

VOLUME • 72 NUMBER • 12 DECEMBER 1989

THE WITNESS

'Our church has AIDS'

Theological reflection

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• Lynne Nelson, R.N.

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Letters

U.S. election scam

Thanks to Ann Robb Smith and THE WITNESS for keeping the injustices in El Salvador and the plight of Nicaragua, facing elections while still subjected to contra attacks, before the public (September and October issues). WITNESS readers should know that until Daniel Ortega suspended the Nicaraguan cease-fire agreement it had been unilaterally upheld by the Sandinistas since July 1, 1988, and had been consistently violated by the contras.

Our Witness for Peace investigators in Nicaragua have documented over 140 contra attacks since the implementation of the cease-fire, a fact which has been ignored by a majority in Congress. Prior to the announced end of the cease-fire, our investigators noted a dramatic increase in contra activity, particularly during the voter registration period. Since the signing of the April 1989 Bipartisan Accord in which the Bush administration and Congress promised that the contras would cease all offensive military actions and human rights abuses, WFP has provided Congress with documentation of 59 separate contra attacks.

Neither does suspension of the cease-fire mean that free and fair elections cannot proceed in Nicaragua, as President Bush has implied. Both the President and many members of Congress were quite willing to praise recent elections in El Salvador though there was no cease-fire in place.

In this regard, we would also call your attention to the current Citizens Campaign for Free and Fair Elections in Nicaragua, an effort to keep the Bush administration and Congress out of Nicaragua's ballot boxes. So far this year, Congress and the White House have agreed to spend \$12.5 million in U.S. tax money in an effort to influence these elections. With Nicaragua's estimated voters numbering approximately 1.7 mil-

lion, the U.S. expenditure equals more than \$7 per vote in overt funds alone. In addition, *Newsweek* recently reported that the United States is spending an estimated \$5 million in covert "opposition housekeeping costs" (10/9/89).

To buy the same level of influence in the United States, another country would have to spend more than \$400 for every U.S. voter. This is vote buying, plain and simple.

**Agnes Black
Witness for Peace
Washington, D.C.**

(For further information: Citizens Campaign for Free and Fair Elections in Nicaragua, P. O. Box 33273, Washington, D.C. 20003. — Ed.)

Bus story touching

I was deeply impressed by William Spofford's article, "Bishops, buses and the Bible" in the September WITNESS. It brought tears to my eyes because Bishop Spofford is speaking the truth — Christ's words to the church, pointing out to us where the mission of the church is also to be. THE WITNESS surely lives up to its name.

**Elizabeth W. Corrigan
Santa Barbara, Cal.**

Uppity women & COCU

I write to complement what Rosemary Ruether said in her excellent article, "Uppity women and authentic ecumenism" (April WITNESS). Three points caught my attention. First, Anglicans and Roman Catholics are nowhere near reunion, apart from the ordination of women. Second, authentic ecumenism is only to be found where the authentic Gospel of Christ is lived out. Third, true ecumenists are after much more than organizational merger.

Real ecumenical opportunity is offered to Episcopalians by Churches of Christ Uniting, formerly the Consulta-

tion on Church Union (COCU). At the COCU plenary last year, nine Protestant churches, including the Episcopal Church, approved a plan which makes possible greater unity among them, and sent this plan to the official bodies of the churches for consideration and action. The plan is, to my mind, a breakthrough, precisely at the points Ruether emphasized. It does not call for organizational merger; member churches will continue to be the churches they are, but will have much expanded relationships among themselves. This means that on the local and regional levels, Christians in these churches will be stimulated by wider ecumenical contact. The COCU plan is noteworthy both for its clear commitment to mission in the world and for its solid and consistent call to the churches to work actively to fight racism, sexism, handicapism, agism — all the forces in society and in the church which push people to the periphery of life.

The issue for many will be whether the plan, and the liturgies which accompany it, offers Episcopalians assurance that the apostolic succession is a part of the Churches of Christ Uniting. I believe they do and that the plan is a most promising one. If it is widely discussed, I think the church will approve it. If it is not, those whom Ruether calls "patriarchal ecumenists" may carry the day and keep the Episcopal Church out of COCU. An exciting new ecumenical venture will have passed us by. Your readers are exactly the kind of folk who could get a creative discussion of the COCU plan underway in the parishes and dioceses.

**Barbara Hall
Alexandria, Va.**

Who is to say?

Please cancel my subscription to THE WITNESS. I find it too one-sided and too shrill, certainly not mindful of the many in our church who are sorely hurt

— whether justifiably or not. Who am I to say? Who are you to say?

The Rev. Donald B. Harris
New York, N.Y.

Glad to meet you

I was born, baptized, confirmed and married in the Episcopal Church. Had I known THE WITNESS and its ilk were around I might still be there. Even at this late date, how happy I am to meet you!

Helen W. Heatherington
Atascadero, Cal.

Clear data balderdash

Louie Crew's article in the September issue protesting that too many in the church are still dodging dialog with gays and lesbians, as recommended by a General Convention resolution, leads me to reflect that the trouble with resolutions calling for dialog is that they stop the talk. If we really want dialog then we must abandon the loaded language employed to bias moral discourse and crowd out our antagonists. Dialog is possible only when participants confer equality of status and good intentions on each other. You can't dialog with someone who begins by declaring you an unfaithful sinner in need of repentance.

We are still hearing the argument that "We don't have clear data on the origins of homosexuality." Neither do we have clear data on the origins of heterosexuality. But we do have some emerging data

on the prenatal determination of sexuality in males and females, and this is all part of the wonderful mystery of God's love in creation.

We will never have "unambiguous data," the kind of information which is both clear and complete. This is implicit in the doctrine of creation. The human condition is living in the matrix of ambiguity. Data always beget 10 pieces of new data. Once discovered, truth opens up further mystery. But we cannot put off moral choice for that reason.

We do not know clearly the reason for violence against gays and lesbians. Should we, therefore, withhold condemnation of "gay bashing" and wait to ask citizens to do all they can to stop this violence until we get some kind of clarity? We do not well understand the etiology of AIDS. Should we withhold our care and compassion from persons with AIDS and their families, and close up church and other AIDS ministry centers until we have unambiguous data on the origin and function of the AIDS virus?

Given the mystery of human sexuality, there is enough information to affirm full human rights, dignity, leadership, even liturgical blessing on faithful and loving relationships.

There is enough information out there for the church if it wants to come out of its ecclesiastical closet and go where the Spirit is revealing truth about the mystery of human sexuality. One source is P-FLAG, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. Another is Integrity. They know that gay people are everywhere. They know that gay people are naturally gay. They know that gay people are part of the family. If the church can open up to the Spirit in this area of life, we will discover a basis for deeper theological and biblical reflection.

John Gessell
School of Theology
University of the South
Sewanee, Tenn.

300 years late

Subscribe to THE WITNESS? Thanks, but no thanks. Your "loving arguments" for blessing gay relationships are 300 years late! And the Church of England burned countless "faggots" at the stake, starting right off with the orders of your founder, Henry VIII! You will never "atone" for your evil murders, no matter how "loving" you think you are today. Your religion is nonsense and your church, all churches, a foolish relic.

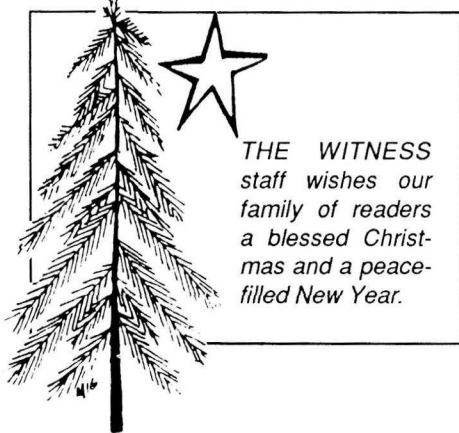
Glen Rice
Davis, Cal.

October issue scores

The October issue of THE WITNESS was unusually good on all counts. I was deeply impressed by Mary Jane Brewster's poem, "Genocide." The executive, legislative and judicial departments of government, whatever their party affiliations, have all been guilty of helping bring about the two-tier society of which she warns us. The present administration seems to be working toward the elimination of the middle class, and without a strong middle class, government "of the people, by the people and for the people" is likely to fall by the wayside. Whether or not it can be revived is questionable. No question, it will not be revived without suffering, perhaps not without martyrdom. That is a tragic fact for a nation that is one of the major great powers.

As to your story on Nicaragua, our record in Nicaragua has been bad under any government, from the time we first became involved there, long before the present government took charge. We have a lot of bad records, but that is one place where we never did anything right. The fact that Nicaragua itself has had a lot of bad governments, from Spain on, does not improve matters.

Pauline Shortridge
Hopwood, Pa.



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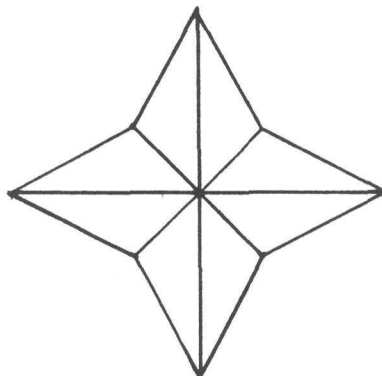
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THE WITNESS



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‘Our Church Has AIDS’

As the church prepares this month to receive the Word made flesh, John the Baptist calls us to repentance. Most of us would prefer to get on with Christmas — and these days, most of America does, sometimes as early as October. But as John well knew, recognizing the Word made flesh will be impossible without, first, a change of heart.

In our consumer-oriented society, it is almost impossible to celebrate the Feast of Christmas simply and with reverence. A culture defined by the paradigm of competition and survival of the fittest, as John Snow points out in this issue, is a culture which cannot appreciate what happens on the Holy Day of Christmas — the birth of Jesus.

In the present economic climate, with its deadly competition for the Christmas market, the prevailing business obsession is, “If you don’t make a killing at Christmas you’re dead.” Prescinding from the violent message of the market, this Advent we dare to invite our readers to contemplate the new “viral holocaust” — AIDS.

No other fact in our lives today

brings us face-to-face with the hard questions of faith so rapidly, or so directly. What is our faith in the age of AIDS? To what sort of repentance does AIDS call the church?

