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THE WITNESS

Meditation for a nuclear age Paul Moore, Jr.



MIGNON

and. . .
John Shelby Spong
on John E. Hines
A new column by
Barbara C. Harris

Letters

Pro-choice challenged

As (on the one hand) a colleague of the Rev. Beatrice Blair at the Church of the Heavenly Rest and a graduate of the General Theological Seminary where the Rev. Patricia Wilson-Kastner currently teaches, and (on the other hand) as theological students at General, we were particularly interested in their "Pro-Choice Commentary" (October *Witness*).

There are two main contentions in the article: 1) that the human fetus is not a "person" whose life therefore need not be protected as a "person" is protected; and 2) that the Episcopal Church may not pronounce on the morality of abortion without being guilty of religious imperialism.

1. Although the authors are not careful with their vocabulary, we can distinguish certain distinct senses in the words with which they refer to the members of our species:

Human being: We will use this term to refer to the offspring of human parents at whatever stage of development, i.e. the "continuum from fertilization to maturity and adulthood" which logically "no one can deny."

Person: We will use this term to refer to "a complex, many-sided creature with the god-like ability and responsibility to make choices."

The authors' claim is that not all human beings are persons and that only to persons may be ascribed the "ultimate value of Western morality."

Their criteria for personhood is lofty. A person must have the capacity "to relate to the creator in obedience or rebellion." He or she must be able to "experience God-like powers of self-transcendence and self-awareness." The person, like God, may be "introspective and prospective," and must be able to "reflect upon the past, anticipate the future, and discern the activity of God in his/her personal life and history." The person must also have the capacity, how-

ever limited, to "distinguish good from evil, right from wrong."

"The fetus," the authors continue severely, "does not meet those criteria." We ask ourselves (a little nervously) whether any human being meets these criteria, except perhaps Professors at Theological Seminaries.

In ethics it is usual to ask of an argument, "What else has been justified?" We have reflected on various categories of human beings which, in our judgment, do not meet these criteria of personhood. The 5-month-old daughter of two of us has not attained "self-awareness." Neither has our 4-year-old son attained self-transcendence. There are many mentally-deranged or retarded human beings who have no capacity to distinguish right from wrong.

We have also noted that the most abominable crimes in history, such as the oppression of women and the holocaust of the Jews, have been justified in their perpetrators' minds by the notion that the victim human beings were not actually real persons. We are chilled that the authors appropriate for themselves this language of oppression and establish criteria for personhood to which the most marginal and powerless cannot measure up.

The image of God does not appear to us to reside only in these well-developed, intelligent, capable persons who are described so eloquently. We do not interpret the notion of the image of God to mean something that a human being attains if he or she is lucky, but to mean something which resides in the whole community of human beings. It is something, in short, which belongs to each of us within the context of our relationships with each other. Thus no *one* human being contains the whole of the image of God — but we are forbidden to say of any one human being, you are *not* the image of God. This is a reflection of the divine nature itself, of which one may say that

the Trinity as a whole is God — but one is forbidden to say that any person of the Trinity is not God.

2. Re the second main contention of their article: The authors recognize the same web of relationships among human beings that we do, and use it to highlight the complexities of the life-situation which might lead a woman to choose abortion. They assert that "no simple guidelines can be given." (With this we agree.) Yet, strangely enough, they take a knife to all these relationships when it comes to the decision-making itself. "Any interference in the abortion decision is an attempt to come between a woman and God." What qualifies as interference in the eyes of these strict authors?

Any statement of moral principles, no matter how meek, appears to them to be "religious imperialism." The Episcopal Church is not famous for its "moral authoritarianism" — but on this issue the authors would choose not even to let the church try to persuade. In their eyes, such an attempt is "unworthy of the Gospel."

The woman is to make this tremendously complex and difficult decision entirely on her own — strictly alone with her conscience and her God, and no human attempt may be made to inform that conscience, no principles may be offered by which she may evaluate her values.

Do the authors truly see no difference between persuasion and coercion? Is every attempt to elucidate moral principles an attempt to come between an individual and God? Is there no room in the church for the prophetic voice? And do we really find these assertions printed in the pages of *The Witness*?

We contend that the experience and wisdom of the whole community (even those male Bishops who can never bear children) ought to be part of the process of moral decision-making. The "priest-

hood of all believers” does not reside in any of us alone but in that Body of which Jesus Christ is head.

The principles set forth in this article (presumably the authors have no qualms about coming between the bishops’ conscience and their God) do not foster what they intend, namely a community of free choice, but rather a community that aborts. Free choice is not hindered by the elucidation of moral principles, and the Anglican deference to individual conscience (an implicitly pro-choice position, even as it is pro-life) is not a deference to the conscience abandoned, but to the conscience informed.

The Rev. Stuart Kenworthy
Church of the Heavenly Rest
Susan Austin
Victor Austin
General Theological Seminary

Authors respond

We would like to respond to three elements of Kenworthy and the Austins’ reply to our article:

1. *The Person.* The authors accuse us of not using words carefully, and proceed to distinguish two different “senses” in which we refer to members of the human species: human being and person. We did not make such a distinction. We *do* distinguish between fetus and person, a fetus being a potential human, and a person, an actual, viable human being. That distinction, we submit, is quite different from distinguishing between two different sorts of members of the human species, as we are asserted to have done.

The authors are opposed to what they regard as our too exalted definition of the person. The definition we offer is based on our understanding of the Scripture; we claim it to be the Biblical understanding of person. We also assert that the Bible itself clearly distinguishes the fetus from the living person, who is in the image of God. Our theological claims

are based on an interpretation of Scripture. If Kenworthy and the Austins disagree, they must still acknowledge and grapple with the origins and roots of our terms and assertions.

On the basis of our Scriptural interpretation we conclude that a fetus and a person are not the same, and do not have the same moral significance, rights, and responsibilities, even though the being of a fetus and of a person are directly related to each other. In civil law, the fetus is not a person. A vast body of religious as well as civil tradition makes a distinction between fetus and person, even though the lines are not always perfectly uniform. We do not understand why Kenworthy and the Austins introduced the person/human being distinction. That is neither what we said nor meant.

2. *Religious Authority.* Kenworthy and the Austins introduce the term “religious imperialism” to describe our alleged condemnation of any statement of moral principles. We do not use the term even about exercises of religious authority which we judge improper. What we do suggest is that no authority has the right or the responsibility to tell a woman what to do, either by legally preventing her from selecting one or another option, or by telling her that one and only one course of action is morally permissible.

We do insist that the woman is the ultimate human decision-maker; she must choose whether to attempt to bear a fetus to full term or not. Nowhere do we say that the church and the community ought not to offer help, support, and assistance in the discernment about the best (or least hurtful) course of action. Quite the contrary. We do insist, however, that no one can or ought to proclaim absolute rules about individual situations, nor should any outside agency, even the church, tell a woman what to do.

3. *Rhetoric.* The language of Kenworthy and the Austins’ response par-

takes of what we would term a “rhetoric of hostility.” They make misrepresentations (that the woman must all on her own decide to bear the fetus or abort it) and accusations (we are not careful, are severe, use the language of oppression). they suggest that our criteria for personhood are so lofty that only seminary professors are eligible. (We still, however, hope that professors are included.) We are accused of helping create a “community that aborts,” of coming between the bishops’ consciences and God, and they link us with “the most abominable crimes in history.”

We submit that there is a direct link between such language and the taunts of “baby-killers” hurled at pro-choice advocates and the increasing number of bombings at Planned Parenthood clinics. Even if specific individuals do not intend it, the ultimate logical consequence of a world-view and language which dehumanizes and denies the religious seriousness of pro-choice advocates is violent opposition to them by word and deed.

Beatrice Blair
Patricia Wilson-Kastner
New York, NY

Need action on local level

The articles and editorial on freedom of choice were excellent. But how does one implement a belief in freedom of choice? National organizations such as NARAL, NOW, Planned Parenthood and RCAR do a remarkable job with low budgets to alert their constituencies to oppose proposed constitutional amendments and legislation, and deserve our support.

And there is also need for action on the local and state level. Two weeks ago I testified before a joint committee of the State legislature against a proposal that would have required all fetal tissue be interred, and that any woman planning to

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As others see us . . .

A major news story broke as 1984 petered out, to shock an American public busy with Christmas shopping and preparing for New Year parties:

A tank valve in an insecticide plant near Bhopal had burst . . . its poisonous methyl isocyanate vapor leaked out to claim the lives of thousands of Indians who were in its deadly course . . . the parent corporation responsible was Union Carbide, based in the United States . . . an Indian journalist had warned for two years that safety standards were inadequate and a catastrophic leak could result.

News of international tragedies seem to be hitting the U.S. public with greater frequency of late, at times when it would rather not be reminded of painful subjects. The famine in Ethiopia created banner headlines just before Thanksgiving, and Americans sat down to holiday feasts haunted by vivid images of starving children and adults that had invaded their living rooms via TV.

