguarded and imprisoned by geographical remoteness, mountain barriers, and most of all by a rural economy that is barely strong enough to

survive. Maine ranks with the bottom 10 of the states of the Union in per capita income.

Fourteen years ago Lucy Poulin, a sister of the Carmelite order, became concerned about the plight of women in the Orland community. She was a native of the area, and the family in which she grew up was familiar with poverty. So, too, these women in Orland were struggling with a marginal existence, trying to ease the pinch by making for sale various articles in their homes. They were tourist-type items — simple toys, quilted pot holders, aprons, rag mats, mittens, socks, dolls.

From many conversations with them it occurred to Sister Lucy that a co-operative, central store for selling these articles, and a setting of standards as to type and quality, would benefit the crafters. So it was that the homemakers organized for more employment. And more employment they found. There are now three retail outlets for the voluminous production of these items. One is located at H.O.M.E.'s base in Orland, with

branch stores in Ellsworth and Belfast. Annual gross sales now approach \$300,000 per year.

Meanwhile, Sister Lucy Poulin was finding her vocational validity more in this community work than in the contemplative life of her order. She tried to combine both for a while, but finally wanted, and was encouraged, to leave so that she might devote her full efforts to H.O.M.E.

As the seasons came and went, more and more people from Orland and from Hancock County became a part of the loose cluster that was H.O.M.E. They came together to sell their home-produced craft products, but they also came because of loneliness. For some people, if they have money or jobs, rural living is ideal, especially near the coast of Maine. Ask any one of the many thousands who flock in the summer to that idyllic area.

For many others, those without decent incomes or education, it can be hell. It can mean severe isolation and depression. It can mean poor nutrition, poor health, incest, alcoholism and suicide. And, most far-reaching, after several generations of poverty and ignorance, it can mean selling off their only remaining asset, the land, and going to an already overcrowded city. The poignant part is that if a typical resident is asked about being forced off the land, the reply will be: "I wasn't forced off. I sold it." There

is little insight concerning the systemic forces of economics and politics that cause their plight. And so the result is a hopeless and unproductive life. And all this in a beautiful setting of green hills dotted with patches of blueberries and clear streams.

As Sister Lucy and others worked with the crafters, each desperate need, confronted, revealed another. Mimeographed instructions for knitting patterns were not followed by some — they could not read. And so it was that the group's concerns were led from literacy training to life-coping, to child care, to child psychology. From nutrition to family planning to home management to consumer education. And this educational effort was not in the tradition or style of U.S. colleges and universities. The instruction was given by amateurs to novices, small groups meeting in kitchens, in living rooms, and a few at H.O.M.E. itself, which at that time boasted sparse space facilities.

Obviously the needs were greater than the space available, greater than the resources. An expansion program was initiated. They went to the New England Planning Commission, to the Community Action Program, to Action/Vista, to Eastern Maine Vocational Technical Institute. They carried their needs to the Campaign for Human Development, to the University of Maine. Their experience was mixed. Sometimes they got promises and no action. Sometimes they got help, and sometimes only words. And threading through it all was the realization on the part of Lucy and others that some of the taxpayers' money which could have been used for such education and constructive community growth went instead to more and more weaponry designed to destroy the very kind of community H.O.M.E. was trying to bring into being.

Indeed, Lucy has become quite skeptical, particularly of federal assistance programs. Noting the unquestioned



necessity for entitlement programs such as food stamps for those who are destitute, she nevertheless feels that most federal assistance programs, intentionally or not, have the effect of pacifying people rather than assisting local communities to find solutions to problems. She tries, as she can, to avoid those avenues of assistance, preferring support from volunteer help, private donations and the money H.O.M.E. itself earns. She cites the example of Black Americans who, without institutional support or governmental support, a people not in power but oppressed, over a generation have radically changed the face of the nation.

It used to be said of Mainers that they were land-poor — no money, just family land-holdings passed down for generations. Now, increasing numbers are just poor, having been forced to sell their land to speculators and summer-residence seekers in order to pay the accumulated taxes. H.O.M.E. has organized a Land Trust to remove land from that threat, preserving it for the use of those who need it. Over 150 acres have been accumulated on which five family homes have been built.

The houses, beautiful in appearance, are built with astonishing economy, and are financed by a Revolving Loan Fund, started in 1981. Why not governmental money for low-cost mortgages? For starts, the buildings face south to take advantage of passive solar heat. Federal regulations require they face the road, which is to the north. They heat with wood, coin of the realm in that part of the





# A wedding in May

They were married by a Justice of the Peace in the Verona Grange Hall which stands between the Bucksport town office building and Western Auto on Main Street. It was a cold Sunday in May and despite the hopeful weather forecast, it rained all day.

