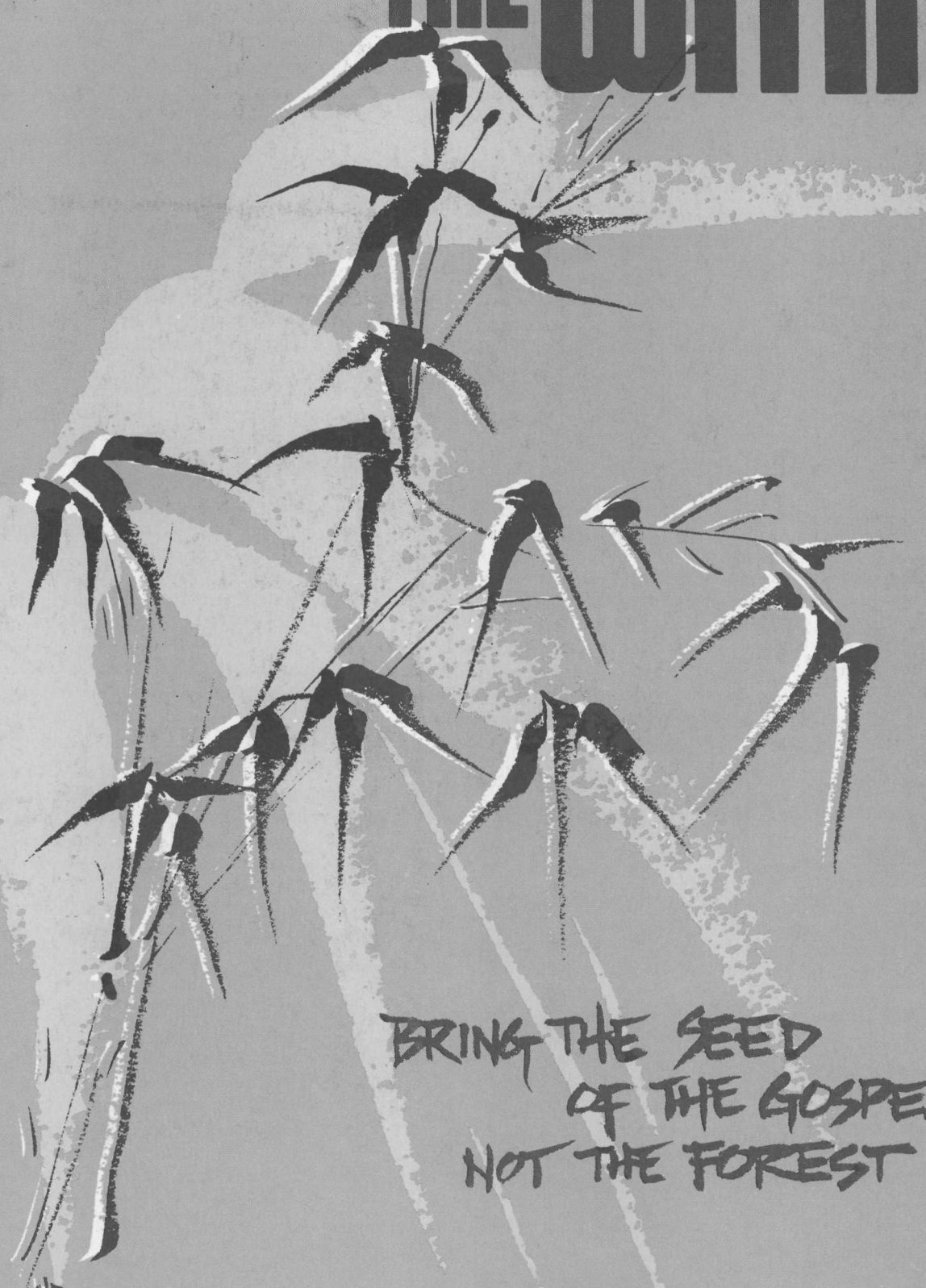


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THE WITNESS



BRING THE SEED
OF THE GOSPEL
NOT THE FOREST

Letters

Hail 'Pontius Bush'?

As I listened to the three-hour service on Good Friday, I ruminated on the role of political expediency in the death of Christ. Caiaphas considered "it was expedient that one should die for the people." Pilate reversed his judgment at the baying of the mob. Neither profited. Pilate was sacked soon after, and a few years later the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple.

Political expediency is still to the fore. In the Gulf, Iraqis were urged to topple Saddam Hussein and his soldiers urged to desert. Then the West recovered Kuwait and the Iraqis that responded to our call became expendable. Piously we hold up our hands and protest that the Allies cannot interfere in the internal affairs of another country. The USA got what it wanted — the oil. Or has it?

The Iraqi rebels are Shiites and Kurds, and the West armed Hussein in his war with Iran to limit the spread of Shiite Islamic fundamentalism. The Kurds are a nuisance to the USA's ally, Turkey, so they can be victims of Saddam's chemical warfare.

Our betrayal of the Iraqis is on the par with Churchill's cynical handing back of Cossack prisoners of war to Stalin, who liquidated them (for his reward Churchill got the Iron Curtain and the Cold War); and the Red Army's deliberate delay in liberating Warsaw in 1944, to allow the Germans time to crush the Polish people. For that the Russians earned the undying hatred of the Poles.

In keeping with the West's callous use of political expediency and the season of Easter, I proclaim, "Hail, Pontius Bush."

Doug Kettle
Indooroopilly
Queensland, Australia

A sign of hope

Thank you for being a breath of fresh air and a sign of hope for those of us who stand for peace with justice here at home

as well as abroad. I appreciated very much Mary Lou Suhor's article "Demons of conflict" in the February issue and am grateful for her many years of service with THE WITNESS.

My heart rejoiced at the article "Remembrance, pain and hope" by Dorothee Sölle in the March edition. I have sent copies of it to many friends and family members. Sölle's article spoke to my experience of asking questions of my own parents about discrimination against black people in our schools and in our town when I was growing up in Ohio. In the final analysis, what really counts is human relations. We have to act out of our own integrity for the sake of humanity.

As a United Church of Christ clergywoman, I thank God for my Episcopalian friends, for the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, for THE WITNESS magazine and for Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning and Patti Browning's witness for peace in Central America and the Middle East.

Frances Truitt
Ellsworth, Maine

(Frances Truitt is a co-founder of Witness for Peace. — Ed.)

'Time to mourn' — EPF

Let us give thanks to God for the cease-fire declaration by President Bush and the apparent acceptance of the UN conditions by the Iraqi government. In our call for an Episcopal Fast for Peace issued January 4, we asked that all Episcopalians "fast and pray until President George Bush and Saddam Hussein agree to negotiate a peaceful settlement to the current crisis in the Persian Gulf." (See February WITNESS).

We thank all of you who have participated in the fast, in prayer vigils, public demonstrations against the war, and other efforts to achieve peace. We also thank Edmond Browning, our

Presiding Bishop and dear friend, for his constant dedicated leadership in our struggle to prevent the outbreak of war.

This is not a time for celebration; it is a time for mourning — for the thousands of innocent civilians who died; for the men and women of the Armed Forces of all nations who were killed or injured, and for their families; for the destruction and pollution of the land; and for our country which once again resorted to weapons of war contrary to the teachings and example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We must never accept such means of settling international disputes.

While some of you may choose to end your Fast for Peace in the Persian Gulf because of the cease-fire, others may wish to continue the discipline of fasting with special intentions for the people of the Middle East and other areas where our brothers and sisters in Christ continue to suffer oppression.

Some of these include Palestine, El Salvador, South Africa and our own country. All of you have our prayers and support.

Ann McElroy, Chair
Episcopal Peace Fellowship
Cupertino, Cal.

Sensible reading matter

I'm quite serious about sending this gift subscription for George and Barbara Bush. Someone has to knock some sense into his head. Perhaps he'll catch a glimmer of truth from reading THE WITNESS. One can always hope and pray.

Ann S. Lowell
Chestnut Hill, Mass.

Not to be missed

I just received a mailing inviting me to subscribe to THE WITNESS and I've returned the card along with my payment.

My reason for writing is to secure a copy of a recent issue, "Breaking Silence," mentioned in the promotional literature. I believe that issue will prove to

be invaluable in my work with the U.S. Air Force Family Advocacy Program. Had I subscribed earlier I wouldn't have missed that issue.

The Rev. Eugene W. Zeilfelder
San Francisco, Calif.

Commends coverage

Your publicity letter describes a recent issue with a story: Victims who suffered sexual abuse by clergy or family members call on church and society to confront the issue rather than hide "the shameful secret." We would appreciate a copy. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Commission for Women has engaged the church in a process of commitment and determination to make the church a safe place for victims of physical and sexual abuse, and we commend you for covering this story.

Mary D. Pellauer, Ph.D.
Chicago, Ill.

(See 'Breaking Silence' ad p. 11 — Ed.)

Issue saved day

I was going to give up reading THE WITNESS. I'm too old! But when I read "What they're saying about the war" in the April issue, I just couldn't.

The Rt. Rev. Francis Lickfield
Yarmouth Port, Mass.