And as Bishop Desmond Tutu went to claim his Nobel Peace Prize shortly before Christmas, members of the Congressional Black Caucus and other prominent U.S. citizens from trade unions and churches were getting arrested

for blocking the South African Embassy and other offices in Washington, New York, Chicago, Seattle, Houston and Boston in solidarity with the struggle against apartheid and in an effort to change our policy of "constructive engagement."

Just about the time those events were taking place, a book published by Orbis arrived at THE WITNESS office: *Third World Resource Directory: A Guide to Organizations and Publications*. The foreword characterizes the directory, edited by Tom Fenton and Mary Heffron, as "a guide to modern day prophets who are attempting to speak truth to the illegitimate use of U.S. corporate and governmental power. Like the prophets of biblical times, they tend to . . . speak at times in tones not pleasant to the ear; and they are usually ridiculed and dismissed by those in power."

It is within this framework that THE WITNESS is listed among secular and church media of the alternative press, where one can "keep up to date on literature related to U.S. involvement in the Third World."

Organizations listed in the directory, according to its designers, have been set up "by people who have dedicated them-

selves to finding out how the powers that be in this country have increased the misery of the Third World. These are the groups that reveal the private interests behind the public policies, that counter disinformation campaigns and publicize the other side of the story, that try to cut through the insularity, racism, sexism and anti-communism in the search for the root causes of social and economic problems, and finally — that identify the allies and opponents you will have as you work to bring about change."

Given that heady compliment, we invite readers to examine our index of articles over the past year to see whether our publication schedule merited the listing in the new resource. (See Index, pp. 21-23.) Standing on the shoulders of previous editors dating back to 1917, THE WITNESS is dedicated to reporting in the tradition outlined above. In covering international issues, THE WITNESS believes that the best way to assist the Third World is to do conscientization around changing U.S. Government policies that support oppressive social and economic structures abroad.

We invite our readers to join us in that resolve and to accompany us on that challenging journey over the next year.

(M.L.S.)

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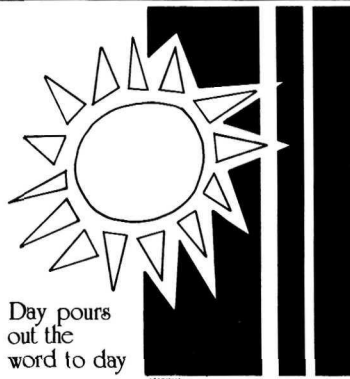


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Meditation for a nuclear age

by Paul Moore, Jr.

Prayers is our communication with the Mystery of Being we call God. It is our total relation to the Holy Trinity: a relation to the Creator through God's presence in everything around us, a relation to the Redeemer through God's presence in the flesh of all people, a relation to the Holy Spirit through God's presence within us. Prayer is response to our total environment. We pray with the totality of our being — with our mind, our feelings, our will, our intuition, the conscious, the unconscious, the body itself. Our prayer is affected by the totality of our hopes and desires and anxieties, by every event that is touching our lives at the moment we pray.

It follows that the prayers of God's people will be shaped by God's powerful presence in history, of which each day is a part. When we divorce ourselves from the reality around us, our prayers become thin, at best an escape. But when we open ourselves to reality in all of its roughness, to its total impact; when we let that roughness assault the soul; when we allow the power of God to do battle there with the full force of reality, then our prayer life will be strong, and it will be empowering.

Consider our historical predicament and its relationship to our prayer life. I set the stage with a quotation from Jonathan Schell's *The Fate of the Earth*:

"Anyone who inquires into the effects of a nuclear holocaust is bound to be assailed by powerful and

conflicting emotions . . . Following upon these just responses, there may come a recoil and a decision, whether conscious or unconscious, not to think any longer about the possibility of a nuclear holocaust. A denial of this reality is a refusal to accept nuclear annihilation, a refusal to accept . . . immersion in death."

And with another Schell quotation, this from *The Unforgettable Fire*, a collection of reminiscences about the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, emphasizing the havoc of a nuclear explosion:

"A mother, driven half-mad while looking for her child, was calling his name. At last she found him. His head looked like a boiled octopus. His eyes were half-closed and his mouth was white, pursed, and swollen."

Such images of that small nuclear bomb's destruction are scattered through Schell's book. Those of us who work in America's cities today, although we may not have seen as horrible a sight as that mutilated child, find stark suffering nonetheless, not because a bomb has dropped but because money that might aid the poor has been spent on arms.

Walk the city streets and see a woman, curled in a doorway like a fetus, covered with scabs, wrapped in newspapers. Or watch a young addict jerking his way along that street. Or look at people creating pathetic homes in buildings that seem ready to collapse. Or notice those who have lined up, waiting for a soup kitchen or a shelter to open its doors. We recoil at these horrors, whether the physical agony of anonymous

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"It may be a death wish that draws the Moral Majority toward the literal interpretation of Armageddon as a cosmic Jonestown. When the eschatological meaning of Armageddon becomes a scenario for the inevitable nuclear confrontation between the United States and the 'Evil Empire' and creeps into the motivation of the President's foreign policy, we are in serious trouble."

human beings or the fearful fantasy of total nuclear annihilation. That is one reason our prayer often pulls back and seeks an anesthetized peace. We crave escape.

Many professions deliberately condition their novices to face unbearable experiences. Medical students and interns are given continual exposure to the horrors that can afflict the human body. So are student nurses. And I remember my own conditioning in the Marine Corps. In order to toughen our psyches for combat, our training included an immersion in military violence, the bayonet drill in which you had to growl and scream as you pierced a straw dummy with a bayonet and bashed a head on which was painted an Asian face. This completed, your pride in being a Marine was brought to its fullness through the massive liturgy of a full-dress parade, which always concluded with the Marine Corps hymn. Marines who did not soak up that kind of toughening, that unique form of "spiritual" preparation, broke apart in combat. Their psyches were not strong enough to let them stand what they had to see: exploded bodies, the mangled arms and legs of their comrades.

Combat is not confined to battlefields. Any Christian, ordained or lay, needs spiritual preparation and conditioning in order to face life, today more than ever. The sheer violence of our world forges a new context for the spiritual training by which we become equipped for our daily Christian experience, able to face what we must and able to fight the temptation to look away.

The seeming calmness of the church since the ordination of the first women priests and the adoption of the new Prayer

Book, the kind of peaceful atmosphere of the last General Convention in New Orleans, belies the violence that swirls around us in the world and is, therefore, both unreal and ominous. The nuclear threat will not vanish, and the world's economic situation — its brinkmanship flirtation with depression and upheaval — worsens as the years go by. These are not just another brace of social issues to be dealt with. They are ultimate threats to the world that we know.

As Jonathan Schell observes, when Albert Einstein discovered the simple equation $E = mc^2$, reality was altered, never again to be the same. Schell calls it the "Second Fall," in the Biblical sense. We need to ask ourselves whether there are any equally simple and equally powerful theological equations that will enable us to deal with the world-altering fact of $E = mc^2$, the new reality.

A look at recent history turns up some creative theological responses to particular social, political, and even economic crises. Liberation theology is a prime example. Born amidst the continuing violence of the struggle in Latin America, it is a whole new way of looking at the liberation offered by Jesus Christ. It stresses, for the first time in recent years, the *freedom* of the Cross. This theme was implicit in American Black spirituality, as in the old song's words, "set my people free." But liberation theology is distinctive, tied as it is to the actual events out of which it is wrung and infused as it is with a more overtly political and economic component.

By the same token, years earlier, the battle for independence from colonialism in Africa gave us Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. In that are some of the beginnings of what we now know as Black theology and African theology.

But where do we now, in the United States of America, find theological and spiritual handles to deal with our altered human condition today? Politics and science brought us into this new reality. They cannot, by themselves, provide our answers. Psychology can explain some of our reactions, but it cannot motivate our recovery. We turn, therefore, with our doubts to the Queen of Sciences, as theology was once called. We also turn to the discipline of prayer. In its history, down through the generations of scholars and theologians, the church has often abandoned concepts, only to reach for them again when in need. Prayers for the dead were discarded for many, many years after the Reformation. But during and after World War I, because of the grieving over young men slain in France, they crept back into use and into the prayer book.

The phrase "punishment of wickedness and vice" was thought a rather crude thing to have in the prayer for the whole state of Christ's church; it does not appear in the current Prayer Book. I mourn its passing. During the 1960s, the days

of the civil rights struggle, we thought about this quite a lot as we struggled against the principalities and powers of those days who needed indeed to be punished for their wickedness and vice. With denial of human rights in so many parts of the world, this phrase could still have lively meaning.

I champion the reinstatement of some of the robust, primitive doctrines of the church as a fitting match for these perilous times. I urge the inclusion and the use of some of these doctrines in your life of prayer.