America has begun to brace itself for a significant escalation of the AIDS epidemic among African-Americans, Latinos and other so-called “minority” groups. Since the days when AIDS/HIV was known as GRID5 — Gay Related Immune Deficiency Syndrome — the focus has been on the disease’s impact on the gay community. Now it is clear that no community is immune. And the uncomfortable evidence is that the particular vulnerability of African-Americans, Latinos, and some other ethnic and racial groups to the AIDS/HIV epidemic is more than a tragic coincidence. The racism which regularly challenges African-American and Latino survival — particularly factors that encourage IV drug use, such as inadequate housing, inferior educational opportunities, and lack of employment — seems also to lie behind the epidemic’s spread in these and other ethnic/racial communities.

When the National Episcopal AIDS

Coalition (NEAC) first began telling Episcopalians, “Our church has AIDS,” one translation was, “Our church has gays,” and many found this a disturbing challenge to their polity, theology and faith.

For the church to begin responding effectively to the epidemic in the gay community, it has to begin acknowledging and responding to the heterosexism within it and within society at large. Both formally and informally, the contributions of gay and lesbian Episcopalians have been crucial to whatever progress has been made to date.

Now, as the church faces AIDS/HIV in the African-American and Latino communities, black and Latino Episcopalians are setting the tone and defining the issues involved in the response. The pieces in this issue suggest something of what they are saying. These reflections are personal and theological. They address frankly the special concerns about sexuality that arise among African-Americans and Latinos, and they point to the ambivalence — and racism — which marks the reaction and response of both church and society.

AIDS and 'the survival of the fittest'

by John Snow

There are times when it is appropriate for voices from within the church to make a radical critique of the status quo and cry out for change. During the 1950s and early '60s when McCarthyism was quite successful in shaping a potentially totalitarian social order, and racial segregation was still deeply established in our institutional life, there was a great need for prophetic proclamation of the Gospel. The conflicts between the Gospel and the use of the media to destroy innocent lives, or the obscenity of legal racial segregation, were obvious. A prophetic voice, not just from the church, but from wherever the spirit moved, was clearly called for by the very nature of Christianity.

The adversary at that moment was the status quo. There was an inclination on the part of society to lock itself into a static Americanism which was white, money-oriented, and centered around the nuclear family as a competitive economic unit.

Yet it should be said that on another level everything was changing. The beltways were making the automobile king, and America took to the road to become the most transient country in the world. Blacks, pushed out of employment by the automation of farming in the south, moved to the city. The white middle class, aided by the free college education of the GI Bill of Rights, burgeoned into a massive, upwardly mobile force of middle management, who, with their

wives and often sizeable numbers of kids, moved all over the United States.

One result was the effective disenfranchisement of a large segment of the educated middle class. People who move every couple of years, or even more frequently, do not get involved in local politics. Often they don't even recognize the names on the ballot if they vote.

Consequently, American politics is at the mercy of the Old Timers, those locked into their place of birth by family and a tight political and economic web of acquaintances. At the heart of their concern is simple turf. They want to keep what they have. But they also want a piece of the good life so they will open their turf if the transient can be exploited. This causes turf change — housing developments, malls, crowded public schools, overburdened sewage systems, rising taxes — and it causes great insecurity among the Old Timers. They tend to retreat into a kind of nostalgia, favoring prayer in the public schools, no teaching of evolution, no flag burning, at the same time that they ignore the true causes of their insecurity — the loss of a predictable and stable local economy, the hostility and envy they feel towards the better educated transients, and the restlessness and boredom of their adolescent children who, if they are gifted in anyway, can't wait to leave home.

Through the Eisenhower years provincial conservatism dominated our politics, but growing affluence, the power of television, and the charisma of John Kennedy seemed to have made even the conservatives willing to take a chance in the '60s. We think of the '60s as a time of rapid social change, but we were experiencing more the consequences of great

radical changes fully implemented before the '60s revolution began: increased mobility, Keynesian economic policies which generated such stunning national affluence, television and computers with their revolution in communication, and the Pill, putting conception control in the hands of women.

I will not go into the litany of changes that took place in the '60s, but I think it is fair to say that the church, both the Protestant, and after Vatican II, the Roman Catholic, was prophetic. Voices from within the church spoke out loud and clear against racial discrimination, against the war in Vietnam, and for the war on poverty.

The injustices frozen in the status quo of the '50s were pried loose to be dealt with in the '60s, and a prophetic church was part of the liberating process, particularly as it followed the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr.

King believed that one's adversary should be treated with respect, and that one's adversary, if not threatened by the fear of aggression or death, could be rational, could hear the truth, could change and repent. King's pacifism was not tactical or negotiable. He believed that any social order forced upon people by the fear of death was demonic, as he believed that freedom was first of all, the overcoming of the power of the fear of death. Against the advice of nearly all the Civil Rights leaders, he publicly opposed the war in Vietnam and was dead within a year. For King, as for the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, sin was captivity to Satan who ruled by fear of death. And the salvation brought by Jesus Christ was the felt knowledge that the fear of death has no dominion over

The Rev. John Snow is professor of pastoral theology at Episcopal Divinity School. He is author of *Mortal Fear: Meditations on AIDS and Death*, and *The Impossible Vocation: Ministry in the Meantime*, both published by Cowley, 1987.

us, freeing us to love, to do justice, to care for the creation, and above all, perhaps, to identify with the marginal, the abandoned and oppressed and to see them not as a bunch of losers but as the hope of the world.

King, with a Nobel Prize, international fame, an incredibly sophisticated knowledge of the use of power in American politics, was murdered helping to organize the sanitation workers, the garbage collectors, in Memphis.

We can discern in King's ministry the inseparability of the prophetic and the pastoral. He was one of the few people I have ever known who could be intensely aware of the pain of another person when he himself was under great personal stress. Like Jesus on the cross, he could turn to another person on the cross and try to comfort that person. He never fell into the pastoral trap of treating the marginal and the oppressed as less human than himself, as helpless victims for whom consolation and pity were the only response. For King, the pain of marginality and oppression was a kind of captivity from which a person could be freed by a vision of a just world.

The answer to the pain of marginality and oppression was not just pastoral care, but hope. In hope, we can become pastors to each other in our shared pain without losing the vision of God's justice, which makes the future something which beckons to us rather than something which we dread.

James Baldwin also championed hope in this way. Shortly before his death, he was being interviewed in Chicago by a reporter. He was holding forth on American culture in his customary devastating way when the reporter asked, "Seeing things the way you do, Mr. Baldwin, don't you ever get discouraged?"

"Yeah," Baldwin answered, "sometimes I get very discouraged. But when I do, I have something I turn to, a secret that I have."

"What's that?" the reporter asked.

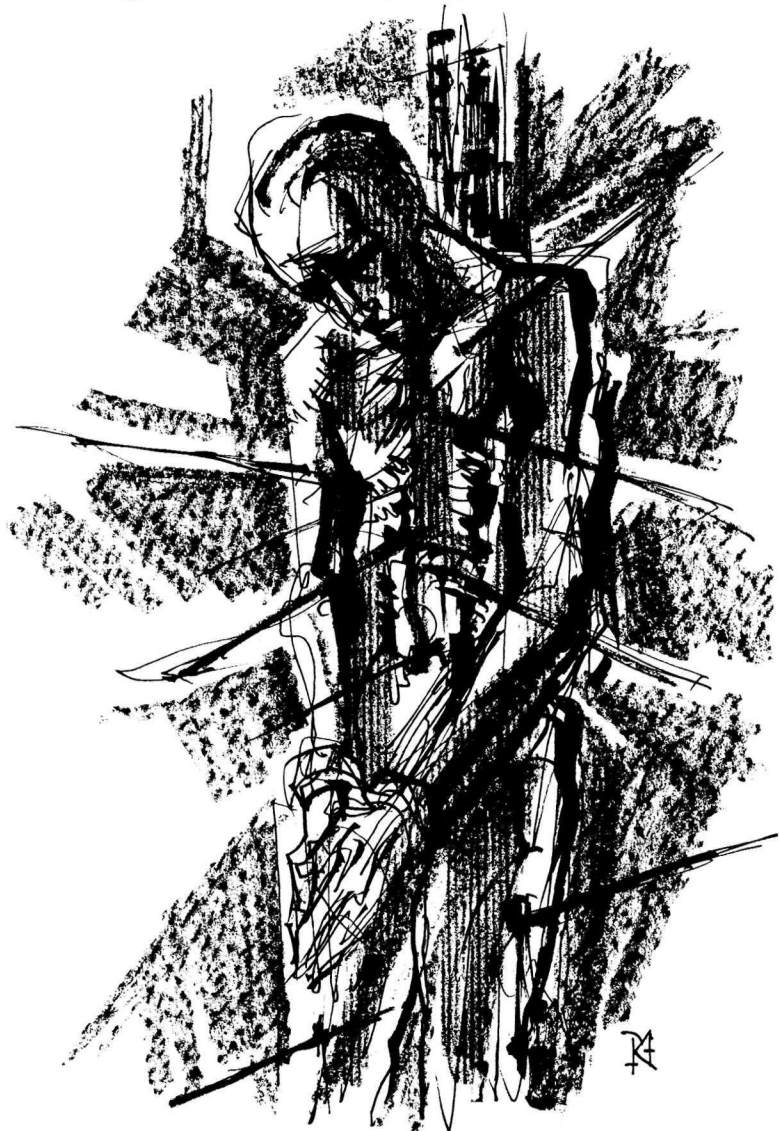
Baldwin smiled. "The Kingdom. You know, the Holy City, the New Jerusalem. I really do believe in that."

So there was Jimmy Baldwin, black, gay, drinking too much, already with cancer, having lived through the murder of his two friends Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, and fully aware of the current crises in the African-American community, yet indomitable and hopeful to the end in his assurance of the Holy City and the ultimate rule of God's justice.

Then I suppose that there could be no more radical conflict than that between Christianity as it was preached and lived by King and current American ideology. I want to go back now to the development of this ideology as a context for

what I shall have to say about the prophetic dimension of the church's mission and AIDS.

Back in the early '50s when America hit the road, a choice was made. At the time, the choice was not apparent, or at least, it was not clear. The college-educated white middle class which was to become the mainstream of our society believed that it was choosing progress towards a good life served by science, technology, the new psychotherapy, medical research, free enterprise, and education. These would free us from sickness, poverty, mental illness, superstition and all the terrible burdens of history which had plagued the human enterprise up to modern times. For those who



were unable or not yet willing to join the climb upwards, our affluence — through welfare and other benign programs — would help them survive during the transition to utopia.