Need deeper analysis

Lost in the hoopla over victory in a war that was packaged as a video-game was the eternal feminine question, "What is right?" It would have been the sort of problem that would get a Joyce Munro ("Protesting the Gulf War with Becca," March) to go to her first peace march to teach her daughter. Like me — Munro would choose a carousel ride over civil disobedience. And the kid would notice both of our limits. As Munro phrased it so well, "My enemy is the government of my country and myself."

Claudia Windal ("A Way of the Cross for the lesbian and gay community")

would have those of us who are gay identify with Christ in crucifixion rather than rock the boat while there is something so important as a war going on.

Mary Hunt ("Medals on our blouses?") seems upset that women are put on the spot of having to fight. One of the main arguments against the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment was that folk were "concerned" that it would mean women would have to fight. Now we see that may be the only "right" that some want women to have. That may be the best example of poetic justice in history.

In a letter to the editor about his and Jeanie Bernstein's predicament, Sam Day sums up the despair of our situation as America applauds a "peace" it probably doesn't understand; a "peace" that can be expected to destroy so many more.

Manning Marable ("The bitter fruits of war") hit at the gut of our problems when he said, "If we want to understand why war occurred, we need to analyze the system of American power." But his solution won't work when the government can make sure the war is over before the peace movement can really begin.

U.S. Representative Henry Gonzales (editorial) only had the solution half-right: The legislature was as guilty as the president. Both need to be impeached!

Men will continue to demand applause for atrocity until women insist on their half of the legislature so that diplomacy can have a chance. We gays will continue to simper for "mercy" until we insist on a fair division of power so we don't have to whine. People of color will continue to be both slighted and destroyed until they themselves insist on power being divided proportionally by race.

And Sam Day and Jeanie Bernstein will rot in jail until they agree that the system of government itself will have to be changed. Otherwise, all of our muttering won't be heard beneath all of the applause for the government.

John Kavanaugh
Detroit, Mich.

Lost friend found

I'd wondered what happened to THE WITNESS after the Rev. William Spofford, Sr., died. I worked for THE WITNESS on an Antioch College co-op job, back in the early '40s.

It was quite an adventure. I met people like Dr. Fred Grant, Bishop Ludlow, Dorothy Day, and Dr. Joseph Fletcher.

I solicited advertising and sent out reams of letters seeking subscriptions — no computers or even electric typewriters in the tiny office on Liberty Street in New York City.

I'm glad to see you are still in there fighting for good causes

Anne M. Huff
Sacramento, Cal.

Non-stratum heaven?

I have noticed in Letters to the Editor various persons attempting to promote a caste system in the church.

In the top stratum would be White-American-Episcopalians. In the next stratum would be Any-American Episcopalian. In the third stratum would be Any-Anglican. In the next few strata would be a variety of people. In the lowest stratum would be integration activists, pacifists, food-stamp chiselers, homosexuals, inclusive language advocates, Jesse Jackson and a few bishops.

When we are gathered about the Lord's Table, I predict that only one out of 25 will be from the top stratum. I say there will be all sorts of persons: Jews, Moslems, Hindus, Buddhists, African animists, Christian Scientists, Mormons, Unitarians, Pentecostals, etc. I base my prediction on *Matthew 25:11 ff.*

I am now 83. Within the next few years, I will, by the grace of God, be welcomed into the heavenly kingdom. I wish there were a way I could report to you the accuracy of my prediction in that post-mortem period.

The Rev. Eldred Johnston
Columbus, Ohio

THE WITNESS

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The view from jail

As we went to press, Sam Day, a member of THE WITNESS Editorial Advisory Board and co-director of Nukewatch, was awaiting sentencing April 24, and a possible 18-month jail term for participating in non-violent civil disobedience protesting the Gulf War (see his story below). This piece, together with Jeff Dietrich's account of similar non-violent actions in Los Angeles, (page 18) are typical of those actions which give the lie to George Bush's words, "there is no anti-war movement out there."

One of the people I have come to know since my arrest January 17 for protesting the Persian Gulf War is a U.S. marshal named Randy.

It was Randy who drove the van that brought me and other peace activists to Federal Court in Madison from Ft. McCoy, a central Wisconsin training base for troops bound for the Middle East, the day after the war began. Randy has been my frequent handcuffer, guard, and chauffeur for court appearances in Madison during the 10 weeks of my stay in the Rock County Jail in nearby Janesville. And it was Randy who drew the duty of watching over me and my fellow inmate, John LaForge, during the concluding day of our trial March 26, when John and I and two others were found guilty by a Federal Court Jury.

"Mind if I ask a personal question?" he asked as John and I, shackled hand and foot, bone-tired and disconsolate after our long wait for the jury's disappointing verdict, ascended in an elevator with him to our new quarters in the Dane County Jail in Madison.

"Go ahead," I said.

"The war is over. You're 64 years old. You've been offered a signature bond. What are you doing in here?"

The question took me momentarily aback because, quite frankly, I had been wondering the same thing myself. I mentioned something about "not wanting to be my own jailer," explaining to him that I could have secured my freedom pending trial and sentence without promising not to do anything "bad" such as returning to Ft. McCoy.

It did not occur to me until later that a

better answer to Randy's question was the fact that he had asked it. My "prison witness" against the war and the policies that engendered it had touched the heart of one of my captors.

For two days in the Madison courtroom we tried to reach the judge and jury through a thicket of case law and procedural rules that can inhibit and ensnare the amateur. The government had charged us with knowingly violating an Army regulation that forbids "demonstrations" at Ft. McCoy. Our central defense was that we had gone to the base to distribute leaflets to the troops about rules against war crimes, not to demonstrate our attitude toward the war.

My attorney, Kary Love of Holland, Mich., brought a professional polish to our defense. He pointed out to the jury that we were helping the Army to do its job of educating soldiers about the war.

John LaForge, author of the leaflets we had taken to the base, incurred a stern lecture from the judge for his "improper argument" in attempting to remind the jury of the bloodshed caused by American bombs and missiles raining down on Baghdad.

Defendant Michael Miles, organizer of a 23-day Advent season vigil outside the base, choked back tears as he told the jury what compelled him to take his message into Ft. McCoy itself.

The fourth defendant was Steven Hardin, who teaches English to Southeast Asian refugees in his hometown of LaCrosse, about 40 miles from the base, and had been counseling Army reservists about applying for conscientious objector status. Like Mike, Hardin had become

convinced that the troops needed more information about war crimes and international law. Asked in court why he did not obey an order to turn around and leave the base, Steve put his finger on the heart of our case. To obey the order, he said, would have been to put himself under arrest.

We gave the trial our best shot but lost it because the weight of the law as clearly on the government's side. In the end we were grateful to our jury of 12 women for taking a long time — five hours — to come to judgment. It must have been a struggle for them. I think we won the battle for their hearts but lost the battle for their minds.

So now we await our sentencing — Mike and Steve at home and John and I on mattresses on the floor of a crowded cell block looking out on the shimmering marble dome of Wisconsin's capitol.

The government has indicated it will seek jail sentences for me and John. As repeat offenders we are subject to sentences up to six months for entering the base on January 17 plus up to one year for having done so while awaiting trial for a similar entry a week earlier. (We were fined \$360 each for the first offense.)

Disappointing as it was to me and my friends and loved ones, the outcome of our March trial was in a sense a victory. The verdict ensured continuation of a "prison witness" which I hope may call attention in some small, symbolic way to the needlessness of the bloodshed, the emptiness of America's military triumph, the injury to our national soul.

— Sam Day

Cells, souls, and people

by James M. Murphy

When we look at an adult person with the naked eye, we see a human being, not another kind of organism. But if we looked at this person through a 300-power microscope, we would no longer recognize that we were looking at a person. Instead, we'd see cells.

If we pricked this person's finger and put a drop of blood on a slide, we would see platelets, erythrocytes, and leukocytes or white blood cells. With a little help from staining, we could differentiate male and female leukocytes and know whether the blood came from a man or a woman, but we'd know we were not looking at a man or a woman.

The happiness and well-being of many people depend upon how we regulate certain social issues, such as parenthood, abortion, and genetic control. The cell versus people distinction and views of the soul influence these regulations. The ultimate choice is to make life on earth either better for its inhabitants, or worse through suffering for the sake of an anticipated happy afterlife.

A vital distinction exists between people and cells, despite the fact that cells are alive. One, two, or ten-celled organisms are qualitatively and quantitatively different from human beings. Although cells or single-celled organisms perform an amazing number of biological functions, they don't do what people do.

People can make sounds that are understood as speech or precursors of speech. As far as we know, cells cannot. People can think, feel, move and choose how to interact and relate with other people.

James M. Murphy, M.Div., M.D., is a physician, ordained minister and lecturer at Union Theological Seminary in New York City.

Cells cannot. People live on their own, are self-sustaining, and are viable. Cells are not. People can exercise reasoning and logic, make and fulfill plans, have beliefs and values, and can develop standards for the ethical conduct of behavior. Cells cannot.

In the present debate over what constitutes human life, we are in danger of confusing people with cells and of elevating cells to the level of human beings.