Creation

In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth, and the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God made many creatures, and then God said, "Let us make man and woman in our own image."

We gain understanding from the basic simplicity of the doctrine of Creation as it appears in the Bible. God did make the universe. The electricity which fires the atomic bomb is the same electricity in your mind which makes it possible for you to pray. God is Other, but nothing in Creation is Other. We are part of it, in every single way. Creation is a seamless robe that includes your spiritual life.

The Fall

Adam and Eve eat the apple. God walks in the Garden of Eden and sees them afraid and ashamed. And they are expelled. The Garden of Eden myth joins judgment to the Creation narrative, so that the abuse of one part of Creation by another part is shown to bring punishment. They are judged, and they are expelled. God's action is clear and deliberate.

In the story of the Garden of Eden, we see a manifestation of the seamless robe consisting of a physical and moral and spiritual Creation; these cannot be separated, they are interdependent. Action in one area relates to action in another. In that context, consider what Jonathan Schell calls the "Second Fall." $E = mc^2$ is the apple of the tree of knowledge. As eating the apple of Eden made the garden terrible, so terrible that it was guarded thenceforth to prevent any man or woman from entering it again, so does eating the apple of nuclear science make the earth a terrible place. We stand naked, ashamed, and afraid of the interdependence of physical and moral law under the sovereignty of God. Are we to be expelled?

In these Biblical precepts, we hear something different from God telling us that we should be peacemakers. Our failure to make peace is not just a matter of being disobedient to God; it is not a matter of just a few people being hurt. There is another spiritual dimension now. Liken it to the Garden of

Eden, with flaming angels translated into nuclear weapons. If we do not love one another in God, if we do not make peace, if we do not obey God's will, there will be — there cannot help but be — total annihilation, the punishment of expulsion in its ultimate form.

Apocalypse

Other images which are appearing more frequently these days are the creatures of Apocalypse. Strange, these images: as we move into them ever more deeply, into their primitivism, we penetrate into our own unconscious and into what Jung calls the very racial unconscious.

In the Victorian Age, into the early 20th century, art — the painting and sculpture of the Western world — was very pallid. Prettiness and photographlike representation were dominant. Then, the Western world was plunged into the horrors of World War I and — not too long afterwards — the Spanish Civil War, where Facism and Communism locked horns for the first time on battlefields. The "sweet art" of a vanished era could not deal with the reality assaulting the senses and souls of artists. Some — George Grosz, for one — turned to vitriolic, savage caricature. But Picasso, Modigliani, and others had to turn to Africa to find inspirational power and strength to deal with the principalities and powers that had emerged on the European continent. In Africa's heart, they found the powerful and primitive symbols with which to deal with the staggering threat to their European society. I do not believe that Picasso could ever have painted *Guernica*, that greatest of war paintings, if he had not been exposed to the art of Africa.

Although artists were to some extent able to assimilate African culture, it had too great an impact on some Western psyches to be absorbed, Carl Jung's, for one. He writes, in his *Memories, Dreams, and Reflections*, that when he was in Africa he had a terrifying dream. He had been in the United States a few years before, and (in Africa) "I dreamt that a Black barber who once had cut my hair in Tennessee was holding a tremendous red-hot curling iron to my head, intending to make my hair kinky. I could already feel the painful heat. I awoke with a sense of terror. I no longer possessed psychic defenses."

Jung left Africa, never to return. The great master of the myth, the flower of science and culture of the Western World, son of a minister, was not able to deal with the power of Africa. Because he always listened to his dreams, he deliberately went back to Europe to stay. He thought he had to keep his European personality intact.

Can we afford to keep our "American personalities" intact? I do not believe so.

Already the need for primitive symbolism is seen in the attraction of the modern Fundamentalists. It may be a death

wish that draws the followers of the Moral Majority toward the literal interpretation of Armageddon as a cosmic Jonestown. It may be a longing for the thunder of Yahweh, so long absent from American middle-class Protestantism. Or it may be a desperate abandonment of hope for this created world.

In any case, the danger of these powerful symbols is evident in their misuse. When the eschatological meaning of Armageddon becomes a scenario for the inevitable nuclear confrontation between the United States and the "Evil Empire" of the Soviet Union, and creeps into the motivation of the President's foreign policy, we are in serious trouble. Even more dangerous is the spiritual pride behind the concept of "rapture" by which the Moral Majority will be saved, and the unsaved, the evil ones, will be destroyed.

Such self-serving hermeneutics demonizes the true meaning of the word of God with the lust of chauvinism and leads to a self-fulfilling prophecy of tragic dimension.

However, we, like our brothers and sisters who are drawn to this rhetoric, also have a hunger for the full dynamic of the word of God; we, too, are fascinated by the *Mysterium tremendum*. We must open up our life of prayer to these nightmare images, those of childhood that still creep into our dreams, the obscenity of the Beasts of Revelation.

"And the last that I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear and his mouth as the mouth of a lion . . . and the dragon gave him his power. But the Lord triumphed."

Descent into hell

Now, let us go even deeper. Let us descend into hell. This is another image that has been watered down, translated now as "He descended to the dead." It was a descent into hell. That is what happened to our Lord. It was more than descending to the dead. Let me say why I believe this. Descent into hell is to go back and back and back, down and down and down, into the psychic depths where the human soul touches the beast from which we came. Somewhere down there, we touch the beast within us. Not only outside us, not only in primitive images, not only in our dreams, but inside us, we touch the rage and bloodlust that exists in each of us. I know it is in me. I have felt it myself in war, I have seen it in others. Somewhere in the darkness, we are beasts. Somewhere there, our human souls touch the beastly nature that is alive within us.

I do not think that we can begin to understand the cause, much less the cure, of national violence and vainglory without searching ourselves, without descending into our own depths to confront the evil doom lying therein. The nuclear threat to the world is a product of this corporate unconscious in which each one of us, no matter how holy, somehow participates. The battle against the holocaust is not only on the streets and in peace demonstrations, in lobbying Congress, on the tables

of diplomacy or on missile sites; a mushroom cloud erupts in every one of our own private hells.

We must descend into that maelstrom, and we need a guide, as Dante — in *The Divine Comedy* — needed Virgil with him in the descent to the lower regions. Can that guide be a psychiatrist? Better than nothing, a psychiatrist can help you go down pretty far — sometimes. But remember Carl Jung. Some have used hallucinogens, LSD and others, to make the descent, lucky enough to have a guide who had been there before to bring them back. Alas, some of them never get back, and are still broken, still there in that hell from which they were not able to return.

I believe that the only safe and sure guide is Christ. For He is the only one who knew the descent into hell and who knows the resurrected way out of it. *Christus Victor*. Victorious over hell, victorious over death, Christ has won the eternal victory. We have been allowed to glimpse the last chapter, as it were, while we are still in the midst of the book.

I remember being in a battle in what sometimes seems to be an ancient war, at other times too vivid a memory, and I found support in the Cross as I was sensing a total disintegration within myself, an emotional breakdown. I was right on the edge of it. I saw others break down, and I thought that I was cracking under the smell and the terror, the blood and the screaming, and the noise, the awful noise. And literally I hung onto that bloody board, the Cross, that piece of lumber; it had Christ's blood all over it. I hung onto it as one who is drowning would cling to the last piece of driftwood, and I got through. This was no theological process, no reasoning out of the theory of the Atonement. This was hanging on for dear life. That was a time I descended into hell and found my Lord there. That is why I say that some of these primitive doctrines may be what we need.

The holy mountain

Come now and stand on the holy mountain, the mountain of temptation, and look down across the world smoking in ruins. Is that what Christ's coming will be like? We have to wrench our souls to deal with that terrifying image. Looking across such devastation, we long for primitive power to protect us. In every one of us, there is a longing for the strength of the fundamental faith that is buried in the Bible. We do not long for the Biblical literalness known as fundamentalism, for the authority and superficial morality of extracted fragments of Biblical text. But we long for the power within that Holy Book to convert this terror and primitivism into the victory of Christ. Because He has given to this generation a grand vocation, a glorious responsibility. It requires great spiritual strength. It requires a steadfast gaze like that with which Stephen looked up into heaven as the stones showered upon

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A Luta Continua

by Barbara C. Harris

Of many things . . .

*The time has come, the walrus said,
To talk of many things,
Of shoes and ships and sealing wax,
Of cabbages and kings. . .*

If the walrus and the carpenter of Lewis Carroll's sardonic poem were around today, they could add several concerns to their mixed bag "of many things." A 1985 list might well include, for openers, the upswing in political repression in this "free society"; increasing militarism by executive (presidential) fiat; the studied development of a throw away class of citizenry and stacking the conservative deck within the church.