But there was another choice being made then — the price we would pay for our journey. We were choosing to exchange the security that comes from the generational continuity of property, inheritance, extended family, local agriculture and familiar community, for cash flow. We believed that a trustworthy and growing flow of money buttressed by insurance and pension plans would give us and our families a new independence to shape our own lives and escape from the narrow, rigid confines of the lives of our parents. What happened is best described by the columnist Ellen Goodman, describing the women's liberation movement: "At times it seemed as if we traded boredom for anxiety."

Any minister who had a parish in the suburbs during the late '50s can tell you about the anxiety. The values of your depression childhood — frugality, company loyalty, saving money, delayed gratification — were out. Credit, fat mortgages, financial risk were in.

Indeed, risk was the essence of growth. One chose a lifestyle and pushed one's credit to create the image of that lifestyle. Articles in *Psychology Today* dealt with one's "credit anxiety." Advertising exploited status anxiety to create the most profitable consumer market in history. The newly discovered tranquilizer became, even more than alcohol, the drug of choice, particularly for women. As anxiety moved into depression, TV programming moved from situation comedies to soaps, endless narratives of futility and despair. Market research bore out that depressed people buy a great deal more than anxious ones.

During the '60s, particularly, there was an alternative culture which had both a vision of social justice and a sense of momentum towards that vision

which was spirited and hopeful. The church, or an animated, energetic, committed segment of the church, was integral to this alternative culture. And it was this same alternative culture which said *no* to our tragic adventure in Vietnam.

But it was not able to prevent that tragic chapter in our history. The word "tragic" seems to me an understatement. Not much need be said of the price paid by over a million who fought. Their suffering has been continuous and public.

The young men who managed by whatever means to avoid going learned a single-purposed strategy of self-preservation. A high level of anxiety punctuated by moments of raw fear accompanied every moment of their lives as they duelled with their draft boards, conned the government into graduate school deferments, didn't quite finish their doctoral theses, married and had children when they had no desire to marry or have children. All this they did, knowing that those less clever, less affluent, less gifted, less white and entitled, were being sent to Vietnam.

Young women who were their contemporaries had their own ordeal. Quite aside from their own moral objections to the war, they were experiencing the men of their age as self-obsessed, lacking any real sense of hope, unable to commit, full of cynicism and anxiety. It became clear to many young women at that time that it would be wise not to contemplate sharing their lives with men.

Distrust grew during every year of the war. For many of both sexes a world view developed that society was a random, hostile environment where only those who focused on their own survival survived. It is this generation who began to move into power and assert themselves during the Reagan years. They are, of course, no worse or better than any other generation, but they learned some very bad things from the power figures of my generation.

The survival of the fittest.

It's a slogan we hear occasionally today, usually to denigrate situations where too much competition causes chaos. The phrase was coined by the Englishman Herbert Spencer in the 1870s to sum up his elaborate philosophy of Social Darwinism. Social Darwinism applied to human society Darwin's theory of natural selection, claiming that the unregulated competition of human against human would move society toward "the perfect man in the perfect society." There were those genetically and culturally fit to survive and those who were not. By the conscious social, economic and political neglect of the unfit, the fit were free to rule and shape the society of the future, with the most intelligently aggressive always rising to the top. The weak, the sick, the disabled and particularly the poor, were an encumbrance on the progressive elite, and nothing was done to enhance their survival.

It would be impossible to exaggerate the enthusiasm with which Americans embraced this social philosophy. In the South the white leaders used Spencer's Social Darwinism to justify subverting the Reconstruction period into racial segregation. Social Darwinism affected and shaped our immigration policy, our approach to the social sciences, our education, and particularly the laissez faire capitalism of the Carnegies, Vanderbilts and the Rockefellers. The survival of the fittest became the will of God for too many Americans, including American Christians, and worked its way deeply into our institutional structures. Salvation suddenly gave way to survival as the goal of a human life.

Under Roosevelt, Kennedy and other brief episodes of democratic government, our Darwinism has been covered with an overlay of social concern, but the point was largely to keep the poor

Continued on page 22

Short Takes

Christmas mini-meditation

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us . . . This phrase from John's Gospel totally encompasses Christian theology in eight words. At the risk of watering down John's poetry, it can be said that we believe the Word of God — God's Spirit, God's soul, God's essence, God's power — became, through an actual human birth, flesh and blood. Indeed, these eight easy words add up to one impenetrable mystery.

But let's poke around in the mystery, taking two very odd steps. First, imagine the process of word becoming flesh, but in reverse. Flesh becoming word. Second, think not so much about a divine process, but a human one. Compare *your* flesh becoming a word, a symbol, a thought. If you were asked to express your flesh in a word or phrase, what would you say? Some thoughts that go through my head are: complex; neither-this-nor-that-but-some-of-everything; loving but scared; scared-sacred, etc.

Now, express your flesh, your life, in a word or phrase. It ends up a mystery, doesn't it? Our own life, when we try to put it into a word, becomes contradictory, ambiguous, even mysterious. Little wonder we have trouble understanding who Jesus was, and is. Christmas is not a time for understanding a process, it is a time for accepting a mystery; the mystery of our own soul and its deep connection to the mystery of Jesus, son of Mary.

Craig Biddle

Bread, Christmas 1988

Sexuality hearing in Washington

Responding to action taken at the 1988 General Convention of the Episcopal Church, the Commission on Human Affairs will hold the second in a series of Open Hearings on Jan. 6 in Washington, D.C. The hearing is intended to facilitate and encourage the "listening process" in the church for gay and lesbian Episcopalians, and will be held at the Church of the Epiphany, 1317 G Street NW.



Living words

The Rev. Siddique Mark Sunder uses community organizing and artistic talent to break down walls of separation between Christians and Muslims in his native Pakistan.

In a nation of 101 million people that is 97% Muslim and only 2% Christian and 1% Hindu, oppression, Sunder contends, comes from the class system, not from religious differences. The Dominican priest utilizes his artistic talent to build bridges of understanding. Muslims take the commandment against graven images seriously, forbidding even the drawing of pictures; calligraphy — the artful rendering of words or letters, however, is not only acceptable but even encouraged.

Using the national language of Pakistan, Sunder skillfully depicts the lettering of some Urdu words to illustrate their religious meaning, to the delight of Christians and Muslims alike.

Frank Maurovich

Maryknoll Magazine 2/89

Bumper sticker: If you can't trust me with a choice, can you trust me with a child?

Rich avoiding tax

A handful of the wealthiest people in America are still able to avoid paying federal income tax despite repeated congressional efforts to close loopholes.

Of 529,460 couples and individuals who reported total income of more than \$200,000 in 1987, 595 paid no tax, the IRS says. Those 595 had income averaging \$600,000; two out of every three had capital gains averaging \$490,000 apiece. An additional 33,805 over-\$200,000 earners paid tax at an effective rate of less than 15%, typically less than a middle-income family would pay. Almost 3,000 paid less than 10%. The IRS has been required since 1978 to estimate the number of high-income people who legally avoid paying any tax.

The rich avoided taxes by reporting big losses on partnership and farm investments; by racking up large capital gains, 60% of which were excluded from taxation; by claiming itemized deductions averaging \$262,000, and by using the credit for taxes paid abroad.

Associated Church Press

When cancer was death of choice

In the Middle Ages, controversy surrounded the *ars moriendi*, the art of dying literature. It was alleged that dying rightly was a major purpose of Christian faith. Now people prefer not to die at all.

In the Middle Ages, according to historian David Steinmetz, cancer was the death of choice. Cancer, unlike a sword through the skull or a heart attack, gave one time to die well, to get affairs in order, to pay off old debts, to bless the grandchildren.

Now, most of us pray for an instant death so we can die without knowing it. But many will not be able to die that way, so they at least hope for a drugged death in which they won't have to come to terms with its hard, cold facts.

William H. Willimon

The Christian Century 9/27/89

The politics of AIDS

by Barbara C. Harris

The theme, "Our Church Has AIDS," chosen by the National Episcopal AIDS Coalition for its conference, is well taken. It is true in several respects. Our church has AIDS in the sense that we are actively engaged in significant ministries on several levels.

At the recent House of Bishops meeting in Philadelphia, about 40 of us gathered to discuss informally our personal involvement. I was pleased to learn that we are engaged in many areas — human services, support groups, visits by lay pastors and clergy, lay membership on public and private sector task forces, crisis centers, and financial support and use of diocesan property for hospice care. And this kind of activity is not just taking place in cities like San Francisco, Los Angeles, Washington, and New York but in places such as Rhode Island, Mississippi, western North Carolina, Orlando, Pittsburgh, and parts of Texas. Also, some of the bishops had taken the Presiding Bishop very seriously about being an AIDS buddy — it was very heartening to hear those reports.

Our church also has AIDS in the sense that there are more among us than many care to acknowledge who carry the illness and its traits, or in some way will be affected by this illness. In some places there is not only denial but a conspiracy of silence on the subject. For some, AIDS happens somewhere else, and it happens to other people. Again, at the House of Bishops meeting, the wife

of one of our chief pastors and shepherds was overheard to remark that "anyone who gets AIDS deserves it."

In some of our churches people will not even talk about it. On my regular parish visitations I routinely ask the rector or vicar and vestry if they have yet had a case of AIDS in their congregation, and what the response has been. Or if the disease should appear, what response they anticipate. Quite often the answer is, "Yes, one has been diagnosed, but not even the family knows it yet." Or, "If it were to happen it would be called something else." Or sadly, "This congregation couldn't handle it."

Of course, we know there are many reasons for people's reluctance to come to grips with the subject. The fear factor and the stigma attached to the illness are very strong. To some, AIDS is a disease of the lower class. But it is this reluctance and denial that give rise to my concerns in at least three related areas.

For one thing, I am concerned about the politics of AIDS. Interestingly, Ben Strohecker of my diocese reports that at a recent meeting of the Northeast/Midwest Leadership Council, to which he has been appointed, not only was AIDS not mentioned, but he did not hear a word about any health issues. Nor was there time scheduled on the subject.

Similarly, at an international conference on AIDS in Canada in June of this year — attended by some 10,000 people — ethical, social, and economic ramifications of the pandemic were discussed, but political implications were not mentioned. Yet the political fallout from the AIDS phenomenon continues to be very much with us.