Inside someone had draped pink and white crepe paper from a cardboard bell in the center of the ceiling. Three generations of Lydicks, Grindles, Allens and Eatons waited patiently on wooden folding chairs lining the walls. The youngest generation, including Rose, played on the wide expanse of floor. In front of the chairs on the side overlooking the Penobscot River two tables stood laden with food. A small stage at the far end was bare except for a tape deck and amplifier. The music was a mixture of soft rock and country/western.

People, despite the weather, had dressed for spring. One of the two photographers, the one wearing high heeled boots, kept on her coat; the other, in tennis shoes and tight fitting jeans, wore a white cotton blouse. The Justice of the Peace, Sister Lucy, arrived just at one. She had on grey cords and a white shirt with machine embroidery stitched on the collar and cuffs. A flannel outer shirt of faded light blue plaid kept her warm. On her head she wore a blue bandana.

The bridal party arrived just after she did. The bride and her maid of honor each had a bouquet of carnations. All four wore new dungarees and blue cotton knit shirts with a pocket over the left breast, the bride and groom's the same shade of deep blue; the maid of honor and the best man's were two or three shades lighter.

A young man from a poor rural area where there are no jobs and whose family lost its land a generation or two back finds one advantage in joining the Army is getting new clothes. If he should go instead to the County Jail he would get new clothes there too. The Army issue is khaki colored. What he would get in jail is blue, blue dungarees and dark blue cotton knit shirts with a pocket over the left breast. (Another advantage of the County Jail is he could get in without having to pass a literacy test.)

The groom was a big man. His well kept beard and hair were long and light brown. His brow was wide, his features strong and clear cut, his demeanor both reserved and kindly.

The bride too looked her part, substantial and sweet, as if given to having children and a well-run kitchen. A smudge of flour on her face would have seemed less out of place than rouge. She wore no makeup. Her long hair was brushed and hung straight down her back. She smiled a lot and so did he. They looked happy.

While the bridal party conferred with Sister Lucy at the end of the room by the stage, the children played. The youngest, Rose, about 12 months old, propelled herself about in a small round walker. More than the others she seemed attracted by the bridal party. She seemed to orbit them.

The music stopped. All the children, even Rose, disappeared from the floor. In the silence Sister Lucy said how glad she was that she had been asked to perform the marriage.

"I knew Janet's father well. He was a good friend. And I've known Jerry since he was just a boy.

"They've asked me to perform the shortest ceremony. So that is what I'll do."

She asked each in turn whether they would love the other all the rest of their life. "They are married now," she announced when they had both in voices too soft to hear said yes. "But they want to give each other rings."

When the ceremony of the rings was completed everyone said the Lord's Prayer. Janet gave Jerry a long kiss. Everyone applauded. The children reoccupied the floor. Except for Rose. Her daddy caught her up in his arms where she cuddled almost lost to sight in a snug place between his arm and his chest. Rose was in all the wedding pictures.

Sister Lucy hurried away to make copies of the marriage certificate. The groom needed one to take back with him — for proof. He had been released from the County Jail for six hours to get married and records need to be kept straight.

— *This Time*

world. Regulations will not allow wood-heated dwellings because they are not insurable.

And speaking of wood, without which

half the people in Maine could not survive the winter, H.O.M.E. has moved into the firewood business. It has provided volunteer labor, a sturdy team of

horses, private donations, state fuel subsidies, and sales to those who can afford to purchase, in order to provide free wood for those who cannot.



All of these activities, and many more, are beamed out to those involved in H.O.M.E. through the pages of a bi-monthly paper, *This Time*. It carries a pot-pourri of program announcements, personal profiles of staff and program participants, notes on farming, household hints, announcements about peace rallies and the White House Conference on Aging, pithy quotes from Helen and Scott Nearing, Pope John Paul II, Karl Marx, and the local staff carpenter/construction expert, Phil Gray ("I suppose manual labor is the best thing for frustration there is.").

And annually there is the H.O.M.E. Fair, a combination sale, promotion effort and community celebration. Tourists driving east or west on U.S. Route 1 cannot miss the many-hued hot-air balloon tethered on the hill, ascending periodically with its basket full of riders. For a pittance they get not only the thrill of vertigo, but a glimpse of what it is like, for once, to be above it all.