They could throw in for good measure the perennial issues of systemic and pervasive racism, classism and sexism, the myriad manifestations of which comprise yet another seemingly endless list. Try a pick-four lottery choice of refined and sophisticated abuses of the judicial and legislative process, including the Grand Jury and congressional investigative bodies; code word domestic policies such as *less government* that spell further isolation and exploitation of the poor; this government's continued temporizing with repressive regimes abroad and its not-so-covert military excursions and incursions that threaten a Vietnam-like quagmire in Central America.

And for a wild alternative, how about denial of any Christian responsibility to challenge these aberrations by segments within the church marching under the dual banner of separation of church and state and "preservation of the faith"?

The time simply to *talk* of many things not only has come, but long since has gone. It is time, at this watch of the global

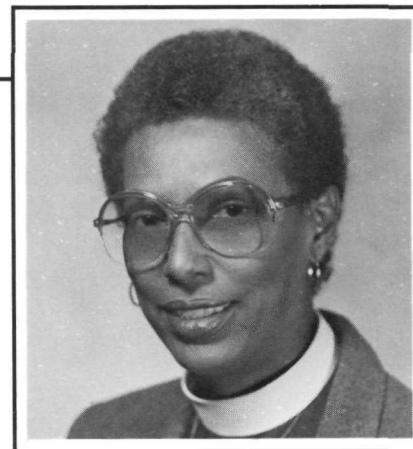
night, to ferret out and face up to their deeply rooted interconnectedness and interrelatedness, if strategies to combat them are to be refined.

Weary activists and their supporters lament that little is new. That, unfortunately, is too true. Would that we could put old issues to rest and move on to cementing the just society, the peaceable kingdom. But the old entrenched issues simply will not die of their own weight. Rather, that entrenchment is undergirded by subtle refinements which pale earlier oppressions because they now are neatly packaged and merchandised as serving the commonweal. And just enough people feel "better off than they were four years ago" to induce an apathy that allows for even more of the same.

Perhaps the time has come to re-examine avenues into struggle that heretofore have been written off as inconsequential and unproductive. In this regard, a recent development in the life of the Protestant community gives pause.

Delegates to the long disparaged Consultation on Church Union (COCU), representing nine denominations which number some 23 million U.S. Christians, have adopted a theological consensus outlining shared administration and ministry. The 70-page document, "In Quest of a Church Uniting," calls for the gradual convergence of all Christian faiths with a *common ordained ministry* and shared worship, communion, administration and *mission*.

Governing bodies of the COCU churches — Episcopal, United Methodist, Presbyterian U.S.A., African Methodist Episcopal, A.M.E. Zion, Christian Methodist Episcopal, Disciples of



Christ, United Church of Christ and the International Council of Community Churches — if, indeed, they adopt the much amended agreement, probably will not take advantage of its potential for concerted politicized action. In all likelihood, they will focus on the easier to digest aspects of common beliefs and worship — how many balloons and doves to release at festival services, provided there is anything to celebrate — than real covenanting for mission. And another opportunity for forceful witness through shared ministry will slip by.

A grass roots thrust for not just adoption, but *creative implementation* of the document could move the struggle forward in some significant ways. Short of radicalizing COCU itself, a highly unlikely occurrence, progressive caucuses within the nine denominations could take that document apart and appropriate its *spirit*, for politicized action to counter the thrust of Falwell et al. In the street that's called "gettin' down and gettin' dirty." In so doing more than two decades of ecumenical hand holding might be rescued from ecclesiastical oblivion.

O well, it was just a thought. *A luta continua*.

A luta continua — the struggle continues — a rallying cry borrowed from Angolan freedom fighters, is a monthly commentary by the Rev. Barbara C. Harris, ECPC Executive Director.

SHORT TAKES

Saint or communist?

"I brought food to the hungry, and people called me a saint; I asked why people were hungry, and people called me a communist."

— **Brazilian Bishop Dom Helder Camara**

Quote of note

"Where two or three are gathered together, the spirit *may* make it, but politics always does."

— **Bishop Leontine Kelly**
United Methodism's
first Black woman bishop



The cartoon above originated in **The Anglican News**, Diocese of Bathurst, Australia. We saw it in St. Alban's Newsletter (Reading, Pa.) and found they had picked it up from **The Vine**, St. Matthew's (Wilton, Conn.). That whale swam a long way to make you smile.

Disabled in courts over Reagan position

Congressional efforts to overhaul the Social Security disability program have reached an impasse, with the Reagan Administration objecting to legislation that would liberalize terms of eligibility, it was reported by the *New York Times* recently.

The program is in a state of legal confusion and administrative chaos, in the view of members of Congress and federal officials.

In a byline story, Robert Pear reported that Senator Bob Dole, Republican of Kansas, expressed "sincere regrets" that Congress could not agree on "a matter directly affecting the lives of 4.8 million disability insurance recipients and their families."

According to the *Times*, the Reagan Administration began a nationwide review of the disability rolls in March, 1981, under a mandate from Congress. After reviewing 1.2 million cases, the government found 491,300 people ineligible for benefits because they were deemed able to work. However, federal officials said that more than 200,000 had been put back on the rolls after they appealed.

Margaret M. Heckler, Secretary of Health and Human Services, has acknowledged that officials made some mistakes, causing "hardships and heartbreaks" for disabled people. Disability cases are clogging federal courts and account for 15 to 20% of new filings in some districts, officials say.



Nancy Talmage, 75, ordained

Anne (Nancy) Talmage, 75-year-old parishioner of St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church, Succasunna, N.J., was ordained to the priesthood Dec. 15 by the Rt. Rev. John Shelby Spong.

Talmage currently serves as chaplain to Ridgewood Nursing Home and Dover General Hospital, and is director of Health Village Retirement Community, Hacketts-town, N.J.

"Although she is not the oldest woman to be ordained — the late Jeannette Piccard, noted balloonist, was 79 when she became a priest — we believe Nancy will be in second place," said Mrs. Byron S. Lane of St. Dunstan's vestry.

Talmage's husband, William, a retired cardiologist, is an active octogenarian who attended all his wife's classes at Drew University and Virginia Theological Seminary with her.

ECPC elects new officers

The Rev. Kwasi Thornell of St. Louis, deputy urban missionary, has been elected vice chair of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company to replace Mattie Hopkins, whose term on the Board expired, it was announced by the Rt. Rev. H. Coleman McGehee, chair.

Newly named to the Board are Migdalia de Jesus Torres, professor of sociology

and law at John Jay College; the Rev. Chester Talton, mission officer of the parish of Trinity Church, New York, and Robert F. Ellsworth, former Ambassador to NATO and currently in business in Washington, D.C. in the area of venture capital. The full complement of the Board appears on the masthead on page 5.

New contributing editors of THE WIT-

NESS magazine, announced at the same time, are Dr. Manning Marable, director of Africana and Hispanic Affairs at Colgate University; the Rev. Carter Heyward, associate professor of theology at Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge; and the Rt. Rev. J. Antonio Ramos, associate director of the Caribbean and Latin America, National Council of Churches.

What's a P.B. made of?

What's the formula for an ideal Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church? Try a pinch of Moses, Elijah, Peter . . . mix with a familial background of loving support . . . add a goodly sprinkling of courage, vision and deep spirituality and voila!

The article below demonstrates how that composite was incarnated by God "in a man called John" Hines (right) whose term as Presiding Bishop (1965-1974) culminated in a moment of grace for the church. Bishop Hines celebrated his 50th anniversary of ordination at the end of 1984. Following are excerpts from a sermon by the Rt. Rev. John S. Spong, Bishop of Newark, at a festive Eucharist marking the event at the Cathedral there Oct. 27.



A moment of grace for the church

by John Shelby Spong

The ministry of John Elbridge Hines was crafted out of the whole cloth of Holy Scripture. John Hines had about him something of the quality of Moses who dared to stand before the Pharaoh and demand an end to slavery and who then led his people into freedom. Moses knew what it meant to stand alone against great odds in the fight against oppression and so did John Hines.

The ministry of John Hines has caused us to hear echos of the great prophet Elijah whose disturbing presence in the land of Israel incurred the wrath of the entrenched authorities. Can those of us who know John Hines fail to think of him when we read the story of King Ahab who, coming face to face with Elijah, said, "Is that you, O troubler of Israel?" Elijah knew that to stand for the righteous cause of a Holy God inevitably meant that you were a disturbing, uncomfortable presence, and so did John Hines.

There are also similarities between our retired Presiding Bishop and the apostle Peter, especially as Peter is portrayed in the 10th chapter of the Book of

Acts. In Peter's vision he saw for the first time the unity of God's people. The barrier between Jew and Gentile was broken. The apostle heard God say, "Peter, what God has made clean, don't you call unclean." Peter rose from that dream and went at once to the house of Cornelius and baptized Gentiles into the life of the church. In Peter's action the church lunged toward becoming inclusive.