When two cells come together and form a fertilized egg in a uterus, this fertilized egg is not a human being. A fertilized egg is a cell living within the womb, as it might live in a tissue culture. A fertilized egg — however one theologizes it — is still not a person by any rational definition. Removing cells from a womb or a tissue culture results in their dying, but it is cells that are dying, not people. Embryos and nonviable fetuses are not people and not babies; they are cells in tissue cultures. To remove them from their means of continued life — be it artificial or natural — is not killing people; it is causing fertilized eggs in tissue cultures to die. Human beings don't exist until they are outside the womb, are viable, and can be sustained on milk from a bottle or breast.

The sperm and egg cells out of which a child develops should not be confused with people and elevated to the status of father and mother. Parenthood should not be based on cells. For example, what does fatherhood mean? What do we mean by "real" father? A man who loves, cares for, and provides for a child and takes on the role of the child's father for a prolonged period of time — even to the point where the child has developed an attachment to him as father — may be viewed by certain laws, legislation, and court settlements as

"not the father."

A Canadian court ruled after a mother had died that the biological father had parental rights over a stepfather who had assumed for many years the role of father and provider. A male who had not assumed the role of a father but from whom the sperm cell came was given the right to determine and influence a child's life — even to the extent of being allowed to take the child away from the stepfather. A cell — specifically, one of several million sperm cells in one ejaculate of a male — was elevated to the status of father.

Similarly, if a man and woman adopt or provide foster care for a child, the child may later have to endure being removed from "Mommy" and "Daddy" because they are not the same religious, cultural or ethnic origin of the people from whose sperm and egg the child developed. Thus, we elevate cells and call them "parents." Can there be a Muslim sperm or a Buddhist egg?

Sperm and egg cells may be alive, but they are not parents. Cells cannot perform parental functions and don't take the role of parents and care for the well-being of a child. They don't love, communicate, and relate to a child; they don't have values and codes of ethics, don't reason and plan, don't communicate through language, and don't have the other characteristics of parents. Parents are the people who sign on for at least an 18-year task of caring for, loving, protecting and nurturing a child. The issue of the real parent can't be decided on a cellular level.

In the Western Hemisphere we generally separate the mind and body and regard the body and biological functions as the lower, animal-like aspects of humans. However, when it comes to certain body parts, such as sperm and egg cells, we

contradict ourselves, elevate cells to the status of parents, and regard cells as holy and sacred.

The elevation of the participants in reproduction and the products of fertilization to the level of the sacred gives genital acts much power and imbues the people who participate in reproduction with the right to determine the future of other human beings. This glorification of sexual acts and overvaluation of fertilized eggs may compensate for the Western beliefs that sexual activities are wrong, sinful, inferior or animal-like. The sacredness of family should be upheld for those who perform the tasks of raising the child.

People's ideas about soul or spirit influence the cell versus people argument. What are souls? Do all people have them, or do only certain people have souls? Do cells have souls? The word "soul" has many meanings. Soul or spirit may mean the essence of a person or what animates a person. It may be the quality that arouses emotion and sentiment. A person with much energy may be described as having much spirit. Soul may be the moving spirit of a group, such as a leader. Characteristics of a group may symbolize or represent the spirit or soul of a group. These definitions of soul characterize a person or group, alive and living on this earth.

For many religious groups, including Christians, soul may refer to the aspect of a human being that continues after death. Religions around the world and throughout the history of humankind do not differ much regarding beliefs that people or souls exist after bodily death. Followers of these religions believe that when the body and brain are dead, the soul or spirit continue to exist, either as disembodied people or with new bodily forms. Some believe

that spirits or souls exist in the mind of God.

Belief in life after death is a religious tenet, something that many accept on faith, though reason and logic and scientific exploration have not proved its existence. For many believers, scientific logic, common sense reasoning, and other values or goals are contrary to matters of religion, such as beliefs in life after death.

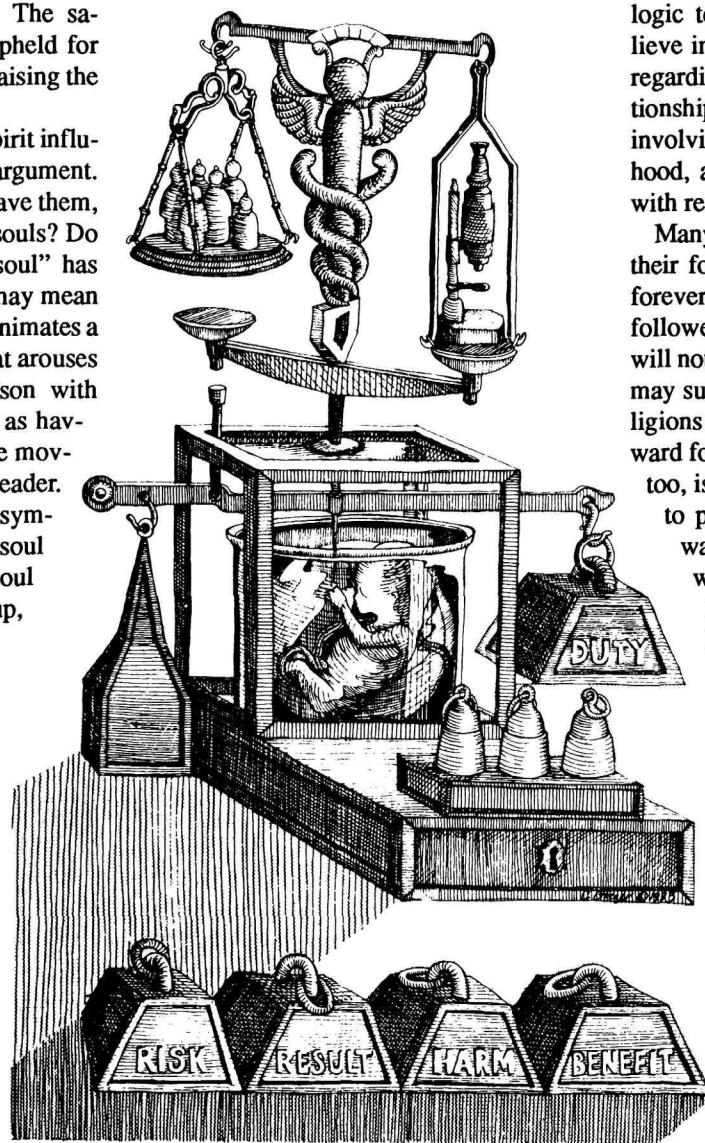
In the science versus religion debate, Christian Fundamentalists opposed a sci-

entific view of the world. For example, Fundamentalists were behind the indictment in 1925 of John Scopes, a high school biology teacher in Dayton, Tenn., for violating the state's anti-evolution statutes.

Followers may suspend or disregard rules of reason and logic and government regulations for freedom and justice. After all, what short-term values in society could compare with the long-term gain of eternal paradise? Even more liberal believers who ordinarily use reasoning and logic to approach social issues and believe in justice, democracy, and freedom regarding the regulation of human relationships, may in certain "religious" areas involving contraception, abortion, parenthood, and genetic engineering, dispense with reason and logic.

Many religions of the world teach that their followers' souls or spirits will live forever in paradise and those who are not followers will not have life after death, will not have happiness in the next life, or may suffer for eternity in Hell. These religions promise eternal paradise as a reward for prescribed behavior in life. This, too, is taken on faith. If there is no way to prove life after death, there is no way to prove any hypothesis about which kind of life on this earth leads to everlasting life. Some followers believe, in fact, that the more people suffer on this earth, the better their lives will be in the next world. Some believe that if people sacrifice their lives on this earth for a certain cause, they will have eternal paradise.

The Japanese Shinto kamikaze pilots were willing to fly suicide missions in World War II because they regarded killing Americans in this life as good preparation for life after death. To-



day, the Shiite Muslims of Iran are willing to undertake suicide missions to have eternal paradise, according to author Robin Wright in *Sacred Rage*. She warns of the danger of our failure to be aware of these religious dimensions in conflicts in the Middle East and their implications for international affairs.

Certain Christians also teach that self-sacrifice, deprivation, or even martyrdom are good preparation for life after death. Christians have been known to attack, kill, and annihilate those who don't agree with their beliefs.

The founders of the United States, the framers of the Constitution, separated church and state. They placed the value of the well-being of living citizens pragmatically above religious beliefs, even beliefs about life after death, if there were a conflict between the two. They wrote a document to regulate relationships between all citizens — including those who believed in life after death and those who did not.

Framers of the Constitution did not intend that religious freedom would undermine the use of reason and logic to deal with social organizations, institutions, and the regulation of behavior between people. They did not intend that religious freedom would destroy the Constitution. Are we now going to allow religious freedom to destroy the principles of government that were created to protect religious liberty?

In our day certain religious groups have arisen, as they have from time to time in American history, with sufficient force to threaten to override the concerns for the well-being of American citizens. A religious belief in life after death is crucial to the arguments of many opponents of abortion. They believe that when a sperm cell unites with an egg cell, a soul exists or is created. These groups believe fertilized eggs must be saved for eternity. They assume cells have souls and equate cells with people. Fertilized eggs, souls and people are all under one theological

umbrella.