Who are the people who motivate and administer this arresting array of activities, programs and services? It is acknowledged by all that H.O.M.E. would probably not exist had it not been for Lucy Poulin. It is equally clear that it could not continue were it not for a host of volunteers and the 15 or so staff people who somehow keep all these wheels turning, as well as giving instruction in the basics of weaving, ceramics, leatherworking and other skills. And most crucial, and perhaps most invisible, a full-time social worker who intervenes in all sorts of personal crises with assistance, counseling, referrals, and an enormous amount of caring.

One of the most interesting and difficult projects undertaken at H.O.M.E. is the recent effort to provide an off-campus resource for credit-earning higher education. The post-high school educational experience, of those who have any at all, is sporadic and painful, almost never culminating in a degree.

H.O.M.E. entered into an arrangement whereby Vermont College would be the sponsoring institution, with classes, discussions and tutorial assistance being provided primarily at H.O.M.E., with two long and intensive weekends on the Norwich campus of Vermont College. The college has been supportive, even though the communication lines are stretched thin. Vermont is not as close to Maine, by auto, as the map might suggest. But approval of the Maine State Board of Education is required to validate any academic credit for participating students. Their guidelines never envisioned the type of frontier educational encounter being pursued by H.O.M.E., peculiarly appropriate though it is to the students with whom they are working. At this writing it is not yet clear whether the State Board will scuttle the program, having it still under advisement.

But what is clear is the human need involved. One young woman currently in the program is married and has two children. Her husband has marginal employment in a paper mill. She herself serves as waitress and bookkeeper in a restaurant (where she met Lucy) run by her parents. Somehow she had managed to pick up one year of college credit, and wants to complete her degree in order to qualify for doing work of social significance. Only the free-wheeling, custom-built schedule of H.O.M.E.'s adult education program could make this possible.

Another young woman came to Maine from West Virginia three years ago. A battered wife with abused children, she opted out of an intolerable situation with the seven of them, ranging from 4 to 16 years of age. She arrived in Bucksport with nothing but the car they moved in, which by then boasted only two functioning cylinders. Destitute, she was directed to Hospitality House, a modest facility H.O.M.E. administers, which cared for her and the children briefly until she was able to manage on her own.