Please note that Peter did not call a convention of the church to seek either permission or consensus. He acted with a single-minded integrity. He recognized in an instant that the church cannot vote on justice. The church cannot debate whether or not to be inclusive of all the people of God. Some things are by definition a part of the church's very being. When Peter acted, he was not concerned that doing what was just might prove divisive or that some members of the community might be alienated.

God had called Peter to reconcile the world to God. There is no divine call to keep all the members of the church peaceful and united. In the name of his vision,

Peter disturbed the status quo. His action forced the early church to deal with the disturbance. In so doing Peter called the church to embrace a new consciousness. The first convention of the Christian church, recorded in the 15th chapter of Acts, was an institutional response to the initiative of Peter. Peter understood that institutions move only in response to personal initiatives. And so did John Hines.

All great leaders give the appearance of breaking into history fully developed and ready to assume the mantle of leadership. Events and persons seem to come together as if predestined from the dawn of history to break forth at a particular moment, a *Kairos*. But when one looks at the life of a leader more deeply one sees the prevenient grace of God preparing, forming and shaping that leader. In many ways John Hines was prepared from the moment of his birth for his vocation and his role of national leadership.

John Elbridge Hines was born in 1910 in the little village of Seneca — one of three major towns in Oconee County,

S.C. — the others being Walhalla and Clemson. His father was a country doctor and a Presbyterian. His mother was an Episcopalian and within the limits that were possible in the latter years of 19th century America, she was a feminist. The Hines family seemed to be instrumental in the life of both the Presbyterian and the Episcopal church of Seneca. Dr. Hines, for example, was treasurer of both churches, and the Hines family undertook the responsibility of maintaining both structures.

The janitorial duties fell to the two Hines boys. Because Edgar was older he got first choice and chose the Presbyterian edifice because, unlike the Episcopal church, it did not require a hand-laid fire to heat the structure; hence Edgar grew up a Presbyterian. John was forced according to the law of primogeniture to accept the heavier fire-making duty of the Episcopal church. That decision, though perhaps somewhat lacking in theological profundity, nonetheless made him an Episcopalian and thus allowed for the possibility of his leadership some 30 years later. Life sometimes turns on the smallest things.

From his father, Dr. Edgar Hines, John received his sensitivity to human need, the ability to discern the future and the courage to act on the basis of that discernment. A Presiding Bishop who acted in 1967 to bring hope to our cities and racial harmony to our people was not unlike that country doctor who demanded that radical health measures be adopted in Seneca to prevent a future disaster.

From his mother, Mary Moore, he received abundant love and encouragement, a deep sense of personal worth and the example that the church matters above all else. The tiny structure of the Church of Ascension in Seneca was invested by Mary Moore Hines with such an aura of holiness and power that it could not help but make an indelible impression on her son. She cared for that church as if it were one more room in her own home. She

empowered that church by becoming the first woman to speak on the floor of a church convention in the Diocese of Upper South Carolina. She was uninvited.

It was illegal in those days for women to serve on either vestries or as delegates to church conventions. But the bishop had threatened to close her church and so she appeared before that convention unannounced, armed with nothing but righteous indignation, and she spoke. I do not know whether or not she seized the microphone from the bishop's hand, but she spoke. The minutes of those proceedings record neither her presence nor her message. For how can you record the presence of one whom the church views as a non-person? But she was there. The church in Seneca was not closed, and the folklore of the Episcopal Church in South Carolina resounded with the reality of Mary Moore Hines that the official minutes could not admit.

The church has institutional power if it has effective leadership. That was the indelible lesson John Hines learned from his mother, and later he had the audacity to think and to act as if a minority group of 3 million Episcopalians could, with proper leadership, use their institutional ecclesiastical power to heal a nation — to prevent this country from becoming two peoples — separate and unequal. In the daring quality of John Hines' appeal to the church at the Seattle convention nothing less than the influence of his mother could be heard and seen.

In many ways John Hines took the lessons of father, mother, and early life in Seneca and kept applying those lessons to a larger and larger world as his responsibilities grew. He did so with self-confidence, for he knew from his personal experience that those lessons worked. If something works in Seneca it can work in the United States of America. As incredible as that might appear to be, it was nonetheless his conviction.

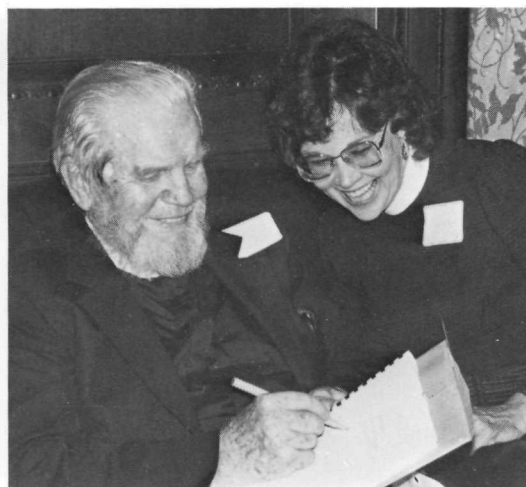
When he graduated from Virginia

Theological Seminary in 1933 at age 22, he had become president of the student body and had so impressed the faculty with his academic competence that they wanted him to consider an academic career, graduate study, and perhaps a seminary professorship. He chose instead to accept a curacy in St. Louis County at the Church of St. Michael and St. George. It was a fateful decision, for it opened him to three relationships that were to shape his life dramatically.

The first relationship was with his rector, the Rev. Karl Morgan Block, who was later to become the Bishop of California. Dr. Block was a powerful preacher with a magnificent command of the English language and a conservative establishment bent. He was a man who valued meticulous preparation and whose congregation had learned to approach the Sunday sermon with great expectations. John Hines listened to this man preach every week for almost two years. It was homilectic power at its best.

The second shaping person that St. Louis provided John Hines was his bishop, the Right Rev. William Scarlett. Bishop Scarlett was the conscience of the Episcopal Church in the '30s and '40s. He was a liberal spirit, an eager ecumenist, a brilliant articulator of the social gospel, and a powerful foe of anti-semitism. He was both an admired colleague of the young Reinhold Niebuhr, and a respected confidant of Eleanor Roosevelt. Indeed, in one of Bishop Scarlett's boldest moves, he offered the deanship of Christ Cathedral in St. Louis to Reinhold Niebuhr, who, though a minister of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, not an Episcopalian, considered it seriously. Had he accepted, the ecumenical history of the Episcopal Church in the United States would have been radically different.

Bishop Scarlett gave much time to enlisting and developing the future clergy leadership of the church. He picked two young priests from Missouri and groomed them for future leadership. They were



The Rev. Chris Hines, left, center, of Austin, was gospeler at the Eucharist marking his father's 50th anniversary of ordination. Right, Bishop Hines autographs a program for the Ven. Denise Haines, Archdeacon of the Diocese of Newark.

John Hines and Stephen Bayne, two great men whose lives were destined to interact more than once as the years unfolded. When John finally achieved the required canonical age of 24, he was ordained priest by Bishop Scarlett in a service that took place Oct. 28, 50 years ago.

The third person in St. Louis crucial to the life of John Hines was Helen Orwig, who ran a nursery school at the Church of St. Michael and St. George and who entered the life of the young curate in a way that no one else has ever done. The courtship sounds rather bland when you read about it. It seems to have consisted of duplicate bridge, grilled cheese sandwiches, and listening to the Texaco Metropolitan Opera broadcasts on Saturday afternoon radio. But the relationship grew and they were married in 1935. Helen Orwig Hines is the one great constant factor in his life. They share a mutual admiration and dedication that is inspiring to those who know and love them both.

Dr. Block, Bishop Scarlett and Helen Orwig were Missouri's gifts to John Hines. They were life-shaping and life-changing gifts. Seldom has a two-year curacy been so instrumental in influencing the future of the entire church.

John Hines' pilgrimage in ministry carried him from St. Louis to Hannibal,

Mo., to Augusta, Ga., to Houston, Tex. and into the episcopacy at age 35. That Episcopal career culminated at the General Convention of 1964 when, meeting back in St. Louis, he was elected Presiding Bishop on the sixth ballot, defeating Stephen Bayne and Richard Enrich who were the other official nominees, along with Thomas H. Wright and Henry I. Louttit, nominated from the floor.

He was to stamp the church with his indelible mark. His years of national leadership were the years of urban riots, of political assassinations, of Vietnam and of Watergate. He responded by moving the church to be incarnate in the pain of the nation. He claimed the center of life as turf for the gospel. He called the church out of that irrelevant and comfortable ghetto called religion and pushed us to step courageously into the moving events of secular history.