If we pursue the logical implications of this belief that cells are equivalent to people, we should keep all sperm and egg cells alive in tissue cultures. If fertilized eggs are people with souls and the aim of life is to create souls that may go to Heaven, we should not allow any sperm or egg cells to die. The millions of sperm contained in one male ejaculate are potential souls; thus, we should preserve all ejaculates. If eggs are potential souls, we

“Sperm and egg cells may be alive, but they are not parents. Cells cannot perform parental functions and don't take the role of parents and care for the well-being of a child.”

should preserve all the eggs in all the ovaries of dead and living females and grow them in tissue cultures — a not impossible task — and attempt to fertilize them with sperm cells.

Within some forms of Christianity the reason for keeping a fertilized egg alive is that a “human being” with a soul is sinful until the church baptizes it. The doctrine of original sin is that the “person” is sinful because of the parents’ lust in sexual intercourse conceiving the fertilized egg. Without being baptized, the soul ceases to exist or goes to Hell and the “person” suffers for eternity. Yet, if unbaptized souls go to Hell, why not keep eggs and

sperms alive and allow the sperm to fertilize eggs in test tubes? We could create trillions of souls, baptize them, and save trillions of souls for Heaven.

If we grant the religious premise that fertilized eggs are souls that can continue to exist in a life after death, one might wonder why it is necessary to keep the fertilized egg alive at all. Why should one not remove it from its tissue culture in the womb, baptize it, let it die, and allow the soul to go to Heaven now? Why are those who oppose abortion so unconcerned about creating “souls” and saving the souls of all united sperms and eggs?

Certain eggs and sperm cells carry debilitating, deforming and lethal physical diseases in their genes. Which egg and which sperm unite can have far-reaching consequences for the medical conditions and physical well-being of people. If we want to relieve human suffering, we should do what we can to produce babies who are normal, healthy and free of diseases.

In many instances, predicting the outcome of uniting certain sperm and eggs is possible. In some cases where union has already taken place, genetic diseases may be determined by chromosome studies in utero, and abortions could be done at these times. Prevention of genetic diseases is a practical and technological possibility. We could prevent people from being confined for years in hospitals or from suffering immeasurable pain and disability. Had we implemented genetic controls previously, millions of hospital beds would never have been occupied. On a pragmatic level, the costs of medical care would not have skyrocketed to current levels. In one generation we could eliminate medical diseases by about one-half.

A decision to conceive and give birth to a person with a hereditary disease that will have widespread detrimental affects on other people, society, and future generations should not be a freedom of individuals, just as individuals do not have

the freedom to kill, rob, rape and injure other people.

Congress, the governing body charged to preserve the well-being of society, should prohibit the production of hereditary diseases. Individual freedom and religious freedom should not be interpreted to mean that people may condemn others to lives of suffering and disability. To condemn future generations to suffering from diseases is a heinous act. Why have we allowed so many parents to conceive and give birth to babies with hereditary diseases, when genetic matching could prevent it?

To believe that God hath joined together those who produce babies with genetic diseases is to blame God for human inaction. If we distinguished people and cells and if the relief of suffering mattered more than religious dogmas, we would actively encourage, legislate, and enforce the union of eggs and sperms that would produce healthy babies.

Both those who protest against abortion and those who advocate it seem to ignore the issue of the control of genetic defects and diseases. By failing to stop birth defects and hereditary diseases we are, in effect, giving consent to physically torturing thousands of Americans.

The enormous leap from knowing this to acting on it would entail staggering changes not only in ideas about parenthood, such as pride in having a child biologically, but also in religious ideas about the sacred quality of marriage and the family, in the operation of bureaucracies of the state, and in accepted definitions of liberty, freedom, and privacy. Despite the toes stepped on and the necessary changes in accepted practices, we must raise the issue because of its potential contribution to the relief of human suffering.

Some of us believe that if life after death exists, it will be based on the fulfillment of human potential in this life and on the principles and values that operate for the happiness and well-being of all

people on this earth. If God created a world that has many predictable rules of nature, has delicately balanced ecosystems, and can be understood by reason and logic, life on this earth may be continuous in some respects with life after death.

If life after death were completely discontinuous, it would be different from anything we know about God's creation. Life after death may involve a metamorphosis similar to that known in biology. For example, a larva goes through a metamorphosis to become an adult animal, such as a frog; or a pupa goes through metamorphosis to become a butterfly. The best preparation for life as a frog or butterfly is fulfillment of the potential for a healthy, functioning larva or pupa.

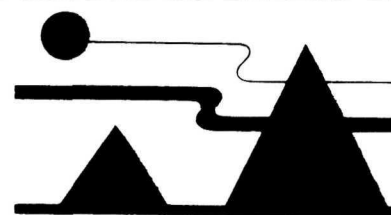
Analogously, humankind's best preparation for a metamorphosis in life after death would be the fulfillment of human potential in this life. In short, belief in life after death need not change and may reinforce the values, purposes and meanings that provide for the well-being of humankind in this life.

Life after death and the Kingdom of God may *not* necessarily be thought of as a temporal state of existence after death, but rather as an idea of a quality of life. Salvation may mean a person's fulfillment of human potential after being emotionally, psychologically and spiritually unfulfilled, or, figuratively speaking, half-dead in this life. In the Bible, Nicodemus puzzled over the idea of being born again and asked how he could enter his mother's womb a second time. Jesus replied, "Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (*John 3:5*).

Being born again of water and the spirit may mean living life fully with spirit and soul, with meaning and purpose, and with relationships that bring peace on earth and goodwill toward humankind. It may mean bringing the kingdom of God to earth now. The good news of the Gospel may be that people can realize God-given

potentials in this life.

Christians have opportunities to influence society for the well-being of the living in the areas of conception, pregnancy, and birth. This involves a three-pronged effort: to prevent the birth of unwanted children, to honor the sacredness of parents who commit to raising a child, and to control the conception of embryos so that medically healthy babies will be born. To accomplish these goals, we have to distinguish clearly between cells and people, stop living in ways that cause human misery and suffering for the purpose of life after death, and apply reason and logic to make life on this planet better. TW



Pro-choice issue available

This issue on procreative freedom gives a comprehensive theological and social analysis of reproductive freedom. Features penetrating interviews with Faye Wattleton, president of Planned Parenthood, and Beverly Wildung Harrison, feminist theologian. Also, an African-American male viewpoint by Faith Evans, past president of the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, and articles addressing pastoral and legislative implications.

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Health not first consideration

by Ruth Hubbard

Before I comment on Dr. James M. Murphy's article, "Cells, souls, and people," I feel obliged to identify my own belief system. I am not a Christian and do not believe in the existence of a soul, hence also not in its continued life after death. I come at the issues Dr. Murphy raises from a feminist and secular perspective. Furthermore, while I am a biologist, I do not share Dr. Murphy's medical perspective, either. I do not believe that the biomedical sciences offer adequate or even relevant criteria of what constitutes a meaningful life.

Health is only one of the factors that contribute to the good life. In fact, I am skeptical of many of the medical criteria of what constitutes "normality" or "health." I do not consider disease the most important, or even a major, cause of "human misery and suffering." When I think about how best to make it possible for people to "stop living . . . in ways that cause human misery and suffering," I turn to a host of political, social, and economic measures before I think of medical ones.

For infants to look forward to a meaningful life their parents need to be secure in the knowledge that they will have food, housing, jobs, and when needed, medical care. They also need to live in a political system that will not pit their basic needs against those of their fellow citizens, hence in one devoid of racist, sexist, and

class hierarchies, and in one that will not send them or their family members off to kill or be killed in wars.

In other words, although I am a biologist, I do not think our biological shortcomings are what most seriously threaten or even limit our well-being. One reason is that I do *not* think that "people live on their own [and] are self-sustaining." People are social beings. We are born

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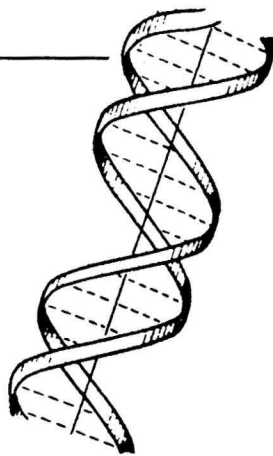
dependent on others and grow up interdependent. At what point dependency is identified as pathology and so becomes a hallmark of disability or disease, rests on social conventions and decisions. Similarly, whether a genetic variation is labeled a defect rather than a difference involves social criteria and, in our time of rapid technological innovation, technological ones as well.

"Defective" eyesight or hearing is not considered serious because we have the

means to fit children and adults with glasses or hearing aids. Children born with the metabolic "disease" PKU (phenylketonuria) can grow up to be "normal" adults, if their genetic "defect" is identified early enough to provide them with the diet they need in order to avoid its expression. Women over 35 were not thought to need special medical attention during pregnancy before certain technological means of surveillance had been developed. And even now that physicians have various ways to assess the health status of a fetus, many tests they use do not permit them to predict at what age (if ever) a specific condition will manifest itself or how disabling it will be. Medical and technological measures often determine what is considered a disability, which disabilities are considered preventable, and the ways in which they can or should be prevented.