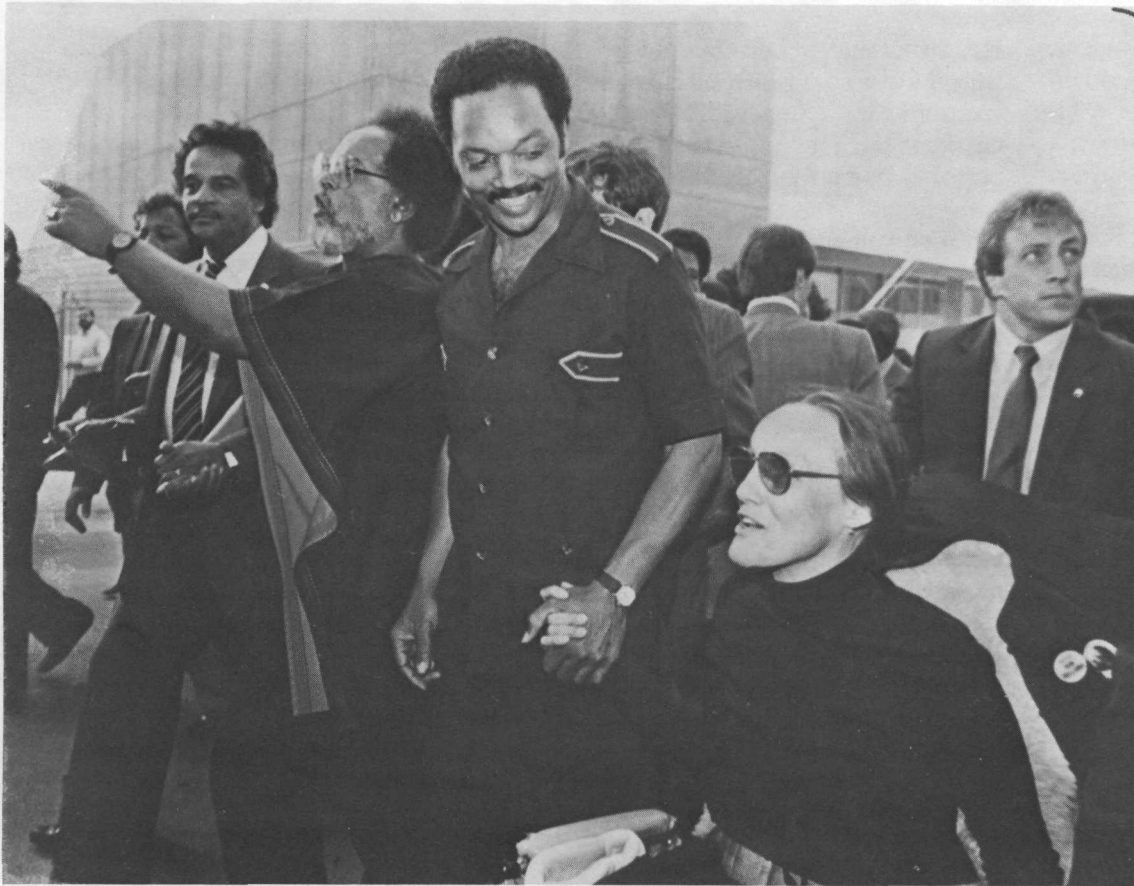
Since, she has managed to complete

the high school program, at H.O.M.E., and now wants to do some college-level studies. Why? She replies, "Because I was married too young, and had no education. I want the basic skills to enable me to function in society. I want to be able to speak properly, to write clearly. I want to find a sense of self-worth." Her last sentence captures the essence of what inspired the establishment of H.O.M.E. and the challenge that leads it on in the face of so much that is adverse.

Why does H.O.M.E. persist in pursuing what often seems a hopeless task? An economist, after reviewing the prospectus for a land trust project H.O.M.E. was planning, made the comment: "It won't work, but I hope they go ahead with it." They did.

Orthodox Christianity has always asserted that the Kingdom will come only at the end of human history, that during the reign of this world, affliction, oppression and suffering will continue, that efforts to eradicate them will inevitably be frustrated. In recent centuries this pessimism has been challenged by a socialist vision which claims that an accurate and adequate analysis of the power structures of our society, and new social structures based on that analysis, can in time progressively move this world toward an approximation of the Kingdom — called by whatever name.

That ideological and theological debate continues. Meanwhile, both within the church and without, efforts like H.O.M.E. and movements appear which seem to be signs of that Kingdom, moments of grace, sources of hope. In the face of discouragements and defeats, these signs are a crucial witness to the struggle of those "yearning to breathe free," because they are a faithful, continuing thrust of spirit and of deed toward an authentic human history, whether it comes within history's time, or at the end of time. The weight of eternity is on their side. ■



### Jackson and Jackson

Presidential candidate Jesse Jackson is shown with Jane Jackson, an Episcopalian noted for her civil and human rights advocacy and for her efforts to gain justice for the disabled. Jackson marched alongside Jane in her wheelchair, enroute to welcome his disabled brothers and sisters to the Rainbow Coalition in Berkeley recently. Said Jane, "He's adding chrome to the rainbow." Said Jesse, "No longer can we think of disability as inability. Together, we can end that discrimination." Pointing, at left, is the Rev. Cecil Williams, Black activist.

### Soelle and Hawkins

Dorothee Soelle, noted feminist theologian and peace activist, is pictured with the Rev. Richard Hawkins, rector of St. Thomas Church, Whitemarsh, Pa., where she spoke recently. Dr. Soelle told parishioners that new paradigms for nuclear disarmament talks should be explored. The U. S. government goes in as though peace is a business issue, and tries to come away with more weapons concessions from the Soviets, and more gains, or "profits," for the U. S. But peace, rather, is "an existential issue, and has to do with one's convictions and energies. It means believing in democracy and asking about what my government does in my name and with my tax dollars, and what my people are doing in the name of my nation," she said.





## Letters . . . Continued from page 3

our minds of preconceived ideas and useless mental chatter before sitting down to do analytical work, and helps us to let go of obsessive emotional attachments before going into action; it teaches us to respond to the concrete situation at hand instead of reacting to the residues of past actions. Through contemplation we learn to blend with, and use, the dynamic flow of history.

Nor is contemplation a worship of the isolated individual, or a cloistered retreat from the world. Contemplative practice takes the individual psyche only as the starting-point. The goal is complete transcendence of that psyche — both in the inner direction, toward union with the Godhead, and in the outer direction, toward union with the world. Contemplation is not retreat, but presence; its goal is to let us be just as present in the midst of action and struggle as we have been in the protection of solitude.