As we look at the projections and estimates of the cumulative number of cases



The Rt. Rev. Barbara C. Harris

that result in death, the direct cost of medical care, the staggering numbers and price tag alone are grist for any political mill. The politics of AIDS could further impede crucial medical breakthroughs, including the development of effective therapy and long-range vaccine research.

Under pressure from consumer groups, some of the major pharmaceutical houses — including Bristol Meyer, Squibb and Johnson & Johnson's Ortho Pharmaceutical unit — are giving away experimental drugs that have not yet received final government approval. The give-aways reportedly are tied to a recent government policy to speed new drugs to persons who might die while waiting for the completion of time-consuming tests and bureaucratic paperwork. But there is no mention of speeding up the tests or paperwork, nor any corresponding governmental effort to bring down the high price of AZT, the only approved drug to combat the virus.

The politics of AIDS threatens to create a new national class of lepers. Legal theories are not grounded in good medi-

The Rt. Rev. Barbara C. Harris, Suffragan Bishop of the Diocese of Massachusetts, is a contributing editor to *THE WITNESS*. The above is excerpted from her keynote speech at the National Episcopal AIDS Coalition conference in Cincinnati this fall.

cal data but are based on the hysteria that so often accompanies society's rush to blame one group or another.

Not to be overlooked is the reality of politics on the local level as more and more groups vie for the same diminishing dollars. It thus becomes imperative for us to work ecumenically and across the faith community, and forge linkages with community groups.

Important here also, and my second concern, are two issues involving the legal and civil rights not only of persons with AIDS but those who may be required to undergo tests. The whole question of testing is very sinister indeed. The American Civil Liberties Union long ago expressed apprehension over confidentiality, and how tests results might be used regarding housing, education, and medical and mental health care. Continued talk of mandatory screening raises particular concern among blacks, Latinos, and other minorities who would be most affected and least prepared to fight court battles over breaches of confidentiality. Some of us in the black community have fresh and painful memories of the racism associated with sickle cell anemia screening in the early 1970s. Positive test results, indicating either the disease or the traits, produced violations of confidentiality, socio-economic discrimination, and increased insurance costs.

Persons with AIDS and those suspected of being affected already have faced difficulty getting and keeping coverage for health, disability, and life insurance. Some insurance restrictions violate both the law and industry ethical standards. One company was found to be rejecting all applications from San Francisco. Coverage reportedly has also been denied to men who are not married or whose jobs are stereotypically associated with gay and bisexual men, such as hairdressers. According to the American Council of Life Insurance, whose member underwriters normally bar coverage

to individuals with cancer or other serious conditions, "We want to treat AIDS as any other disease," while industry and other regulatory experts maintain that insurance is statistically designed to discriminate. The elderly pay more for life and health insurance, bad drivers pay more for auto insurance, death policies cost more in a high crime areas, and a house on an eroding beach may be uninsurable. For people confronting AIDS, insurance has become critical in assuring their access to health care.

This brings me to a third concern — a new locus of the AIDS epidemic within the teenage population. New data show that the virus is rapidly spreading among the 13 to 19-year-old age bracket through heterosexual intercourse. According to Dr. Gary Stropash, director of adolescent medicine at Rush Presbyterian/St. Luke's Medical Center, the extent of AIDS infection among teenagers is going to be the next crisis. And it is going to be devastating. Conditions are ripe for such rapid transmission among that age group because teenagers have multiple sexual partners and very few use condoms. If you know anything about teenage sexual forays and mores, you know how difficult it is to say the right things in order to get young people to use condoms. You should hear some

of the rationalizations.

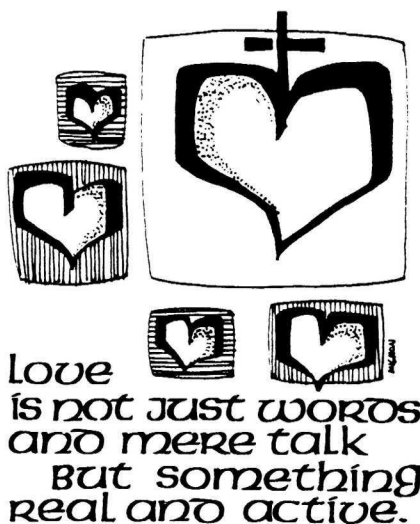
But what a year ago was largely a theoretical possibility is today a frightening reality. And that reality is compounded when we consider the alarming rate of teen pregnancy. Babies making babies and babies having babies adds up to more babies being born with AIDS: More babies being born with the twice jeopardized condition of drug addiction and AIDS, more abandoned babies, an ever-burgeoning case load, and a physical and financial drain on an already strapped health care system.

Further compounding the situation is the question of how such teenagers are going to qualify for any kind of insurance, to say nothing of the other bleak aspects of their lives.

We can play out this ugly scenario to its totality within the realm of possible conclusions — AIDS-infected teenagers and suspected AIDS-infected teenagers and their offspring being warehoused in some state-run institution as were the mentally ill at the turn of the century. If you don't think that's possible, just let people continue to refuse to believe or admit that our church has AIDS.

Let me cite a danger and a hope, for there is both danger and hope on the horizon. And I cite them because the danger resides in people like us, and the hope resides in people like us.

What is the danger? Three days ago a lead story on page two of my local paper read, "Environment to dominate world issues during the '90s." Meanwhile our church has declared the 1990s the Decade of Evangelism. Tension and energy get focused on ozone depletion, saving the rain forest for oxygen, cleaning the air to avoid catastrophic global warming, keeping streams from spreading toxic pollutants, winning souls for Christ and cloning the church. As important as some of these are, we can easily lose the focus on the plague of AIDS, pandemic



Continued on page 15

UMWA strikers face Christmas

Winter of discontent in the coalfields

by Susan E. Pierce

The leaves were beginning to bud on the trees on April 5 when 1,900 United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) members went out on strike against the Pittston Coal Group. Last year, Pittston refused to sign the contract between the Bituminous Coal Operator's Association and the union. Working without a contract for 14 months, the miners walked out after Pittston stopped paying into the pension plan and abruptly cut off health benefits to disabled and retired miners and miners' widows. Now, as Christmas approaches in the mountains of south-west Virginia, the leaves are gone from the trees, and the strike continues.

Even before it began, Pittston brought in a private protection force, Vance Security, run by ex-President Gerald Ford's son-in-law. Many Vance employees are trained mercenaries, recruited through *Soldier of Fortune* magazine. They are skilled in techniques of disruption and intimidation, and reportedly try to goad miners into violent confrontations. When the miners went on strike and began doing peaceful civil disobedience, Virginia Governor Gerald Baliles immediately sent 300 state troopers, accompanied by federal marshals, to escort the coal trucks and keep the mine entrances open. People feel as if they are living in an occupied country under martial law.

The strike has caused great stress, financial difficulty and heartache for the people of the small towns around the mines. Even those not connected with the UMWA or Pittston are affected. But the strike has also called on the physical, emotional and spiritual reserves of the people of the region, who though weary,

have created a whole new sense of community and have confronted hardships with creativity, humor and courage.

Visitors find their way to Camp Solidarity, near Hamlin, Va. on the site of a former summer camp owned by UMWA member Jack Bartig. Mountain roads that twist and turn back on themselves lead to the camp. Many of the signs put up by the UMWA to guide visitors have been routinely defaced or torn down, reportedly by employees of Vance Security. And state route signs often have been spray painted, according to one account, by miners to confuse the state police, much as the Polish people tore down road signs to baffle invading Germans during WWII.

The tradition of mountain hospitality prevails at Camp Solidarity, where camouflage-clad miners welcome visitors. The camp is a command center for coordinating the strike. Hard-working UMWA members and supporters have built a bunkhouse, dining hall, kitchen and showers for strikers and visitors, more than 45,000 of whom have come from across the country and abroad to show support.

Camp coordinator John "Buzz" Hicks stressed how important it is for people to see what is really happening in the coalfields, since the mainstream media appears more interested in strikes in the Soviet Union or Poland. Greeting a group of labor organizers and activists from Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C., he said, "Eyes and ears don't lie. People would never believe what's happening here could happen in the United States."

The strike has helped the miners forge strong bonds with their brothers and sisters in the labor movement. The visits, said Hicks, "get your union blood boiling." Two women miners from Kentucky, Sarah Lindenburg and Ruth Vondrasek, said they came over to the camp as often as they could, to show support and get support.

Union banners from every part of the country drape the outside walls of the dining hall and the bunkhouse. Inside, the walls are covered with more banners and placards with signatures and messages of solidarity. Prominent among them are those from Eastern Airlines and New York Telephone/NYNEX employees who are also involved in long and difficult strikes.

The strike has created bonds between neighbors who were formerly only nodding acquaintances. Sue Ring, who works in the kitchen, said "When this first started, most of us didn't know each other. Now it's like family."

A core group of women, many on probation for civil disobedience and barred from the picket lines, staff the strike kitchen — stocked with supplies donated by supporters — and have turned out phenomenal numbers of meals. During the Sept. 17 takeover of Pittston's Moss #3 Processing Plant, when 98 miners and the Rev. Jim Sessions, a Methodist clergyman raced past startled guards and peacefully occupied the site for three days, thousands of supporters waited at the plant gates. The strike kitchen fed everyone.

"We cooked for 5,000," said Ring. "Fed them breakfast and turned right

around and started lunch." The food is so good that one joke going around was that the miners wear camouflage not only as a symbol of solidarity but also in order to hide the weight they've gained.

Marat Moore, a woman miner originally from West Virginia who now works for the UMWA, emphasized that the strike couldn't survive without the women.

Moore recalled that when the contract wasn't renewed last year, women began organizing through the Ladies' Auxiliaries at the various UMWA locals. "Small groups got to know each other and at a certain point we called a district-wide meeting and set up a coordinating network," she said.

Two weeks after the strike began, Moore was one of 40 women who occupied Pittston offices in Lebanon. They staged a sit-in and sang hymns, causing Pittston Group President Mike Odom to complain to the *Washington Post* that he was "a hostage" in his building.

During the planning of the action, Cosby Ann Totten, another miner and activist, suggested they call themselves the Daughters of Mother Jones. "We each took a number," said Moore, "and during the sit-in, when they asked for our names, each would say, 'I'm Daughter of Mother Jones number so-and-so.'"