Medical judgments about who is fit to live have a gruesome history. The eugenic and racial laws the Nazis enacted in Germany enabled geneticists and physicians literally to decide which adults and children should live or die. And although in the United States eugenic laws did not permit that degree of medical intervention, earlier in this century they empowered physicians to sterilize people against their will. Diagnoses of "insanity" or "mental retardation" constituted grounds for eugenic sterilization as did such questionable labels as "alcoholism" or "criminality." Needless to say, such diagnoses were used primarily against poor immigrants and minorities, not against affluent Caucasian-Americans.

Ruth Hubbard is Professor of Biology, Emerita, at Harvard University and chairs the Committee on Human Genetics of the Council for Responsible Genetics.



In this country, physicians, lawmakers, and clergy still are mostly white, affluent men, which necessarily limits their experience and perspective. They have their expertise and their role to play, but they have not the experience, training, or wisdom to decide who is fit to be born. Rather, our aim as a society must be to do what we can to provide the social, economic and, where needed, medical measures to enable each of us to live as fully as possible.

Much of the money that now goes into research on prenatal diagnosis could be spent more fruitfully on preventive and therapeutic measures and on basic social and health care services. A victim-blaming approach that suggests that the birth of a child with a disability is someone's fault and is to be prevented at all costs reinforces our society's neglectful, and often punitive, attitude towards people who have a disability. Meanwhile, people with disabilities say again and again that their disability is usually not the problem. The problem is the way they are treated.

As scientists claim to diagnose and predict so-called inherited tendencies to develop diseases that usually do not exhibit symptoms until mid-life or later, such as most cancers, high blood pressure with its increased risk of a heart attack or stroke, or Alzheimer's disease, Dr. Murphy's mandate not to bear children who have a knowable "genetic defect" becomes highly restrictive.

Indeed, these examples illustrate the arbitrariness of the decisions about which diseases — hence which people — should pass muster. There are no proper social

mechanisms for making such decisions. Certainly, individual physicians or lawyers must never be allowed to use their professional expertise to make judgments about who should, and should not, be born. The most we can ask of physicians, clergy or indeed the entire society is to do what they and we can to enable every woman to welcome and care for the children she decides to bear.

So far I have not addressed directly the subject of abortion, which is one of the issues Dr. Murphy tries to encompass. The reason is that I look upon abortion as a personal and social question, not a biological or medical one. I am not prepared to split hairs about whether eggs, sperm, embryos, and fetuses are alive or human. As long as they are of human provenance, I am willing to grant they are human. And they are as alive as any other living cell or organism.

The crucial issue is that their continued life requires them to be nourished within the body of a woman who, without doubt, is alive and human. It is for that woman — and no one else — to decide whether she is prepared to sustain that relationship. That may not always be an easy decision, but easy or not, it is hers to make.

Where society (including clergy and physicians) can help is by making it possible for her to feel able to bear and rear her child, and particularly if that child turns out to have a disability or disease.

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The blessings of sexuality

by Donna Schaper

Here's my bet. If American girls and women achieved normal sex, safe sex wouldn't be such a big issue. I know safe sex has come to mean sex free of AIDS. Safe sex means sex with condoms. For females, however, safe sex has long carried additional meanings. Safe sex is sex without the consequences of pregnancy. Except for the brief period when middle-class women or women who use birth control turn towards child bearing, the rest of our sexual life we are very interested in sex safe from the consequences of children.

That's why we use birth control and why, when birth control fails or we foolishly forget it, we have abortions. We want inconsequential or recreational sex rather than consequential or procreational sex. We are very much like men in these matters. We enjoy sex, we look forward to it, and we remember the experience fondly. In our projection of normal, legitimate lives for ourselves, we want sex more than we fear it. Maybe this is what is not clear. Perhaps the political passions aroused by abortion, linked with the seeming hatred of the body and its pleasures and the possibility that women might be enjoying these pleasures, derive from the illusion that women don't want fun, safe sex. It is clear that some people think we should not want enjoyable safe sex, that we are naughty to do so. But, like men, we want bodily pleasure whether we are supposed to or not.

If girls were taught the normalcy of such desire, and women permitted themselves to enjoy it, the rates of both teenage pregnancy and abortion would go down. That's my wager. Failing to use birth control is a pretended innocence —

we fake being "good girls" while being naughty. Girls raised in this fraud refuse to acknowledge their normal sexuality and have unprotected intercourse. The results are tragic. Abortion is a tragic choice precisely because it is avoidable.

Sex — both homosexual and heterosexual — normally involves petting from about age 12 on. I base this on the fact that I started petting 30 years ago at age 12, and I think my experience was pretty normal. For some it is before 12 and for some

*"I wager that
normal sexuality is
less costly than
abnormal repression."*

it is after; that's what normal means, it implies a range of behavior.

All my friends were doing the same thing. We were not in a big Northeastern town either. We were in rural South Carolina. According to my parents, their generation started petting around age 15, except for the very good, upwardly-mobile girls who ended up having a hard time enjoying sex or giving pleasure to themselves or to others for most of their lives. Their delay was abnormal, and that abnormality hurt them. Their reward was the approval of the highest, most repressed, layer of society which always takes more than it gives.


First experience of intercourse comes for some girls around age 16, according to the famed Kinsey Report on sexuality. The age range is wider here than for petting because of a greater disparity in how relationships are formed at this time. Most girls, according to groups that have studied teenage sexuality, want relation-

ships with sex. The majority of them are unprotected the first time, and most are lucky not to get pregnant.

The reason for such stupid risks is the sexual schizophrenia of "moral" mind over "immoral" body. Imagine what happens when a teenager pulls a condom out of her purse swearing that this is her first time. Normal sex would encourage parents to give their sons and daughters condoms for their 16th birthdays.

Of course, kids would and should sneak around a little. But the idea that parents of my generation would risk their children having an unwanted pregnancy or an abortion is obscene. We fought, some of us pretty hard, for the right to normal sex. Our parents fought pretty hard for what they thought was normal sex, too. But what was considered normal has changed, due to the availability of birth control. Thank God for birth control.

But birth control is a blessing only if it is used. If the social head can't keep up with the social body, and we continue to encourage fraudulent mental virginities in which we're not admitting to what we're really doing, the blessing dissolves. One consequence of this dissolved blessing is absurd quarrels over the morality of abortion. The supposedly elevated conversations about the sanctity of life only slightly mask social anxiety about women's free enjoyment of sex.

Another consequence of the unused blessing is teenage parents. A third is unwanted children. I wager that normal sexuality is much less costly than abnormal repression. You would think that all the losses caused by repression, particularly the lost and abused freedom of God-given sexuality, would cause me to win my wager. But lots of people seem to prefer unhappiness, and think it is normal, even moral. I wager it is neither. 

The Rev. Donna Schaper is pastor of First Congregational Church, Riverhead, N.Y.

Short Takes

The unknown clothier: What Jesus wore on Easter

What did the Christ wear on the first Easter morning? Well, it wasn't the "same old thing," that's for sure. His grave clothes neatly folded in the tomb, his robe gambled for by soldiers at the foot of the cross — what on earth was he to put on for Easter?

At first glance, Mary mistook him for a gardener. Could it be that was because he was dressed like a gardener? Is it possible that a gardener shared his clothes with Jesus — the first instance of "I was naked and you clothed me" in post-Resurrection history?

Did Jesus come bursting out of the tomb in grave clothes just as a gardener went by, and scare the poor chap half to death? Causing the gardener perhaps to say, "Man, you can't go running around like that, you'll scare people. Here, let me give you some of my duds so you'll look alive instead of like a corpse."

Or had Jesus stripped the grave

The Gospel According to Abbie Jane Wells

clothes off and folded them neatly before he burst forth, causing the gardener to say, "Man, you'll catch your death of cold, and besides, women come this way often. Here, let me give you some of my clothes."

It's said that Mary was the first who saw him that morning. But maybe not; it might have been the one who gave him the clothes who saw him first.

I wonder what effect this had on the one who gave Jesus clothes to wear on that first Easter? Did he (or she, maybe?) know who he or she was giving clothes to? Did that person always share clothes with anyone who needed them?

Well, anyway, Jesus was decently clad in someone's clothes when Mary came and Jesus didn't scare her by wearing grave clothes. The one to whom we never give a thought, or thanks, the unknown clothier who provided Jesus with something to wear on the first Easter, deserves some recognition. So here it is, belatedly, and with my thanks.

Abbie Jane Wells, 1915-1991
Episcopalian author, beloved of THE WITNESS staff, from an article which appeared in 3/83. (See obit p. 25)

Stats on Iraqi dead

In Nazi Germany many citizens claimed "We didn't know" to avoid responsibility for the ovens of Hitler's "new world order." In the United States today, as Johnny and Joanie come marching home victorious, having massacred Iraqi civilians and troops, brownshirted warmongers swagger rampant through the streets — with every bit as much indifference to the slaughter as displayed by the good Germans.

Listen up! Three hundred thousand Iraqis — including perhaps 100,000 civilians — were murdered by the U.S. military . . . The extent of the massacre at least got an airing in the British press. The *London Sunday Times* on March 3 estimated that "as many as 200,000 Iraqis may have died in the Gulf war, according to senior Pentagon officials. Preliminary reports suggest that allied bombing was much deadlier than previously thought and that thousands of Iraqi troops may be buried in bunkers and trenches . . ."