Finally, contemplative experience is not a reward for personal sanctity, but a potential contribution to the community life; it is the only point through which the power of the Godhead can flow in to transform society and history, by means of human thought, human struggle, and human love, as enlightened and moved by God's spirit. Contemplation is both a form of human labor — of releasing egotism and letting ourselves be moved by realities deeper than egotism — and a form of being that completely transcends labor — the ground of being, the presence and the will of God, the concrete moment as it really is. Contemplation is the true and final "demythologization" of God and the supernatural order, not through historicizing them, but through incarnating them. It is only in contemplation, and in action contemplatively experienced and performed, that God stops being a fairytale, an actor in a mythic drama that we are somehow never able to witness firsthand, and becomes a present living reality: "Yet in my flesh I shall see God."

Contemplation is also forgiveness, automatic forgiveness, we might say. As soon as we're willing to release our own

guilts and attachments in the presence of God, in the face of God's eternal and unvarying will to forgive, then we have already forgiven others; if we're willing to receive God's compassion, then we have compassion for others, immediately, in the same breath. One of the things this compassion lets us see (and what a sickening sight it is) is that even in the inner spiritual hell of a Reagan or a Somoza there is a living human soul, infinitely tormented, but still alive. We realize, at last, that not even the most degraded torturer, using his utmost skill, can succeed in destroying his own soul.

If the liberation theology movement is to survive and grow in North America, the synthesis with contemplation will have to be made, and not only on the theoretical level. We must plan and carry out deliberate experiments to determine how contemplative practice is best integrated into the activist lifestyle to form a single comprehensive praxis. We must discover how contemplative techniques can be used to increase energy, tap strategic insight, and give us access to the kind of spiritual power we will need to carry on the struggle for peace and social justice. Nor can we afford to let an openness to such charisma be monopolized by Christian neo-gnostics, or the fundamentalist Right. Liberation theology, if it is to survive, must not become the final secularization of Christianity.

It must include social action, but not be limited to it; it must address itself, as every vital spirituality in history has done, to the fullness of our humanity, psychic and social, individual and collective, eternal and historical. If our commitment is to serve, and be enlightened by, the oppressed peoples of the world, we must recognize that oppression is part of our inner psychic as well as our outer social reality. We must minister to the spiritual as well as the physical needs of those we serve; we must meet present pain, both spiritual and physical, with something more than social activism and a prophetic orientation toward a future just society. We must be willing and able to demonstrate God as an eternally present as well as a

historically developing reality. Liberation theology, in other words, must address itself to *faith* — the *presence* of things hoped for, the *evidence* of things not seen, in the concrete present moment — as well as to hope, as historical struggle, and love, as human service.

I eagerly solicit dialogue on this, with concrete organizing activities in view. "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets."

Charles Upton  
San Rafael, Cal.

## Holy Trinity

It rained the night before Trinity  
And like silent pilgrims  
The priests of Los Alamos  
Their litany ended  
Waited;  
And one or another  
They climbed the tower  
To gather their instruments  
And make silent vigil  
While lightening danced  
And licked the lips of fate  
High above the valley of death.

At the foot of the tower  
They cast lots  
Cool reason heated  
to the boiling point  
Science gone mad to guesswork  
About the size  
of the black beast's wings  
And the sting of its breath.  
They shared cigarettes and fear  
Against the spell  
Of this long black night.

"Should we call the Chaplain"  
The journal entry reads.  
A passing thought  
That there might be some prayer  
Some invocation  
A blessing spoken  
in the moment's pause  
A shudder sucked in  
Before the gates of hell burst open;  
But he had no jurisdiction there  
Faust dealt but once  
And Vishnu's arms grew  
To embrace us all  
As we became death  
The destroyer of worlds.

— Ralph Pitman Jr.

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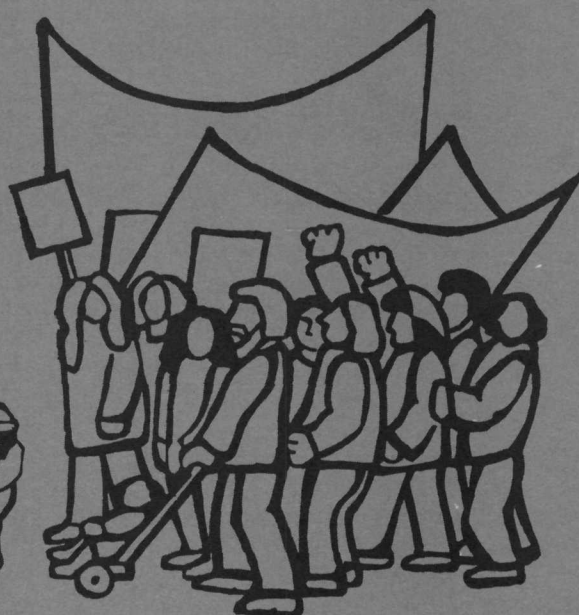
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