Moore drew no firm distinction between the Daughters of Mother Jones and the Ladies Auxiliary. "Most of the women are members of both," she said.

Having lived through the unsuccessful two-year UMWA strike against the A.T. Massey Co., Moore felt that the miners and the community were better prepared this time. "Outside forces have run the economy here, but not the spirit."

Family is of great importance in the coalfields. Spouses and children of the miners have been arrested alongside them and borne abuse and harassment from state police and Vance Security.

At the Binns-Counts Community Center in Nora, named after Cat Counts, Vir-

ginia's first woman miner who died in an explosion, the ecumenical Commission on Religion in Appalachia (CORA) has set up a food program for the strikers. During lunch, miners told of their worries about their children.

Beauford Mullins said he confronted a state trooper "not as a striker, but as a concerned parent" when speeding coal trucks threatened the safety of his and other children waiting for the school bus, only to be told there was nothing the trooper could do.

Bob Dickson said he had to walk his children to the bus stop and wait with them because "Vance Security will stop and shake their nightsticks and threaten the kids. They're afraid."

The miners said they try to reassure their children and explain why their parents are constantly hauled off to jail and hounded by state police and Vance. "I just sit and hug them a whole lot," said Mullins. "I told them, 'This is the real world. This is war.'"

The intimidation campaign has infuriated the community. Betty Collius, who daily joins her husband Paris at the picket shack outside the McClure #1 mine, said, "There's women and older people that won't go to town anymore. They're scared of being run off the roads by the coal trucks, or running into Vance Security."

It is tough living on \$200 a week strike pay, Collius said. "You got to do without; so do the young'uns."

Despite the hardships — she and her husband have both been jailed for civil disobedience — "We are not afraid anymore, we are plain mad. We are not backing down one inch," she said.

Another factor that has sustained the community during the strike is a strong religious faith. Pittston deeply insulted the miners, many of whom are Baptist preachers, by demanding compulsory shifts on Sunday. Worship is taken seriously enough that the weekly strike rally was moved from Wednesday to Thurs-

day nights, because Wednesday is the traditional night for prayer meetings and Bible study.

Mainline churches have generally been supportive of the strike. An ecumenical fact-finding team sponsored by CORA released a report in October which said, "There are times when religious bodies, on the basis of their historic commitment to justice for working people, are called to become involved in a conflict. The current strike by UMWA against the Pittston Company appears to be one of those times."

The Episcopal Church, traditionally the church of the elite in the coalfield, has come out in support of the miners. The Appalachian Peoples' Service Organization (APSO), a church-funded agency, has been instrumental in getting more than 30 bishops, including Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning, to sign an ecumenical statement supporting the miners. Episcopal laypeople and clergy have done civil disobedience with the miners.



Grace House, an Episcopal mission atop a mountain near St. Paul, Va., has been very active in the strike. Linda Johnson and Liz Rose have built and nurtured Grace House's ministry for more than a decade. Both Johnson and Rose are coalfield born and bred. Johnson's grandfather was one of the organizers of the UMWA in West Virginia, and Rose grew up in Kentucky coal towns. Grace House serves as a worship and education facility for the Diocese of Southwest Virginia. Johnson directs an Appalachian studies program; Rose does counseling and advocacy work, and is part of the Coalfields AIDS Project. The mission serves as a regional center for women's ministry and a home rehab program which fixes up three to four homes each summer.

According to Johnson, Grace House was one of 15 Episcopal missions set up at the turn of the century — opened by coal and timber operators and staffed by deaconesses “who were young, bright, articulate, and upper class.”

The deaconesses developed a variety of social institutions, such as clinics, Red Cross chapters, schools, clothing and food banks, Johnson said, but in so doing created dependency. “And they never challenged the social structure,” she added.

In the early days of the union struggle, missions were used as safe places to organize. Families would picnic on a mission lawn while the miners disappeared into the woods to hold secret meetings. But people were abandoned when the missions closed in the 1960s.

When Johnson came to be program director at Grace House, she was not an Episcopalian, “and doubt I would have joined if I hadn't experienced the church outside the coalfields and got to know its depth and breadth. The Episcopal Church here is traditionally the church of the local elite or outsiders,” she said.

The purpose of Grace House now is to change that image. “We live here and

this is our life, too,” said Johnson. “We go to the little community church up the road.” And she shares with her neighbors the tensions and dangers of the strike. Johnson told how she was run off the road by a coal truck last summer, in full sight of a state trooper. She is wary driving now. “I've heard my license plate number being broadcast over the CB radio,” she said.

“My neighbors have been shot at, had their cars egged, been blinded by security lights, and gotten jackrocked,” Johnson said. (Jackrocks are made of nails welded together and thrown into the road to blow out car tires.)

Johnson participates in a weekly Bible study at St. Mark's Church in St. Paul, which helped plan a trip for miners and supporters to Pittston headquarters in Greenwich, Conn., thereby earning the censure of local conservatives.

The parish is a microcosm of the larger community. Both miners and Pittston employees worship there and participate in the Bible study. The divisions have tested many churches. One miner said that the strike was “a terrible thing for Christian people. It's like the Civil War; brother against brother, family against family.” However, most local people are solidly behind the miners.

Support for the miners continues to build nationally and internationally. In Boston, due to a campaign by UMWA supporters, unions and the city withdrew nearly \$100 million in deposits because Shawmut vice president William Craig was a member of Pittston's board of directors. Craig subsequently retired from the bank. The United Auto Workers supplied strikers' families with Thanksgiving turkeys. Lech Walensa, leader of Poland's Solidarity movement, was scheduled to visit, following visits by Guatemalans on strike against Coca-Cola.

The miners are using their organizing skills for political change. UMWA member Jackie Stump, a write-in candidate whose campaign started only three

weeks before election day, defeated incumbent Donald McGlothlin for a seat in Virginia's House of Delegates. McGlothlin is the father of Judge Donald McGlothlin, Jr., who has fined the UMWA more than \$32 million for strike related activities. All but one of UMWA-backed candidates won their races, including Douglas Wilder, Virginia's first black governor-elect.

The miners are returning the support wherever they can. A busload of miners went to Washington, D.C. to demonstrate with Eastern Airlines strikers. Another UMWA group went to Lexington, Ky. to help a local peace group construct housing.

Grace House director Johnson felt church people should get involved in the strike. She recommended making contributions to APSO's fund for winter clothes and Christmas gifts for miners' children. “The holidays are going to be hard here; the degree of uncertainty is so great, and though people won't admit it, things are tough,” she said.

Out at one of the picket shacks, the radio weather report called for a hard freeze. Miners talked and whittled — the floor was carpeted with cedar shavings. As coal trucks rumbled past a line of state police cars, a miner gave a little smile and said, “Maybe Santa'll bring us a contract for Christmas.” **TW**

Resources

APSO, P.O. Box 1007, Blacksburg, VA 24063, (703) 552-3795, has an emergency assistance fund for miners' families, and publishes *APSOlution* newsletter, a good source of information on the strike.

UMWA, P.O. Box 28, Castlewood, VA 24224, (703) 762-5537, has a Christmas for Pittston Miners fund to buy gifts for children, and offers free copies of *The Camo-Call: UMWA Strike Newsletter*.

Linda Johnson, Grace House, Rt. 1, Box 232, St. Paul, VA 24283, (703) 395-6588, will assist church groups wishing to visit the coalfields.

in its proportions.

This church and society have short-lived love affairs with catastrophes, causes, and concerns. There is the danger that we can become so consumed with the environmental aspects of the science of survival and the ecclesiastical aspects of the dynamics of inclusion that we lose sight of the importance of the current struggle.

I have watched over the years this church of ours shift and drift from one noble undertaking to another without stopping to make the links and the connections between what we have been doing and what we are about to do. We must remain cognizant that the struggle with AIDS, the science of survival, and the dynamics of inclusion are inextricably linked.

We cannot be good stewards of creation without an awareness of the integrity of all creation, including all of humanity. Unlike Jesus, the church has not realistically come to grips or gotten in touch with issues of wholeness, wellness, illness, death, sexuality, or sin. We dare not talk of evangelism and its dynamics of inclusion without an awareness that what affects any of us affects all of us. And we cannot get sidetracked from our ministry.

There's also a danger of becoming tired and discouraged and giving up. It's understandable. People are dying around us, and that's depressing. I go into the cathedral in Boston and look at the AIDS memorial. There is one name on the sheet in 1985. And as the years move ahead the numbers of names and the number of sheets increase. That's discouraging, but we cannot give up.

Where is the hope? How is the hope to be realized? AIDS is unlike other plagues that have affected large sectors of populations, such as the so-called Black Death that swept across Europe in the 14th century. People were powerless

in the face of those epidemics. They didn't know where or how they originated, how they were transmitted, or how to prevent them.

Again, if I may cite my friend Ben Strohecker, "Let's not waste energy on the origin of the virus." And I say, Amen. Whether it came from African green monkeys, a Canadian airline employee, or as some Africans believe, a serum fabricated in a CIA laboratory in Maryland and sent to their continent, at this stage engaging in such debate is to indulge people in their denial and is about as productive as rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.

It is difficult to educate and police ourselves but we know it works. Our brothers in the gay community have proven that and we can learn from their experience. It is difficult to educate others, especially on a subject that they would just as soon forget — or about the needs of people whom they would just as soon not recognize.

But I think about the importunate widow in the Gospel — persistent, worrisome until she got her point across and received justice. We could use some of that persistence, especially in getting the point across to young people. Even if we have to wear them down as the widow in the parable did the judge. Perhaps also we can communicate the inter-relatedness of other concerns and help people to put them in perspective.

Health and Human Services Secretary Louis Sullivan has announced the Food and Drug Administration would allow wider distribution of AZT to children three months to 12 years old in advanced stages of the disease. It will be administered in strawberry syrup. The point is AZT testing got out to those who can benefit from it. And we need to push legislators and industry to make it affordable, or free.

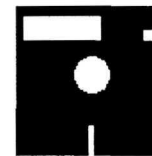
Remember the national effort to get the Salk polio vaccine to people? Most of us lined up to get it on a sugar cube

— free. We need to confront both church and society about mounting a sustained national effort — including needle exchanges where necessary — and being in the forefront of an international effort that rivals our commitment to the space program.

If we can spend that much money to put people in outer space, then we ought to get serious about putting those kinds of financial resources to the eradication of this illness.