Mitchel Cohen
Quoted in *The Guardian* 3/27/91

Now they're asking?

The Federal Government has begun an extensive study to determine whether barrels of radioactive waste dumped in the Pacific Ocean could break open and spill their contents into a national wildlife sanctuary that is the richest marine habitat in the West.

From 1946 to 1970, an estimated 47,500 steel barrels containing chemicals including plutonium, cesium and mercury as well as empty cardboard boxes were scattered over an undersea area of more than 350 miles in the Gulf of the Farallones, 30 miles west of San Francisco. The wastes were from the Manhattan Project, which developed the atomic bomb, and two nuclear labs of the University of California, as well as some from the Navy.

Katherine Bishop
New York Times 1/20/91

Power corrupts; but lack of power corrupts absolutely.

Adlai Stevenson

Sounds like he's mad

There is a holy anger, excited by zeal, which moves us to improve with warmth those whom our mildness failed to correct.

John Baptist de la Salle

Ethic for sexual behavior

What is a good sexual act? It is honest and real — clearly conveying what the relationship really means, what its deepest meaning is. It is other-enriching, respecting the other person, never exploiting. It is faithful — "tonight's pleasures are not tomorrow's pain." It reveals a commitment, a trust, a tenderness for the other person. It is willing to take responsibility for sexual love's consequences — personal and social. Good sex connects us to the building of a good society. It is liberating, life-giving, joyous, fun, easy, ecstatic, fantastic. And it resists all cruelty, all exploitation, all impersonalization.

This kind of ethic for sexual behavior is appropriate, I believe, for both gay and straight Christians.

The Rev. George F. Regas
Sermon, *God, Sex & Justice* 11/11/90

Australian church oppresses women

by Sally M. Bucklee

‘Why,” the talk show host asked, “has the Episcopal Women’s Caucus in the United States raised funds to bring you to Australia?”

“Because we care about the Anglican women in this country and what’s happening to them,” I replied. “We want to express the support and concern that thousands of North Americans, in Canada and the United States, have for the 140 women here who are deacons and are denied priesthood simply because they are women. We also stand in solidarity with Caroline Pearce, an Australian woman ordained in the United States who is not permitted to exercise her priesthood here, and with the far larger body of women who seek full inclusion in the life and ministry of the church.

“I’m here as well to share the riches the ordination of women has brought to the North American church, and in particular, to my own congregation, which has grown spiritually, financially, and numerically with a woman rector, Jane Dixon, for the past five years. I want to dispel any notions that ordaining women has had negative effects on the Canadian or American churches.”

A deacon later told me that, hearing my statement, she burst into tears. “At last! Somebody cares!” That would be a common response to my presence as I moved through Australia’s major urban centers for three weeks in February speaking to gatherings of the Movement for the Ordination of Women (MOW), clergy, semi-

nary students and faculties, and Education for Ministry groups.

That particular young woman had graduated from seminary three years before her husband. She shared with me the pain of processing as a deacon at her husband’s ordination to the priesthood last year. The tension created in their marriage by the church’s inaction is torturous. More than one deacon confessed she could not bear the agony of telling me her story. “I can’t cope with dragging it up one more time,” said a woman in her sixth year as a deacon.

I often found myself listening for the sacred in the pain of Anglican women and men. Many who talked with me so feared church reprisals for speaking out that they did not want to be named in this article. Sharing the North American experience proved to be the catalyst for ideas and action. Our story helped regenerate the commitment so essential for the next stage of the struggle, which centers around several questions about the autonomy of diocesan bishops to ordain women that have been submitted to the Appellate Tribunal (the national church’s supreme court), set to meet in May.

What would happen after the Tribunal responds was the question on everyone’s mind, but Dr. Janet Scarfe, MOW president, summed up how many felt: “It is lamentable and demeaning to see women — our vocations, and by implication our very natures — examined, picked over in effect, in terms of 19th-century laws and 17th-century canons.”

The Tribunal has determined that MOW is not eligible to be officially represented in court as an “interested party” because it is not considered Anglican on two counts: first it is an incorporated body and second, some of its members are not

Anglican. How many organizations, including the Episcopal Women’s Caucus, would be ruled non-Episcopal if the same rules applied here?

The Australian Church is a federation of 24 dioceses, formed in 1962 when it became independent of the Church of England. A handful of conservative dioceses assured that change would be difficult by requiring extraordinarily high voting majorities in all three houses (bishops, clergy, laity) on church law. The voting patterns of the General Synod (equivalent to our General Convention) in 1977, ’81, ’85 and ’87 have consistently shown two-thirds of the members approve ordaining women. This is as frustrating a deadlock as it was in the Episcopal Church between 1970 and 1976.

Women serve as deacons in 18 of the 24 diocese. Twenty-seven are now into their sixth year of assistant curacy. All this despite a shortage of priests. One of the 27 told me her archbishop has resolved he will not appoint another woman as vicar-in-charge because it is too difficult to schedule supply priests for the Eucharist.

When Bishop Philip Newell of Tasmania flew to a remote island to institute a new female vicar as the only Anglican clergyperson, he consecrated sufficient bread and wine to last several months. By the time her supply runs out, a combination of factors may lead Newell to be one of the first bishops to priest women. Tasmania, isolated from the mainland, has traditionally and legally been one of the most autonomous dioceses. It has experienced the ministry of many highly respected deaconesses throughout this century and currently has a reservoir of excellent female deacons awaiting the priesthood. Furthermore, Tasmania is one of a half dozen dioceses whose synods

Sally M. Bucklee is vice-president of the Episcopal Women’s Caucus and a member of the church’s Standing Liturgical Commission. A trainer and consultant to non-profit organizations, she lives in Laurel, Md.

have already voted to support their bishops' ordaining women as soon as the legalities are clarified.

Although women occupy only about 22% of the "power" positions in the U.S. church, the glass ceiling is even lower in Australia, where women are few and far between in diocesan and national decision-making bodies. Women serve on vestries but are not usually involved in or knowledgeable about church politics beyond the parish level. Those who are, frequently pay a harsh price.

A woman in Brisbane shared her experience when she moved a motion at diocesan synod to support the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women: "I described the oppression of women in Third World countries and then moved on to the oppressive situation for women in the Anglican Church. One man moved an amendment stating that 'women are com-

plementary but not equal.' Thankfully this amendment was rejected. Another man tried to gag the debate, which was an attempt to treat women and their oppression as invisible.

"During another motion on domestic violence there was much laughter as a male priest recounted anecdotes about how he dealt with victims of domestic violence, including sending them back to submit to abusive husbands. I felt psychologically abused after that debate, which was even more moving because a female victim of violence had testified during it."

Mavis Rose, a doctoral student in theology, wrote in *MOW Magazine* that she has to come to think of herself as an "Anglican guerilla. I may not use bombs, but I believe it is my prophetic role to bombard decayed, patriarchal structures. A challenge which has yet to be resolved is a sign outside the Cathedral which reads 'Our Forefathers had a Vision for this Cathedral'. The historical record shows that our foremothers worked for years raising a considerable portion of the money that made the vision a reality. A paint brush would help, but the sign is high up, and has a wire fence around it."

One night I met Fran Toy, a priest from California, and Ann Smith, Executive for the Women in Mission and Ministry Office at the Episcopal Church Center, at a MOW potluck supper in Canberra, where they were attending the World Council of Churches' Assembly.

Priests from New Zealand were present, along with local deacons and national MOW leaders. The next day we would all participate in a non-ordination event to

commemorate Bishop of Canberra Owen Dowling's promise the previous year to ordain eight women on Feb. 24, which was postponed to await the decision of the Appellate Tribunal.

At the gathering, a deacon asked, "How do you get a radical act like Philadelphia to happen? How do you push a bishop to do it?" Another asked, "Is there no other way to ordination than the political route?" And then the question I'd heard so often, "How has the church treated the 'Philadelphia 11'?"

Only a few deacons in Canberra and elsewhere seemed ready to risk a radical act like the one that took place in Philadelphia in 1974 when three bishops ordained 11 women in defiance of an Episcopal Church ban. More often, they appeared resigned to their lot or took the approach that if they just keep performing well, some day they will become priests. They may not have the energy to be the motivating force for liberating action. Some are openly uncomfortable with the assertive tactics of MOW. A laywoman claimed that ordained women and seminarians in her diocese are told they may not join MOW or associate with its members. Another was absolutely certain the bishop had schemed to infiltrate the local MOW chapter and cause dissension in order to muzzle it.

In every diocese there are a multitude of reasons why deacons cannot get together to support one another, to organize, to subvert the system. A deacon's salary is limited — "No man could or would live on it for six years!" — and precludes travel to distant conferences. Ordained women are few in number and spread across vast distances. Their rectors keep them busy in the parish.

When I asked one group of deacons what I might bring up at a meeting with their bishop and diocesan clergy the next day, one said, "Well, this is rude, but don't ruffle their feathers." Another suggested, "Try to help them understand how hard it is for us to be in a male ethos all



the time, how hostile and unwelcoming that environment is." A third woman urged, "Tell them about why you came and about our church not recognizing the orders of your church."