Bishop Hines retired in 1973 in some ways defeated by the reactions that his dramatic initiatives had created. But those defeats were short-lived, because he rode the waves of the future. The revisions of the Prayer Book adopted in both 1976 and 1979 had been publicly inaugurated during his tenure. The ordination of women endorsed in his powerful convention address in 1973 and carrying with it a promise of a sexually

inclusive ministry was defeated in that convention year. But it was a movement whose day was soon to come. The structures of the church were simply not in touch with the spirit of God, and that spirit erupted in July 1974 in a prophetic act in Philadelphia. Finally, in 1976, the institutional structures of the church officially endorsed women for the priesthood. Today almost half of our Episcopal seminary students are women and the priesthood is far richer for their contributions. The next step clearly is to have a woman bishop, and that will come faster than some believe and certainly by the end of this present decade.

The thrust toward racial unity and urban initiatives that John Hines stood for were also reversed with his retirement. We witnessed among other things the dismantling of the General Convention Special Program, and the shift away from urban America in the priorities of national leadership. But that emphasis was not lost; it merely retreated from the national to the diocesan level. And it stands today primed to reassert itself on the national level.

No tribute to John Hines can ever be adequate if it is a tribute paid simply with words. Ours must be a tribute that is lived and acted out. Our tribute will be seen when the church renews its dedication to his vision. Our tribute will be apparent

when bishops, priests and lay people are willing to serve their world in the name of Christ with boldness and courage no matter what the cost. Our tribute will be demonstrated when the leadership of this church is willing to step out on the fron-

tiers of our generation as he stepped out on the frontiers of his. The issues will be different but the spirit with which we address those issues will be the same.

Ultimately that is the most effective way that those of us who care so deeply

for this man of God, this bishop, can say thank you, John Hines, for the moment of grace which you gave the church. May we be to tomorrow's generation some small part of the inspiration that you have been to us. ■

Churches effect prison changes

by Richard W. Gillett

An order from the director of the Bureau of Prisons agreeing to transfer four Hispanic Grand Jury resisters to prisons nearer their homes and downgrade their security classifications has revived belief that the system can respond to church pressure for justice.

A brief summary of events leading to the order follows:

Some 10 months ago, Maria Cueto, Steven Guerra, Andres and Julio Rosado and Ricardo Romero entered federal prisons around the country as prisoners of conscience for refusing to testify before a federal Grand Jury. The Grand Jury was convened to inquire into activities of the FALN, an alleged Puerto Rican terrorist group advocating independence. None of the five has ever been formally charged with any crime other than refusing to testify. Their three-year sentences will expire April 19, 1987.

Although convicted solely of criminal contempt, the five were treated as terrorists, with prison "security risk" classifications rigidly imposed. During their trial, however, Judge Charles Sifton had repeatedly refused to allow government attorneys to suggest or imply that they were members of the FALN, since they were not accused as such, and therefore could not present a defense against it.

As weeks and months went by, the prisoners' visiting lists were not cleared. By September, immediate family and a few clergy were allowed, but the process of obtaining permission to visit remains at this writing shrouded in bureaucracy

and obstinacy. Now, as a result of considerable pressure by church groups and legal moves, some changes are occurring. Resolutions have been passed by church bodies and quantities of letters are arriving at the offices of the Bureau of Prisons, prison wardens, and the U.S. attorney. This resulted in downgrading of security classifications, permitting greater freedom of movement.

In late October, a church delegation met in Washington, D.C. with Norman Carlson, director of the Bureau of Prisons, to express concern about the prisoners' treatment. Members included the Rev. Barbara Harris, executive director of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company; the Rev. Guillermo Chavez, United Methodist minister, and the Revs. Faith Evans and Karen Moeschberger of the United Church of Christ. In response to their request, the director agreed to consider transferring Guerra, the Rosados, and Romero to prisons closer to home, and committed himself to downgrade further their security classifications. (Maria Cueto, originally assigned to Alderson, W. Va., was reassigned to Pleasanton, Cal., reasonably near her home, as she began her sentence.)

In late November, Carlson notified church representatives that the transfer would be processed around Dec. 15, and regional offices would make the new prison assignments.

It would be premature to rejoice at conversion or repentance on the part of the authorities. The process of applying

for parole by Steven Guerra, an ECPC Board member, was instructive: Parole officers made explicit their conviction that Guerra's crime in refusing to talk was tantamount to being an active accomplice to terrorism and that his sentence should have been at least nine years instead of three. Parole was denied, as was an administrative appeal to the regional Parole Commission.

If Judge Sifton prohibited any allegations in the trial that the five were connected with the FALN or involved in any crime of violence, how can the prison system proceed as though the allegations are true?

Defense lawyers explain that the government prepared a long memorandum which they hoped the judge would allow to be entered into the court record, to influence the sentencing. They describe it as filled with hearsay, gross speculations, and accusations that the five are linked with the FALN. The judge disallowed it, but the government sent it to parole authorities, ensuring that the prisons to which the five were assigned got the government's version. The government also leaked the memorandum to the press. Because of this behavior, defense lawyers are appealing Guerra's parole hearing to the highest administrative level, and if necessary on to a court suit against the government.

A public with historic trust in the Federal Bureau of Investigation still finds itself deeply respectful of that agency. Fading from memory are the highly il-

legal activities of COINTELPRO — the FBI's counterintelligence program of the 1960s and '70s, which targeted Martin Luther King, John Lennon, movie producer Bert Schneider and Malcolm X among others. In the process the FBI fabricated memos, bugged offices, and used undercover agitators to disrupt political groups.

Although discredited and disbanded several years ago, COINTELPRO apparently still lives on in spirit in the Reagan administration's Justice Department, which is arguing that there was nothing objectionable about the COINTELPRO operations. It is actually suggesting that if such a program were revived, it would be *constitutional*.

The Grand Jury resisters' case has implications for the practice of legitimate dissent elsewhere: in arms race protests, Central American advocacy work, Black, Hispanic and women's groups, and others. It is legitimate to worry about and deplore increased incidents of terrorism both at home and abroad. But it is altogether impermissible to allow this to undermine and destroy two centuries of precious freedoms guaranteed under the Bill of Rights.

Concern about FBI activities is now being expressed in Congress. The House Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights issued a report recently which says that "FBI investigations follow a pattern of widespread deviation from avowed standards, with substantial harm to individuals and public institutions." It documents a rise in FBI covert operations from \$1 million in 1977 to more than \$12 million in fiscal 1984.

As it sinks in that five people are ticking off three years of their lives in jail simply for an act of conscience in refusing to talk before a Grand Jury whose police arm may not be above reproach, people are beginning to ask, "How can this be?"

This increased searching for answers may account for a surge in church ac-

tivity and publicity surrounding this case. At their October meeting in Jackson, Miss., 40 Episcopal bishops signed a petition about the case. The previous month, the fifth annual Assembly of the Episcopal Urban Caucus passed a resolution deploring treatment of the prisoners. This fall, the Northern and Southern California Ecumenical Councils, and the Episcopal Dioceses of Los Angeles and of Bethlehem, Pa. passed resolutions.

Readers wishing to write letters can direct them to the director of the Bureau of Prisons and to Attorney General William French Smith (or his successor). Petitions can ask that treatment of the five be equivalent to that of non-violent prisoners, that visiting lists be cleared immediately, and that transfers to prisons near the prisoners' homes be expedited. Experience thus far is that letters do count. Write: The Hon. Norman Carlson, Director, Federal Bureau of Prisons, Dept. of Justice, 320 First St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20534; William French Smith (or his successor), U. S. Attorney General, Dept. of Justice, same address as previous. ■

New WITNESS Readers

New to our circle of WITNESS readers this month are more than 7,000 pastors of Episcopal Churches throughout the United States. A gift marking the 10th anniversary of THE WITNESS (the journal was revived in 1974 after the death of former editor William Spofford) made it possible for the Episcopal Church Publishing Company to initiate the parish program extending the magazine's outreach within the church.

"Such mutual sharing is especially timely now, as we approach the issues that will be confronting the church at its General Convention in September," the Rt. Rev. H. Coleman McGehee, ECPC Chair, said. "We hope that parishes will find THE WITNESS a useful and provocative forum for those issues."

Letters . . . Continued from page 3

have an abortion would be required to sign a form indicating what manner of interment she desired. These forms would become matters of public record.

Clearly this would not be as serious an invasion of choice as the Hatch or Helms' proposals, but it is the kind of harassment that goes on. Every Saturday morning there are picket lines at Morristown Memorial Hospital and at an abortion clinic in Montclair where vicious verbal abuse is the order of the day. This is a two-front war. While we do battle in Washington against the Falwell-O'Connor attempts to overthrow Wade vs. Rowe, we must not overlook the more subtle pressures exerted in our own communities to make exercising free choice difficult.

**The Rev. F. Sanford Cutler, Chair
New Jersey Coalition
for Abortion Rights**

Permission granted

We would appreciate your granting us permission to distribute the article by the Rev. Chuck Meyer, "Death and spirituality," which appeared in the October WITNESS.

Copies will be made available to our volunteers and patients' families, as well as to board members and staff, without charge.