Our church has AIDS, our nation has AIDS. And both have aids for those who have the illness, those who are the caregivers, those who live with persons with AIDS, and for those who tomorrow or the next day find themselves involved in any one of these groups.

While hundreds of thousands will be lost to us, we are in a moment of grace. There is still time to save a generation. Let's get on with it. **TW**



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The face of God: Stories from

I have often prided myself on the understanding that the world is not a rational place and that most of what occurs in the course of human experience is not fair. I still believe in God, however, and in God's overcoming love and power to affect the course of life for good — in the next world but also, and importantly, in this one. I usually think of myself as

Lynne R. Nelson, R.N., a registered nurse, lives in Elizabeth, N. J., with her husband, Peter, and their three children. She is a member of Grace Church in Linden, N.J.

being on pretty good terms with God.

At significant points in my life, though, all of my suppositions about God — about what God requires of me, my sense of God's presence and of God's answering love — have been shattered. Bewildered, I have stumbled through life gripped by inner pain beyond my ability to direct.

Such was my state in my early encounters with AIDS patients. I was working nights, from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m., the time that I always feel closest to my patients — when essential things be-

come clearer, relationships more sharply defined. I was utilizing my skills as a nurse to give good care to my patients and to be a positive influence in their lives, but inside I felt an emptiness, a sense of God's absence. The suffering I witnessed didn't help — and then it did.

I remember Annie, a young black woman of 25 who was an IV drug user. She weighed about 90 pounds, but was successfully overcoming AIDS-related pneumonia — again. She would not readily speak, and when she did, she would not look at you directly. But there

Church must combat stereotypes

by Hobart M. Banks

Many years ago, in my college days, I had the good fortune to visit Sweden for a summer program through the courtesy of the American Friends Service Committee. While there, I noticed an article in the local press quoting a sociologist as saying: "In America, the Jewish problem is not a religious problem but a race problem, and the Negro (sic) problem is not a race problem but a sex problem." I found this quite disturbing.

At the time, this experience led me to do a lot of reflecting about what seemed to me to be an inordinate emphasis on

the sexuality of Americans of African descent. The stereotypes of the sexually insatiable, well-endowed, black male and the completely uninhibited black female were obviously fueled by it. It was commonly said that some white women would actively pursue black males out of curiosity. And there were even some white men who would insist publicly that "you haven't lived until you've slept with a black woman!" The results of this kind of talk complicated — sometimes fatally — the relations between blacks and whites.

One of the unfortunate connotations of the stereotypical emphasis on African-American sexuality is that of primitiveness and inferiority — blacks supposedly have limited intellectual ability and are promiscuous. If taken further, the allegation becomes that there is a greater incidence of sexually transmitted diseases

among blacks, and the statistics showing the relative percentages of infection in African-American communities are provided as evidence of this. Sometimes it is even suggested that blacks are especially susceptible to certain sexually transmitted diseases — ignoring the fact that, before exposure to the Europeans, such diseases were unknown among these people.

When the new "plague" was first announced in the press, it was identified with the gay white male communities of New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco. While sympathy was extended to people afflicted with this new and fatal disease, there was some covert relief within the black community that AIDS was not immediately identified with it, feeding into the old stereotypes. Indeed, for some time now, there has been an attempt to deny that the new sexually

Hobart M. Banks, Ph.D. is a psychologist with the California State Department of Corrections. He serves on the Board for Westside Community Mental Health, a program serving the Fillmore District, one of the historically black neighborhoods in San Francisco. Banks is also a member of the Union of Black Episcopalians AIDS Task Force.

the front lines

by Lynne R. Nelson

was a strength and tenacity about her, an internal will that was hard to define.

Annie listened to a lot of evangelists on television. Since I'm not much of a fan of such personalities, I seldom paid attention to what they were saying when I was in her room. But one memorable night, when I had come in to care for her, Annie was lying on the bed with her back to me. Although I thought she must have heard me come in, she did not stir. Struck by her attentive stillness, I hesitated to disturb her. Just then a voice rang out of the television, filling the

room with its power: "In the midst of your deepest despair, I am with you, says the Lord." Very shortly, Annie turned towards me, holding out her arm so I could take her blood pressure. For the first time, her eyes calmly met mine, and in them lay the joy and certainty of the words we had just heard.

And there was Melanie, who liked to be called Mel. She had been infected with AIDS through a blood transfusion, given some years before during a complicated hysterectomy. She was the same age as I, married, with school-aged chil-

dren and actively involved in her church and community — her life paralleled mine a great deal.

At the time Mel was my patient she needed a tremendous amount of care and support. She was lucid, but very weak, with multiple infections, and she was depressed. Several times I remember her asking me, "Why has God allowed this to happen to me? What kind of God is this?" I found Mel's situation very difficult to deal with, probably because she reminded me of myself so much, a reminding I resisted in order not to lose

transmitted disease was really a problem in the black community at all.

It is noteworthy that the gay white male community in San Francisco mobilized quickly by establishing several strong, supportive groups and lobbying for improved treatment and more research on how to deal with this new problem. When it became apparent that one significant contributing factor was sexual promiscuity, the gay community began a massive and effective program of education that resulted in reduced "bath-house" activity and other situations that encouraged casual sex.

Somewhat more recently, the leadership at the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta announced at a CDC-sponsored conference that there is evidence to suggest that the incidence of AIDS/HIV is about to explode in the "minority" communities. Figures were cited that showed significant increases in Hispanic and black communities on the East Coast, apparently related to IV drug abuse and the exchange of used needles. By this means female partners are also being infected and, in turn, some are be-

coming pregnant and passing on the disease to the newborn. It was also observed that Hispanic and black males who were gay are likely to function bisexually because of the greater stigma associated with homosexuality in these communities. Scary notions, like genocide, began to crop up as conference participants realized that, through dirty needles, bisexuality, or both, this disease is posing a considerable threat not only to whole communities, but to an entire new generation.

At this point, it is urgent that blacks and Hispanics learn from the gay community about mobilizing with effective education directed toward specific behaviors. But the educational message and tactics will have to be tailored to the needs of the specific communities and presented using language and formats most likely to be effective. I am, personally, very excited about being a part of such an effort and being involved in a religious community trying to meet its responsibilities in fighting AIDS.

In San Francisco, I feel especially privileged to be on the cutting edge of

some of these concerns. My bishop, William E. Swing, has long been a leader in reaching out on behalf of the Episcopal Church to the gay and lesbian community, establishing The Parsonage and other ways to encourage dialogues between the church and gay groups. And he has added a canon to the ordinary to his staff for the specific purpose of dealing with the church's concern for people with AIDS and their loved ones. Without getting caught up in the politics of the gay community, or even the broader issues of the church's position on human sexuality, there is no escaping the mandate to reach out to the distressed — the sick and afflicted, the dying and bereaved, and those directly involved in trying to relieve the suffering.

Having learned many lessons in dealing with the gay community, the church must now pay attention to the needs of the black and Hispanic communities. If, as the result of my experiences, identity, expertise or skills, I can be of any particular service in this instance, I sincerely hope I can serve effectively. Here am I, Lord, send me. **TW**

the objectivity I needed so badly.

One night when I went into her room, Mel was very agitated. The patient next door had died on the previous shift. Although nurses had been with the patient, she had still called out for someone to please hold her hand. With tears streaming down her face, Mel told me that she had wanted to do just that, but that she hadn't been able to move because she was so weak and there were so many intravenous lines and tubes. "My God, if I could have gotten to that woman to hold her hand, I would have! I wanted to comfort her as she was dying. I would have climbed over the side of this bed to let her know that I cared."

I was amazed by the intensity of her words and by her grief over another person's suffering. She had lost herself in compassion for someone else's pain. For that moment, her depression had vanished, replaced instead by a kind of soulful vitality. The next time I came to work, Mel had died.

Jake was a big-boned, redheaded Irishman with the face of an angel, even in his illness. He had been married years before and pictures of three beautiful children were always in view on his bedside table. Jake was bisexual and had contracted AIDS through a gay lover who had since died.

What impressed me about Jake was his sense of humor. It did not seem to be a veneer over despair, but a kind of therapy with which he dealt with his disease and with which he ministered to the inhibitions of others. "Oh nurse, I'm *dying*," he would moan, and then, with a smile, "but not today."

Jake would not use the bed in his room. "Once I get into that bed," he would say, "I'm dead." We accommodated him, and a well-padded recliner was ordered for him. He spent a lot of time writing letters to friends, calling up different people and talking with them. One night, at 3 a.m., I found him sitting up straight in his recliner, the lights in

full blaze. With reading glasses perched on the tip of his nose, he was writing a letter and his eyes were sparkling.

"You've no idea how much I have to do," he explained. "Don't be concerned about me not getting enough sleep, please, please, please," he said in mock contrition. He looked very pale and tired, but I knew he had refused his sleeping medication. So I encouraged him to do what gave him peace.

It became increasingly difficult to care for Jake in his chair, to keep him off his back and keep his gangly legs supported, but no one wanted to make him get into bed. Jake's physicians left this up to the nurses, so we persisted in fulfilling this need. When Jake was too tired to write, he would dictate to the many friends who visited him, insisting that they read back what he said — even simple phrases were reworded to get things just right. Jake told me that all these letters and phone calls were "putting things in order, expressing things that have never been expressed but need to be."

Jake's room was always filled with flowers, which he loved. "Do you think they will have flowers?" he once asked. "That would seem to be in character for the place," I responded. I knew what he meant, and in his smile he understood that I knew.

On New Year's Eve, Jake asked to be helped into bed, and to have one of the flower arrangements placed within his view. The time had come, he said, when he could really rest, and this he wanted to do in bed. We lifted Jake into bed so he could face the window and the flowers. There was a quietness about him now, even in the midst of his discomfort and pain.

In the early dawn of that New Year's Day, Jake died. That morning I went home from work weary with exhaustion and grief. As a surprise, my husband had bought me a bouquet of mixed flowers in celebration of the new year. A low fire was burning in the fireplace and

breakfast was waiting. These simple things profoundly comforted and consoled me. Within them was an echo of another early morning meal, this time with fish and bread cooked over a low charcoal fire — and with conversation about one's call before God. "Feed my sheep!" Jesus had said then to Simon Peter. I understood what this loving exhortation meant for me that morning more deeply than ever before. In trying to feed his sheep, I would be fed so very much more through them.