Early on I discovered that Australians think the Rt. Rev. Barbara Harris, Suffragan of Massachusetts, is an *appointed* bishop. They only elect their diocesan bishops, who, in turn, appoint all subordinate bishops — and large archdioceses, like Sydney, have several. Clergy especially were astounded to learn that all bishops are elected by the people, lay and clerical — and that it is often the laity who steer the outcomes of the election. When I explained that after the diocese elects, a majority of the Standing Committees and bishops across the entire church must then confirm that election within a specified time period, they were well beyond the astounded state. It is much more difficult to dismiss the election of a woman to the episcopacy given this process of catholic affirmation.

People frequently commented that they'd met clergywomen from Canada and the United States before, but how important it was the Caucus had sent a layperson this time. I told them I was chosen partly because I could share our common "herstory"; I was deeply involved in the ordination movement throughout the 1970s. In addition the Australian Church's lack of reciprocity for priests ordained in the North American churches was an insult to which we did not wish to subject our ordained sisters. When a priest did not comprehend why women would be insulted, I said they feel the same as he might feel about the Roman Catholic Church's not recognizing his orders.

The Australian Church generally fails to acknowledge the ministry of women and laity, but the absolutely worst statement I heard was from a man who wrote to a daily paper that "conferring the sacrament of ordination on a woman is like trying to baptize a dog."

More and more, women in Australia realize that they participate only in a secondary way in the sacramental life and ministry of the church. Yet it is very hard for them to crack the solidly entrenched patriarchy and accompanying misogyny.

The first white women to come to Australia were prisoners, forced to sexually service the officers, guards and sailors for six months enroute from England. When they arrived in Sydney, they were auctioned off as slaves. From its very beginnings, Australia saw women as whores. I

"A man wrote to a daily newspaper that 'conferring the sacrament of ordination on a woman is like trying to baptize a dog.' "

was told that the strong homophobia I heard expressed also stretches back to those earliest days. And the Church of England collaborated with the government. Meting out punishment was a role for the clergy. The "flogging parson" is part of the national memory.

At a meeting, a seminary professor explained that the church in Australia never seriously attempted to serve the needs of the working classes or to adapt its ministry to a wholly different environment. To this day there is little indigenous theology. Another professor asked if the U.S. churches are still as ethnocentric as they are in Australia. Until the early 1970s, most Australians saw themselves as part of the British Empire and there was a strong "whites only" policy for immigration. Going to church was like stepping into England. I never saw a person of color in an Anglican church, al-

though there were many in the streets.

Wherever I worshipped, I saw few men other than those in the sanctuary. I was frequently asked about men's participation in the U.S. church. Australians were surprised to hear that having a woman priest seemed to bring in more men than it scared away, and that men make up 40 to 50% of U.S. congregations on Sunday mornings. In Australia they constitute no more than 30%.

The interim bishop of Adelaide, Bruce Rosier, asked, "How do you handle St. Paul and the concept of headship?" I confessed that I had never heard of the issue before, although supposedly it was imported from the United States.

Headship-subordination theology is nurtured in that most hedonistic of all Australian cities, Sydney. While there I spent an afternoon with a woman I had met in England at the 1988 Lambeth Conference. She had been raised in the Diocese of Sydney, which is something of a unique evangelical sect unto itself within the Anglican Communion. By virtue of its wealth, size — which gives it more votes than any other diocese — and abundance of canon lawyers, Sydney has blocked the ordination vote in every General Synod. It is expected to sue any bishop who ordains women.

The headship of men and subordination of women were part of my friend's identity as a devout young Anglican attending the University of Sydney in the 1970s. For example, she explained how marriages were not actually arranged, but relationships "were understood."

Several children and one divorce later, she is forging a new life and theology for herself. The institutional church has nothing to offer her. She has sought out a "woman church" to meet her spiritual needs.

Another Sydney woman noted, "If the blokes go into our Moore Theological College feeling OK about women, they learn to hate them while they're there. It's part of the course. That college has done

more to injure and oppress women than anyone could ever believe."

If my conversations are any indication, the Archbishop of Sydney has good cause to be concerned about the number of women defecting from the church.

I met with John Hazlewood, Bishop of Ballarat, near Melbourne, and his wife Shirley, and shared the very positive experience my parish has had over the past five years with a woman rector. Wondering how a woman could possibly serve as rector, Shirley Hazlewood asked, "How does she manage her family? What if she has an emergency?"

I asked her how she, as a physician who delivers babies, manages her household. To her, that was different; the responsibilities of a priest must always come first. Her husband, who attended the 1989 Fort Worth convention of the Episcopal Synod of America, which opposes women's ordination, paid close attention to my parish story and observed that it differed radically from what he has been told about the consequences of ordaining women.

Also sipping tea in the bishop's living room was Lorna Cousins, a soft-spoken woman who attends the Cathedral each Sunday, where no one speaks to her because the bishop has called her a "feminist Marxist." He instructed women's groups in the diocese not to accept her offer to address them on the subject of ordaining women. Recently two priests visited her husband to remind him of his duty to silence his wife in church. I was tremendously moved by Lorna's courage, as she sat there telling her bishop she would like the shunning to stop.

Clergy wives offered equally poignant and compelling stories. I met several who had been divorced in recent years. All had apparently been strong complements to their husband's ministry. Their identity, self-worth and financial security had been shattered. Some sense they are an embarrassment to parishes and bishops alike: few receive much emotional or financial support.

Late one night, I talked with a gynecologist who in her work had come upon two quite frightening instances of sexual exploitation by clergy — one involving a youth program, the other in premarital counseling. Taking her husband as a witness, she revealed her findings to the bishop. He heard her out, then opened his door and said firmly, "Get out! And don't ever come back!"

As Mavis Rose says, "It's very difficult at the moment not to get cynical about the God of the church's structures. Sometimes my desire to leave the Anglican Church becomes overpowering and I wonder whether I can stand another pathetic sermon addressed to the 'in' crowd or another exclusive language hymn or creed."

Anglicans make up about 24% of the population but parochial reports indicate only 10% of that number grace a pew each week. The Roman Catholic Church has the largest membership, at 26% of the people. Thus Australia's two largest churches — representing 50% of the nation — continue to provide the theological underpinnings for discrimination against women. This position is supported by groups such as Women Against the Ordination of Women, and the Association for the Apostolic Ministry, which reportedly has a war chest of \$2 million to fight all attempts to priest women in England and Australia.

Since returning home, I've been digesting the stories and making meaning out of a crowded, extraordinary experience. I often think of Lorna in Ballarat who asked, "How do you cope with a church that doesn't want you?" And the Roman Catholic nuns who appeared in Toowoomba and other places to hear of a church, 14 hours away by air, that is beginning to behave like the community of equals Jesus envisioned. I especially remember the young women who came up to me, excited to learn the stories of our mutual foremothers and eager for role models.

I recall laughingly plotting how to transform the patriarchy, and much more seriously exploring how to challenge *what is* with a vision of *what might be*. The church is an institution, a community, with a dream in it. It has always depended on its prophets to proclaim God's judgment and God's hope in that dream. Possibly the very best hope the church has today is the women, lay and ordained, who are emerging to reform and renew the Mother Church, so that she can hold up for all to see the vision of a new humanity in a new society — in biblical language, the Kingdom of God.



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Opting out of the 'New World Order'

by Jeff Dietrich

“Hey, Homes, you still in here?” The loud jocular voice of my fellow prisoner bounces off the steel walls of this jail house recreation room in reverberating echoes. “I thought they were gonna let all you protestors go home now that the war is over.”

“No, man, it looks like I’m kind of a prisoner of war now.”

“Well, I guess they must want your ass real bad, ‘cause they’re even lettin’ all them Iraqis go. Well, all them that want to, anyway.”

Even the guards here at the Federal Detention Center are a little surprised that I have not been released. Their concern is almost solicitous: “Mr. Dietrich,” they say, “You need to be about your business. You should be getting home now.”

But that is unlikely now that I have been officially indicted as a felon for a Feb. 15 protest in which three of us dumped 40 gallons of oil and two pints of human blood on the Federal Building steps.

“Was it worth it, Homes?” asks Mike, the cynical old jail veteran in a caring but sardonic tone that implies an affectionate contempt for simple-minded idealists like myself. “The war is over and you ain’t accomplished a damn thing.”

And again he asks, “Was it worth it?”

Who can say what convictions are worth? We are known as men and women of conviction only if we are willing to pay the price of that conviction. It is easy enough to protest a war. Far more

difficult a task, though, is to place our entire existence in the path of war. “The Cost of Discipleship,” as the theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer implied from his Nazi prison cell, “must in some measure be commensurate with the price of war.”

But to speak the truth while none are listening, to continue protesting a war that is substantially over, to stay in jail when your presence is so obviously ineffective, is to appear foolish bordering

“Our task, now that the war is over, is to remain in jail praying and fasting even as America cheers and celebrates.”

upon the pathological.

Yet it seems that our task, now that the war is over, is to remain in jail praying and fasting even as America cheers and celebrates. Our task, as people of conviction is, in the words of the late Dr. Martin Luther King, “to save the soul of America.”