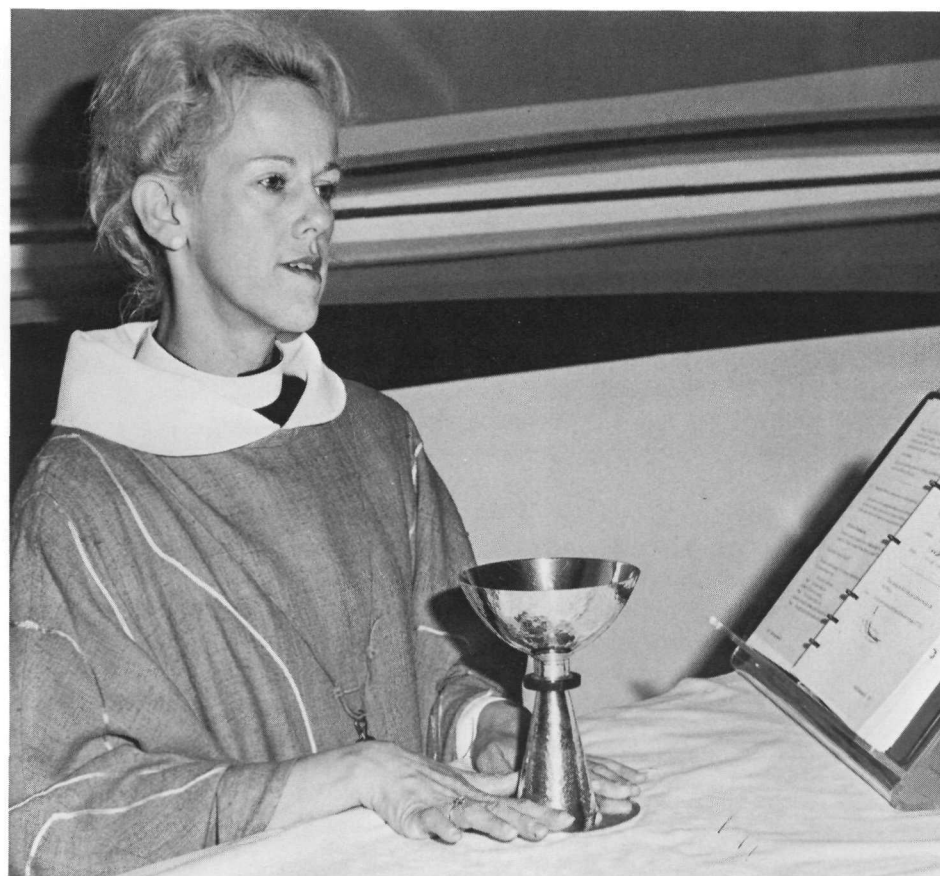
**Cheryl Lauterjung
Hospice Austin
Austin, Tex.**

Likes new format

My compliments on the new WITNESS. The quality of the reproduction color and all, and the clarity of the type is remarkable.

The current issue again testifies that THE WITNESS continues to sound vibrant chords within the chorus of Christian voices. Translating universals into specific issues and back again is a continuing challenge to the religious mind. You've done a wonderful job of putting old wine into new wineskins.

**Douglas H. Schewe
Madison, Wisc.**



The Rev. Nancy L. Chaffee, priest-in-residence at St. David's Episcopal Church, DeWitt, N.Y., prepares for the Eucharist. She is director of the Diocesan office of Ministry with Persons With Disabilities (Central New York) and a member of the General Convention Task Force on Accessibility.

A woman's journey: **Cerebral palsy to priesthood**

by Nancy L. Chaffee

My ordination to the priesthood in the Episcopal Church in 1984 was a milestone in both my own life as well as in the life of the church. Historically, the Episcopal Church has ordained persons who were visually or hearing-impaired, while those with physical impairments usually were not. In my own life, it is a time for celebrating my abilities, my gifts, my call. It is a liberation from the Leviticus stereotype, that the blemished shall not approach the altar of God.

I was born with cerebral palsy in 1942. My parents were told I had palsy-like symptoms, that I would never walk or talk, and that I certainly would never

go to school.

The experts gave us no hope and no encouragement. But my parents' expectations were positive and encouraging, and I was expected to learn to do all things, in whatever way I could. My maternal grandmother also provided *hope*, pointing always to Jesus, to the Cross. She used to say that God would use me just as I was. That stuck somewhere inside of me, and was to be the motivating force in the days of despair.

Against the predictions of the medical professionals, I was able to make it through school with little extra help. I learned to play the piano, the accordion, the organ, to dance and to rollerskate. In

short, I learned not to be a "super-crip." I felt I just had more difficulty doing whatever my brothers did. Sometimes that was all right, other times I was mad about it.

I married amidst the objections of most everybody, and had two children in eight years against the wishes of everyone I knew. There was never any celebration, only dread that I was doing either thing. My marriage was disastrous . . . with his family blaming me for his alcoholic behavior because I was not a "whole person."

At the age of 32, I decided to go to college. By then, I had been divorced, denied employment for two years every-

where I went, and determined to survive and support my children somehow. I applied to a community college and to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), planning to study creative writing, thinking that if I worked at home, no one would refuse me work. OVR promptly turned me down; since I had CP, they said, I could not learn. The label determined my ability.

Finally, through the efforts of the school financial aid director, I was admitted. For the next three and a half years I attended school part-time, studying women's liberation and thanatology under the direction of a truly outstanding priest.

With his help, I eventually went to Wells College where I enrolled in the Religion Department. I had always had thousands of questions about God, about creation, and Christ. Each night as I did my readings I would type out two or three pages of questions. Each morning my professor gave them back, unanswered, assuring me that I could answer them myself, by learning to use the tools and by trusting my own ability to read, sort, and reason, eventually finding their answer for me.

I thought I was being ignored, or maybe laughed at for asking so many questions. But then the revelation came; I was being treated as a capable, thinking adult. I was being taken seriously and was being encouraged to seriously look for the answers.

During this time I discovered the Episcopal Church. There was something here for me; the crucifixion was a powerful symbol of struggle, of suffering. But Easter was even more powerful as a symbol of triumph . . . of *hope*.

At the end of my first year at Wells, I became fully aware of my call to the ministry, a call which I had been hearing since the age of 16. It was with great trepidation that I approached my Bishop, Ned Cole. He listened very carefully as I

outlined for him my hope, which was to seek Holy Orders through the Canon 10 process, whereby one is always unpaid, under the auspices of the local congregation, training outside seminary.

I said I would be willing to work just in terminal illness areas, staying out of sight, not preaching, not serving at the altar, etc. But Bishop Cole's answer was that I was to go to seminary.

After the psychological tests required by the diocese, a letter arrived saying that I did not accept being disabled. I was furious. How dare they define how I felt about me or my disability. Oh, it was true that I had a poor self-image; but was that the same as accepting or not accepting disability?

After much study, I came to see that liking and disliking are active modes in which we have a choice. One does not like having pneumonia, or cancer. We do not like losing loved ones, be it from death, divorce or distances; we do not like war, or earthquakes. But we do have to accept these things often, and go about the business at hand. So it is with disability. We do not necessarily like it, yet we can still accept.

This, and other experiences and learnings at seminary helped me to integrate disability into who I am. I no longer had a need to be ashamed, or to feel that I was not in the image of God. Indeed the discovery that I *was* in the image of God was very liberating. How long I had been taught that to be in the image of God meant to be white, male, middle-class . . . and *perfect*. But God is not limited! Whatever we are, is what God is too, for God is not limited by our finite ideas of perfection.

Nevertheless, there are still days of pain, of frustration, of grief for the real or perceived image of who I would like to be on occasion (e.g., very perfect, very gracious, etc.) but never will be. There is a tension here between liking, not liking, accepting, not accepting. Grace makes it possible to walk that fine line; grace

makes it possible too for me to get going when I stray too far into the 'negative' zone. We are but frail human beings . . . not always able, not always perfect . . . not always accepting. I can live with that. But can others?

I had decided long before seminary I would never preach, therefore I had no need to take a preaching course. However, the preaching professor did not buy my argument. So off I went to class. But in the closing few minutes, Prof. Thomas Troeger gave a short sermon example. It spoke about the call of God to Moses, and how Moses felt he could not answer since he had a speech impediment, so he resisted.

But God assured him that if he could not speak, then his brother Aaron could speak, and God assured him that God would be with him always. As Prof. Troeger said this three times, I felt the power of that statement flowing through me, as if God stood at my shoulder. I knew then that I would stay in the class, and not long after gave my first sermon.

The first student to stand up after I had completed my sermon was a man, and he said, "When you first came into the class, my immediate response was that 'the blemished shall not approach the altar of God.'"