Several years ago, an issue of *The National Geographic* featured on its cover a photograph of the last smallpox victim on earth. He was a young black man with healed scars on his face, and he was smiling full face into the camera. I remember being overwhelmed with grateful tears, an unknown grief comforted — smallpox would claim no more lives. I have a vision of a day when such a photo will show the last AIDS victim on earth. He or she will be well and smiling, the disease eradicated, the cure complete. But that will depend on our willingness to allow God's supernatural love and grace take us beyond ourselves, to erase our fears and to see us in "the other," in the person suffering from AIDS — and not only ourselves, but the face of God.

Resources

National Episcopal AIDS Coalition
1511 K St. NW, Suite 715
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 628-6628

For a copy of *Sin, Disease, and Sexuality*, the Union of Black Episcopalians AIDS Task Force's theological statement, which was primarily authored by the Rev. Canon Nan Arrington Peete, contact:
UBE AIDS Taskforce
The Rev. Charles Poindexter, Convenor
St. Luke's Episcopal Church
5421 Germantown Ave.
Philadelphia, PA 19144
(215) 844-8544

In ghetto: Double standard prevails

by Floyd Naters-Gamarra

There is definitely a double standard at work in the battle against AIDS. The people who are now contracting AIDS in alarming proportion to the rest of the population are people of color and poor whites in the inner-city ghettos.

Today the Latino communities in many cities have the highest incidence of AIDS, even though Latinos comprise only a small percentage of the population. According to recent national figures, the Hispanic population is only 7% of the total in the United States. But it makes up 15.6% of all AIDS cases nationwide. In Pennsylvania, Latinos make up 50% of all AIDS cases statewide — 25% of the Latinos tested for HIV infection in North Philadelphia are positive compared to a rate of 6.4% testing positive at all other sites citywide.

These people now getting AIDS in such large numbers are not only primarily black and Hispanic, they are also the people that our society considers its throwaways — the outcasts, the unproductive, the parasites, the lazy, shiftless, and homeless mentally ill; the obstacles to progress. These people, it is said, are draining our resources.

AIDS is spreading like wildfire through the ghettos of our cities. Children and babies are infected by fathers or mothers who contracted the virus through prostitution and/or drugs, and a great number of ghetto teenagers are being infected through a combination of unsafe sex and shared needles. We are

witnessing not two, but three generations going down the drain.

What is happening is that genocide is being committed against people of color. We are talking about values and morality and good old-fashioned evil. We are talking about justice. We are talking about race, class, economics, culture, gender, age, sexuality, handicaps, religion, society — the human condition in all its expressions and need. We have dehumanized ourselves by ignoring the humanity of society's casualties.

Drugs have been a problem in the Latino and black communities for years, but did not become a "real" problem until it blindsided the white community, the mainstream group. Only when a problem moves into the mainstream is it cause for concern. That was also the case with the spread of AIDS.

AIDS initially affected primarily the gay male population which gave rise to a paranoid and ugly expression of homophobia. When heterosexuals began coming down with AIDS, it became evident that AIDS is a human, not a gay, disease, and that everyone was at risk if they were not careful in their sexual practices. So education about safe sex became a must.

It is a truly shameful fact that AIDS was allowed to spread by a number of institutions that could have nipped it in the bud, or contained it. When AIDS was perceived as only a gay disease, the Reagan administration was not interested in funding research of a disease that affected "those people." The medical profession was not interested either, since there was no future or glamor in dealing with "that disease." Even more

shameful was the gay movement itself which in the beginning saw AIDS not as a human problem, but as a political and public relations inconvenience. And last, but not least, was the media, which had no real interest in talking about AIDS, except on the back page.

Latino people infected with AIDS are getting it primarily through sharing needles. The many AIDS task forces around the country are not dealing with this segment of the population. In my experience working in black and Latino communities, I have found that these agencies are more concerned about politics than funding. What is sad is that many advocates are gay brothers and lesbian sisters with whom we stood, and still stand, in solidarity, compassion and support.

But how could so much be forgotten in so little time, to the point that resources and support are being withdrawn from ghetto communities by political and budget surgery in city councils and legislatures throughout the land? Are junkies less human? Are addicted prostitutes less deserving? How does it happen that race, language and culture make some people less human and others less compassionate?

Finally, many will say that the problem is the drugs and the addiction in our society. I beg to disagree. These are merely the symptoms of the malaise of our society. Unless we begin dealing with our society's racism, sexism, classism; unless we begin providing decent housing, education, day care, and employment for all of our people — we will be denying the good news our church proclaims. **TW**

The Rev. Floyd Naters-Gamarra is vicar of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Boston, and a member of The Consultation, representing the Coalition of Hispanic Episcopalians.

Racism and the viral holocaust

by Elsie Pilgrim

I knew an IV drug user with AIDS who because of opportunistic infections had to be hospitalized. After he recovered he'd go back on the street because he had nowhere else to go. Once he went out and got run over by a car just so he would be able to come back and continue to get care. Eventually, he got into a fight, got stabbed, and ended up in court for beating someone up. The public defender assigned to him inquired after his health. "Oh, I have a little touch of AIDS," he said. She jumped up and ran out of the courtroom. The court attendant brought the judge a phone and after a hurried conversation the judge said, "All right. You can go. Case dismissed." That happens a lot. If someone is diagnosed with AIDS, the indictment is dropped, or people are actually discharged from prison. So I spent one of my days off looking for an apartment for him, and we found one. The landlord found out he had AIDS and threw him out. He didn't even come back to tell me; he just lived on the street for two weeks. He came back to the hospital in a coma. And then he died.

In New Jersey in the early 1980s, the majority of the AIDS cases we were seeing involved IV drug abusers, 95% of whom were male — many from minority communities. Sexuality complicates the question of how transmission occurs. In communities which are economically oppressed, men who are prevented from exercising power in socially useful ways may find

other channels of expressing power needs — including sexual domination of other men. These men will not necessarily identify as gay. Bisexuality is therefore an issue in minority communities, possibly more so than in the white community. More recently, heterosexual women whose partners engaged in IV drug use or homosexual activity began to be identified as being infected. Because many people who are drug-addicted have sex for pay, we had cases of lesbians who were IV drug abusers who were engaging in heterosexual prostitution. It becomes a chicken-and-egg kind of question to try to identify "the source" of transmission. Presently 30% of the diagnoses of AIDS in northern New Jersey are women.

Statistics reflecting the magnitude of what was happening in the black and Hispanic communities weren't presented to the media and general public until August 1987 in Washington, D.C., during a conference on minority incidence of AIDS. Twenty-five percent of AIDS cases are now black people who represent 12% of the population nationally; 15% of cases are Hispanic persons who represent only 7% of the population nationally. In New Jersey, 53-54% of the cases are black (11% of the state population is black); 17% of the cases statewide are Hispanics. That adds up to a staggering 70% statewide. Some 90% of children with AIDS are black or Hispanic.

Mortality rates among blacks are higher than for whites because they tend not to have the same access to medical treatment and other support

services. In some cases basic necessities like a home and food and a supportive community are lacking.

Congress has now provided extra funding to reach minority communities. But what is happening with the money on state and local levels? White and middle-class people are designing the programs and allocating the funds. Those programs from the beginning are marked for failure because they don't include any input from community residents. Neither the national nor state level asks local people for advice. And then they wonder why local people don't co-operate. For example, a white woman from Rutgers University was given a contract from the state health department to inquire from AIDS patients what their needs were. First of all, the state furnished her with a list of people to interview. That information was supposed to be confidential. It had taken us months to establish trust and rapport with those patients — some people are in marginalized situations. What do you think the effect is of a well-dressed white woman coming into a really poor, black neighborhood with her 80-page questionnaire to interview sick people? Some neighbor will say, "I saw that woman. Your son hasn't been looking so good. What's wrong with him?"

The people I try to reach as part of an educational program are elementary school teachers, church leaders, undertakers, beauticians, and barbers. I try to reach people in the Essex County Jail, the Urban League, the fraternal organizations, and the sororities. I spoke at one church, and five young ladies came forward to volunteer to work with AIDS patients in the St. Francis Hospital

Elsie Pilgrim, R.N., Infection Control Coordinator at University Hospital in Newark, is a member of the Church of the Epiphany in Orange, N.J., and serves on the AIDS Task Force of the Union of Black Episcopalians. This piece is adapted from an article that first appeared in the Summer 1989 issue of *Jubilee*.



prison ward in Trenton. Their response really gave me hope. Tapping indigenous people and resources is how to win this war — but it's almost as though no one wants to win it. Social workers make their salaries from "resolving problems." Yesterday the problem was poverty; today it's AIDS. The name of the game is to hop from problem to problem rather than actually resolve anything. And the consultant network doesn't include blacks and Hispanics.

Why pay someone to establish needs, when that money could be used for much-needed services like hospices, caregivers, homes, food, medicine, or legal advocacy? The gay community has organized to get home care for people with AIDS, but affordable housing is lacking in many cases for blacks and Hispanics who are sick. Furthermore, there has not been one new rehabilitation center for treatment of drug addiction. Drug rehabilitation programs are part of the AIDS treatment program needed in minority communities. The waiting list is immense. You can't tell someone who says

they're ready to try to kick a drug habit that they have to wait; you have to deal with them right then or you lose them

It is also a simple fact that if you're high on drugs, you're not in control of your actions. You may not even know with whom you're having sex. And you're certainly not worrying about taking any precautions. The talk about "safe sex" in this context is basically irrelevant — and even condoms can't be guaranteed as 100% safe. The statistics prove a reduction in transmission, but that's not the same as proving that something is 100% effective.

AIDS is a very ticklish issue in the African-American community. The gay community began mounting all sorts of campaigns, but within the black and Hispanic communities there were no advocates. For many years there was no serious discussion about how this disease was affecting minority communities. There was a false sense of security: "It's those white folks." And people basically don't believe in the system and the system won't use people in the community.

One of the best ways to communicate would be through the churches. People would believe the message. They'd believe *Jet*, *Ebony*, the beautician, the barber, the bartender, or Mrs. So-and-so because she's been around here a while. They'd also believe the minister and the deacon. But the potential of the churches hasn't been tapped.

My father was an Episcopal priest. He used to take us children along when he visited prisons in Trenton. I said, "Daddy, how can you go there? Those people are criminals." And he would say, "Child, when I go there I know what they've done. But I have people sitting in front of me every Sunday and I don't know at all what they've done." During my childhood years, it seemed as if every hungry person knew the way to our house, and my mother would always make a sandwich. Later she taught people how to take civil service exams. I guess I've just grown up with that concept of community service and being taught to see that spiritual and physical needs are connected.

We are living in the midst of a viral holocaust. The needs of people with AIDS are tremendous and those needs are going to increase as the numbers increase. There are people living in railroad stations, bus terminals, airports, and vacant houses who have AIDS. People have got to come together regionally and start planning now, or we will simply be overwhelmed in the 1990s.

Racism is a real issue here. One segment of the population is allowing this holocaust to be visited on another segment for various economic and other discriminatory reasons. The church and the world community must come out and join this struggle. So far the church hasn't done it. If an ecumenical D-Day-like attack is not made by the religious community, AIDS with its companion plague of drug addiction will eventually empty all the churches, too. It's just a matter of time.

TW

Survival . . . Continued from page 8

from becoming troublesome, which in our affluence we could afford to do.

But in the late '60s the simple fact emerged that our economy was irretrievably tied into the economy of the world by fossil fuels. OPEC nudged the price of oil upward and the whole edifice of predictable and growing cash flow on which the security of individual Americans depended began to topple. Inflation began in earnest. Grandiose investments in third world nations failed. There was, from then on, serious unpredictable regional unemployment. Businesses would start up, thrive, produce huge profits, and fail, leaving a trail of human and economic wreckage. I needn't go into the economic and social randomness and chaos of the late '70s and '80s, but the turmoil underscored how deeply rooted Social Darwinism is in U.S. culture.

At the heart of Social Darwinism is the use of the fear of death to motivate. Winners win, losers die. "Life," as they say at Harvard Business School, "takes no prisoners." Or as they say in the world of mergers and unfriendly takeovers, "In this world you have to be willing to shoot the wounded." Or as one politician said about people with AIDS, "You gonna play, you gotta pay."

I was amazed in the early '80s when David Stockman revealed that he had warned the Reagan Administration that lowering taxes and throwing money at National Defense would not increase revenues, but would multiply the national debt. The president "took him to the woodshed" but didn't fire him, or publicly castigate him.

Little did I realize that the Administration knew just what it was doing. It planned to use the debt as a threat of national economic disintegration and death, if our social programs were continued. It was the sledge hammer with which the rich and powerful destroyed the welfare state, deregulated their own enterprise, and took over to become

richer and richer as close to a majority of us became poorer and poorer.

This then, is the kind of thinking which deeply shapes the culture into which AIDS appeared. It is a culture that is not only afraid of death, but deliberately motivated and driven by the fear of death. In this respect I think it may be historically unique.

Many cultures have some means for mitigating the fear of death, understanding that an unmitigated fear of death is destructive to corporate life. It drives individuals to behavior which is self-absorbed, impulsive, heartless, incapable of contributing to any cooperative enterprise. It is precisely as Martin Luther King understood it, a demonic power that utterly distorts our apprehension of reality and makes us subject to a thousand different kinds of oppression.

All true liberation is liberation from the fear of death. We can be freed from death's rule over us through God, who took on all the pain and fear of history in the person of Jesus, and who died and rose again and whom we call love — a curious, sacrificial love, without which all corporate life falls apart.

One does not cure AIDS, one lives with it. One does not *fix* death, one lives with it. These are simple givens of human life which cannot be framed as problems and neatly solved. The way we live with these givens is by the significance, the meaning, the kind of value we assign to them. One doctor, a simple evolutionary naturalist or Darwinist, sees AIDS as nature's way of shaping the human enterprise for its own good. Another doctor sees AIDS as a tragic event in human life which nevertheless brings a graceful and redeeming spiritedness to his understanding of human relationships, and assigns as much value to the marginal as to the mainstream.

And of course there are those who continue to see AIDS as a problem to be solved, and to see no need to look at it in a larger context of meaning. ("It's sim-

ply a disease. We shall continue our research. We shall find a cure.") These level-headed people contribute in a healthy way to our hope. But they do not help us to live with AIDS. And they do not convince the majority that taxes spent on AIDS research is a good thing. Neglect of AIDS research is regarded by too many in power as benign and intelligent social policy. In all the propaganda about the war on drugs, AIDS is never mentioned except for barring clean syringes from street addicts. Indeed, the war on drugs has kept AIDS out of the media for almost a year now. Yet we lose more people in a year to AIDS than we do directly from illegal drugs.

If our national leadership seems to us evil, we seem to them sentimental, silly, perhaps even dangerous. They are intent on saving us from ourselves if we are white and straight and middle class.

A prophetic church would concentrate on saving this leadership from a demonic world view which is almost a metaphor for sin — the belief that the human enterprise is best served by the material aggrandizement of the self, motivated by the fear of death. This idea, deeply built into our institutions and our education, underlies at this moment all of our public policy, foreign or domestic.

We can attack the policy itself forever, but as long as the false evolutionary ideology behind it remains intact, we shall be trivialized and marginalized. We shall not, as the church, be taken seriously.

Well, O.K., let's be realistic, Social Darwinist style. Unless a cure for AIDS is found, or some new drug which will make it possible to manage AIDS as a chronic rather than a terminal disease, the cost of treating those already infected with the HIV virus will devastate our entire health care system.

A new and fast-growing segment of those with AIDS is made up of heterosexual adolescents of both sexes, most of whom are runaways who work the

streets as prostitutes. Experts estimate there are roughly a million such run-aways on the streets. Their clients are mainly straight married men. Yet another radically marginalized group, but one that constantly feeds in to the mainstream, either through prostitution or by returning to the middle class.

Seen from a Social Darwinist point of view there are solutions to these problems, but the solutions are all totalitarian. The current one is neglect, palliated somewhat by gestures of concern and treatment. Indeed, national investment in both research and symptomatic treatment is more than just a gesture to the tight political organization of the gay community. But the full economic weight of the epidemic has not yet hit our health care system.

The totalitarian approach, already being discussed in some regions of the country, is compulsory universal testing followed by quarantine, something on the level of the internment of the Japanese in World War II mixed with the early 20th century approach to leprosy. Granted the numbers anticipated by the year 2000, this would be the logical outcome of a Social Darwinist understanding of the AIDS phenomenon, keeping whom we regard as the most fit alive and uninfected.

However, in a strange way, Social Darwinism also works against this kind of totalitarian solution since at its core it assumes deregulation as the proper environment for competition to work its magic. Under this totalitarian scheme, survival depends on a massive governmental intervention to separate the fit from the unfit, but such an intervention is a deliberate assault on nature, which will throw us off our course towards human perfection.

My point is that the Social Darwinist, free enterprise, survival of the fittest paradigm is most absurd when faced with AIDS. Competition among the drug companies, or even among research

doctors to make a fortune or win a Nobel prize may not be the best way to find a cure for AIDS where access to all information is essential to success. Politicians calculating their chances to survive politically by reading polls may not make the best public health policy. AIDS among addicts and their families is hardly being touched. And above all, the revolution in community taking place around the whole issue of AIDS, when the fear of death is simply removed from all communal motivation, is beginning to effect more and more people's lives.

To be seriously concerned about AIDS is to come flat up against death. It is to plunge into the middle of all those things we have been taught to fear most: career failure, social disgrace, poverty, sexual marginality, drugs, pain, grief, loss. But the response in so many cases is sacrificial love, commitment unto death, mutual support, incredible courage, patience and kindness, and even a fair amount of wit and laughter. From a Social Darwinist point of view it makes no sense whatsoever. Yet from a classical Christian point of view, from a New Testament point of view, it makes perfectly good sense.

True community exists where love has overcome the power of the fear of death, and death has no more dominion, freeing the community to work toward a vision of justice. The role of a prophetic church, then should be clear and simple — preach the Gospel. Yet as I look around the church and into myself, I do not see the motivation or the vision. We, as the church, have not escaped the deep assumptions that drive our culture. My capacity for sacrificial love and my vision of a just world are always weakened or distorted by the fear of failure, loss, marginalization, hostile adversaries. But since I know that these motivations are there, I'm at least free to choose whether I shall let them rule my behavior or not.

And as I look around the church, I see adversarial behavior. Priests competing,

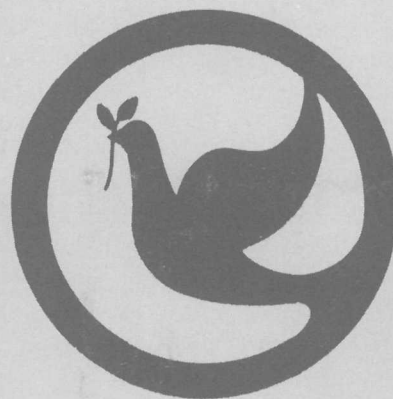
bishops competing, men and women competing, classes, races and cultures competing. At one level we know better, and are often surprised and chagrined at our own behavior. But at another less conscious level that surfaces when we're depressed, or under severe stress, we believe what we have been taught. "It's a jungle out there. Nobody out there gives a damn whether I live or die. Look out for number one."

For the church to be prophet, it must tell its secrets. For *perestroika* there must be *glasnost*. For us to overcome the structures of paranoia that underlie so much of what we do, we must first endure the pain of *metanoia*, repentance, rethinking the failure of how we ourselves make sense out of life beneath the overlay of our Christianity.

To do this we must move to the margins of society not as lordly pastors, bringing comfort and help or expecting a quick fix and a lot of gratitude, but to rediscover hope on the other side of death, to find in life on the margin some of the values and virtues essential to Christianity which Jesus himself found always among the marginal.

If we can believe Scripture, the hope of the world is to be found on the margin, not in the mainstream. In those communities gathered around the phenomenon of AIDS we find no shortage of belonging, courage, or trust. Here, beyond the rule of the power of the fear of death we find a model alternative culture deeply Christian in its understanding of what life is about. Mutually pastoral, corporately prophetic, intensely alive beyond the power of the fear of death. We see what happens when God's grace makes human history a home for human beings, rather than a battlefield for the war of all against all. And perhaps the church can learn from this again, that the salvation of the world is not accomplished by the survival of the fittest. After that, we can, as a prophetic church, preach the Gospel of Jesus. **tw**

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