I was shaking. But my professor was turning green! I looked at him and wondered what I could do for him. He slowly rose to his feet . . . and then the student continued. "But after hearing you speak," he said, "I shall never again feel that way." The sound of relief in that room reached heaven I am sure! On that day I became aware of what Paul meant when he wrote that God's strength is made perfect in our weaknesses.

The Committee on Ministry (C.O.M.) and the Standing Committee comprised of both ordained and lay persons require physical and psychological examinations. Every member has been personally affirming of me and of my call, as well as having supported me collectively. Their

evaluations never centered on what I could not do but rather on how they could assist me in developing my ministry.

As a deacon, I was assigned to a unique parish. They too were willing to work with me, to accept me, and to learn from me and with me. That meant some of them also had to deal with their own feelings.

Following my first Eucharist there, one couple shared their struggle and their reaction. As a deacon I had prepared the altar for communion for the priest, with the assistance of a licensed lay person. This person reaches across the altar to accept the gifts of wine, water and bread. He then pours the wine and water into the chalice, with my hand merely resting atop his. He then carries the ciborium with the wafers, and I take them one at a time to serve. I do not carry the paten since to do so would have the wafers spilt. The ciborium prevents that happening, although there have been two occasions when I dropped a wafer. It is traditional for the deacon to serve the cup, which is not possible for me. So the bishop had said I should do the wafer instead.

Watching me do all this, the young couple felt that they saw struggle and suffering — and yet a sense that that had not prevented me from doing. For them, communion was broken open, and the suffering of Christ and the purpose of the Eucharist became real. For me it was both an affirmation and acceptance. It

was also a reminder that things which I often am embarrassed about, are the very vehicle which God has chosen to express God's power and presence in my life, with and for others.

As a priest I celebrate the Eucharist, but I do not elevate the elements. A deacon, or other licensed person will always assist me in setting the Table.

For me to require the assistance of others in carrying out my sacramental ministry has meant that I participate and share in the gifts of others. My belief has always been that in ministry we do things *with* others, rather than to or for them. How much more powerful it is, then, that I cannot do my ministry without the assistance of others!

Presently I am director of a diocesan program, Ministry with Persons with Disabilities. I travel throughout the diocese preaching, speaking and doing workshops for groups about the need for awareness and sensitivity towards persons with disabilities and the barriers which we erect of attitude, architecture, and communication.

I am also chairperson of a new Diocesan Task Force on Ministry with Persons with Disabilities. We are hoping to learn where persons with disabilities are in or out of the church: are they invisible? are they inactive because of

attitude or other barriers? what are their gifts and how do we use them . . . or don't we? and do we encourage participation in all aspects of our corporate life together?

I contend that disability is a universal condition, rather than a particular condition. For centuries the church focused on the sin, the sickness, or the shame of "differentness."

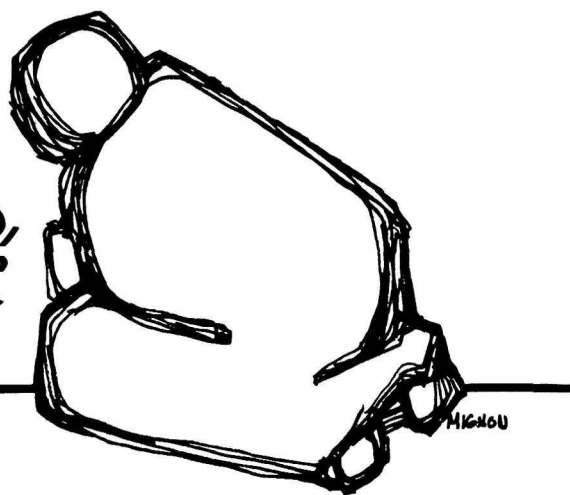
If we are to be a healing community then we have to work towards healing, acceptance, and incorporating diversity into the whole Body of Christ.

I have been enabled to become all that I can be by the affirmation and positive attitude of our diocesan structures. I have not been regarded as being weak, helpless, incompetent, or without gifts and abilities. Rather I have been encouraged and enabled to develop my potentialities and my ministry.

I am accepted and affirmed as being a whole person, a person who is in the image of God. My limitations are accepted for what they are, merely more visible and perhaps slightly different from those of others. ■

(We first met Nancy Chaffee in The Caring Congregation, a quarterly published by Harold Wilke and the Healing Community, to whom we are grateful. — Eds.)

**I believed,
even when I said,
"I am greatly afflicted."**



Larynx spirituality

by Charles D. Corwin

I lost my voice 12 years ago. A larynx riddled with cancer was the cause. This is a bad scene for anyone, and certainly for a retired Army officer who was practicing law in a small town in Indiana. Within 10 days I sold my practice, my library and my office equipment and was admitted to the Ear, Nose and Throat clinic at Walter Reed Army Medical Center where the initial diagnosis was confirmed. For six weeks they gave me one cobalt treatment every day. Then a month at home and finally back to the hospital for surgery.

For the first few days following the 12 hour surgery I felt so poorly that I really didn't miss my voice, but as I began to return to normalcy, that loss hit me hard. Not being able to communicate except by writing everything out either on a pad or a slate is extremely frustrating. It also builds an inner anger that is hard to control, and a depression that eats away at the very soul. This combination of anger, frustration and depression was turning me into a self-pitying idiot, moving me rapidly downhill.

After a few months I took some time to

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do a little soul-searching. My conclusion was that I had two paths to take with my life. Either withdraw completely and be a useless blob of humanity, or develop the patience and will to accept things as they were, put my will and heart into moving forward, and thus to get on with the job of living a useful life.

Patience didn't come overnight or easily and progress was terribly slow. However, as I look back on the past 12 years, I am able to recall situations which required a degree of patience that makes Job look like a sissy. One frustrating but amusing incident happened while I was doing legal research for a local attorney. I was alone in the office during the noon hour. A Black man came in and asked to see the lawyer I was helping. I wrote him a note stating that the man he wanted to see would be back at 2 p.m. Unfortunately he couldn't read and I couldn't talk. A true stalemate.

I gradually began to realize that silence is not always golden, but that there is much gold to be found in the right use of silence. With patience and forbearance I was slowly turning my life around and pointing it much more Godward. I began to look for ways to help others, and there are so many simple things one can do in

day-by-day experiences. This aspect of my life developed into a subconscious habit. By accepting my own physical disability I was able to accept and even overlook the infirmities of my peers and of others both younger and older.

At this point in my life I discovered, through the efforts of two men who later became close and dearly loved friends, the Rule of St. Benedict. I began to increase my prayers and meditations from once in a while to twice daily. This brought me humility, greater love of God and of neighbor, deeper desire to be obedient to God's commands, and a stability insofar as my life and abilities were concerned. This silence I had abhorred was now actually bringing much gold into my life — deeper meaning and deeper peace.

I was using the silence to read more, to think more, to carry on an extensive correspondence with people all over the world, including a small prison ministry; to not waste my words in idle and unimportant conversation, and thus to develop a sort of "larynx spirituality." I suddenly found that I had never been happier. So spirituality does abound in strange places and under unusual conditions. ■

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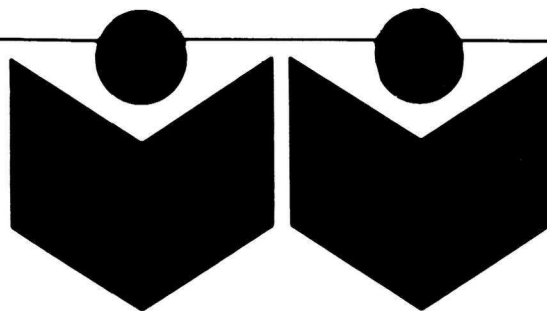
him. It requires a steadfast gaze at the water-walking Jesus as we toss on the dark sea, a steadfast gaze at the light breaking in the east. "Lo, He comes with cloud descending, once for our salvation slain." Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again.

We discover ourselves as individuals so that we may collectively carry out our mission as Christians, as the church. We will demonstrate our acceptance of the grand vocation and the glorious responsibility by the way in which we, as church, face the awesome realities of our day. And our power to face them robustly will, I believe, depend on the use of these

discarded, primitive church doctrines to deal with the equally primitive threats of economic chaos, racism, and nuclear annihilation. Through these strange images perhaps, as through a glass darkly, in time of sudden change and danger, we glimpse the hidden dynamism of the Providence of God.

As Herbert O'Driscoll has said, "Apocalypse comes when we stand in terror on the precipice of the old age and look across the chasm to the new." God has given to this generation a rare privilege. God has given into our hands creation itself to carry intact from the edge of chaos into what may well be a new age of freedom and justice and peace, such as God's people have never known before. ■

THE WITNESS



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The preponderance of articles listed in our 1984 Index under the categories *Social Action* and *Theology/Prayer* underscore the praxis of THE WITNESS—our emphasis on the action/reflection theological model. We welcome any queries concerning the availability of back issues or articles by your favorite writers.

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