But the original prophetic intent of repentance was always addressed to the corporate transgressions of the community; injustice, repression, the violence of war were the traditional targets of the prophet. The authentic purpose of penance is to give substance to the otherwise ephemeral reality of evil in our midst; to take onto our own flesh the insubstantial spirit of malevolence which

otherwise remains unconscious and thus deadly. Just as the assembly-line worker feels no responsibility for the sometimes dubious fruits of his labor, in the same manner does the B-52 pilot feel disassociated from the deadly effects of his labor.

Despite all of our moral pretense and ethical posturing, the real message of Desert Storm heard by all the Third World nations is the Draconian edict of unrestrained power. The Vietnam era is indeed over and America is back with a vengeance, no longer concerned with “winning hearts and minds.” We will not hesitate to use our entire arsenal of technical omnipotence to enforce a vision of the “New World Order.”

But our cheap, tawdry victory does not carry with it a corresponding moral value. Such a moral victory would, as King said, “lay hands on the world order and say of war, ‘This way of settling differences is not just.’” In the same speech, he went on to make the prophetic characterization that remains unfortunately true today: “America continues to be the greatest purveyor of violence the world has ever known.”

This New World Order of the “Pax Americana” based upon meeting the voracious consumer needs of a gluttonous, bulimic economy that devours world resources merely for the perverse pleasure of regurgitating them again is pathological. It is the nature of such compulsive deviant behavior to be in denial. To challenge this state of non-recognition with the consequences of such dangerous behavior patterns, to intervene along the path of the addict’s collision course with destruction, is the task of people of conviction.

Despite the illusions that have been

Jeff Dietrich is a 20-year member of the Los Angeles Catholic Worker.

established of victory without sacrifice, of war without suffering, of battle without death, we know that actions have consequences. We mourn the death of over 100,000 Iraqis. And while our nation rejoices, we weep at the deep cost of such "cheap" victories.

It is this penitential task of putting flesh upon the disembodied spirits of unseen suffering, and the desire to confront the elusive reality of war with its unacceptable truth, that causes us to remain in this prison.

So we continue to fast, and each evening we gather in an obscure corner of this jail under a garish makeshift shrine of the Sacred Heart, to pray the rosary with a group of Latin Americans who cannot speak English. They too are P.O.W.'s for the most part, foot soldiers and underlings captured in the not-so-triumphant "War on Drugs." They do not pray for world peace or economic justice. They pray for a lenient prosecutor, a fair judge, a compassionate jury, a brief sentence, reunion with family and friends. We join our prayers with theirs in the deepest hope and profoundest conviction that such commingling of concerns may indeed "redeem the soul of America."

We know that the world counts us as fools. All the more so do the powers judge us in the wake of their startling victories.

We had predicted disaster, bloodshed, potential nuclear calamity, world conflagration. We had bet our lives, or at least some small portion thereof, upon their failure. Now their cool, efficient management and clear, rational assessment of crisis has prevailed. They are victorious while we remain in jail. Thus is our foolishness compounded with utter humiliation.

In the days and weeks to come, we will no doubt be subjected to barrages of breathless euphoria as the triumphalism of empire is celebrated in martial liturgies and rituals of military canonization,

confirming yet another generation of battlefield heroes.

With a flourish of unravelled yellow ribbons and unfurled patriotic bunting, we will confer upon every Desert Storm veteran from president to private, general to janitor, the status of military sainthood.

Though we may be fools here in our jail cells, we are not blind, and we can-

not be but appalled at the spectacle of unwarranted and unmerited pride in the vanquishing of so unworthy an opponent. This was not a battle — this was a debacle!

Like a lustful rapist too long denied satisfaction, we unleashed an orgasm of deadly technology, a battering of smart

Continued on page 24



Jeff Dietrich, Mary Lopez, Sandy Perluss-Lejeune (right to left) dump oil and blood on the Los Angeles Federal Building steps.

Church after death

by Charles Meyer

Those who have experienced a deep loss know that the most prevalent feeling survivors have after the death of a loved one is vulnerability. Survivors may be physically weak from fatigue or lack of regular meals. They are also emotionally “weak,” not in control of whatever feeling spews to the surface from the lava-like reservoir inside.

Social occasions are frequently avoided and obligations postponed for fear of being “blindsided” by overwhelming thoughts or memories, and feeling humiliated and embarrassed when voluminous tears suddenly appear and an excuse must be made for a quick exit.

But for many persons a religious service is not simply another social occasion or obligation. It is instead a source of previous liturgical comfort where the chaotic world is put back in order. The familiar readings and well-worn trappings are reminders of the past and of the transcendence of God and the ongoing nature of the community. Ideally, it is in this community where people who knew the survivor before the death will still be there to uphold, comfort, console, and treat him or her like a normal person. So, when all other social obligations are avoided, survivors may well venture back to church seeking the solace and understanding they have been unable to find it in the world around them.

What they often discover, however, is surprise at their own difficult reactions to the service and a community unprepared or unwilling, liturgically and personally,

to deal with their grief. Having come expecting to find solace, survivors are astonished to note their own feelings of anger at scripture readings regarding resurrections and healing, sadness at stories of tenderness or loss, depression regarding memories of the loved one being in church, hurt and envy at others going on with their lives through baptisms, confirmations and marriages, and indignation when a reference is made to the justice and mercy of God. These emotions are often exacerbated by familiar, meaningful music that causes the spillover of tears again and again.

Many survivors report feeling isolated in church, met by uncertain stares from persons who want to help but don't know what to do, who want to comfort but don't want to increase the pain and tears, or who are embarrassed at undignified displays of emotion during an otherwise orderly service. Some survivors recount that it was suggested they not return to church until they could keep their emotions in check.

Otherwise caring people, due either to an inability to know what to say or an unwillingness to hear the truth about the depth of the survivor's feelings, tend to say things like:

“You look great! Are you feeling better now?”

“I'll bet things are going fine, aren't they?”

“It's time to get on with your life.”

“Don't cry! He's in a much better place now.”

“I'm sure that God is comforting you.”

“Time heals all wounds, dear. You'll be over this soon.”

“The Lord has a purpose in this. Just trust him.”

It is as though people shape their remark to receive only positive answers,

and to avoid confronting the desperate fear of death and grief inside themselves. Unfortunately for many survivors, the church turns out to be no different than any other social group they have been scrupulously avoiding. Disappointed, they stop their Sunday sojourn and remain at home, unable to face both their feelings and the insensitivity of the community in which they sought solace and healing.

To enable survivors to experience the faith community as a help rather than a hindrance in the journey through bereavement, the following suggestions are offered:

1. Decide why you're going to church.

Though it may not be possible to determine at first, give some thought to the reasons you are returning. There are many possibilities: for a first step back into social relationships in a “safe” setting; for the liturgy and service; to see people you haven't seen in a while, and perhaps only would see at church.

If you have some idea of what you are doing there, you will feel less befuddled when you walk in and are confronted with concerned faces and difficult questions, and you will experience a greater sense of achievement for having accomplished your task when you leave.

2. Prepare your response. It is important to realize that supposedly well-meaning people will say thoughtless things. Also, you will run into people with whom you have varying levels of acquaintance and intimacy, and will want to be able to respond appropriately to different situations. Some preparation — rehearsing probable scenarios in your head — may help relieve some of the normal anxiety about not being able to handle yourself.

When people you know well ask how

The Rev. Charles Meyer is assistant vice president for patient services at St. David's Medical Center in Austin, Tex. This article is excerpted from an updated edition of his book, *Surviving Death*.

you are, it may be appropriate to say: "It's really hard, but I'm doing okay." To others asking socially, you might respond: "I'm doing the best I can. Thanks for asking." (Then ask about them or change the subject.) For people you really want to connect with: "It's very hard. Would you call me at home this afternoon? I'd really like to talk with you." Some preparation beforehand will make those first moments of greetings less awkward and overwhelming. The important thing is to give yourself permission to say different things, depending on who you are talking to and how you feel at the time. That means it is also okay to lie and say you're fine as well as to tell the truth and dissolve into tears.

3. Return gradually. It is not required to begin by attending the most crowded and visible service. Many people report it is helpful first to go back to church on a weekday when no one else is around; to sit in your usual seat and get the feeling of what that is like now that the loved one is not there any more. This time of individual private prayer, rage, sadness or depression may be the beginning of real spiritual comfort that simply cannot be had if others are around.

Likewise, it may be easier to attend a weekday morning or evening service where the crowd will be smaller and perhaps more focused on a specific activity in which you can unobtrusively participate. On Sunday, go to the earliest service — or to a Saturday or Sunday evening service — to limit the number of people with whom you will have contact.

4. Go with a friend. Pick someone who either has been through a similar experience or who knows you well enough not to be disturbed by your tears, and will act as a support and a buffer when you feel overwhelmed by emotions. It may also be possible to go with a group of friends. In any case, knowing that the person sitting beside you will be accepting and avail-

able can ease the re-entry into church considerably.

5. Leave when you want. Unlike jails, mental hospitals, the Army, and some personal growth seminars, you are not required to stay in church until dismissed. Leave whenever you feel the need — if your emotions get too overwhelming, or if the timer in your gut indicates for no apparent reason that it is time to go. Leave when you have accomplished what you came for — whether that was to take a first step back into the community, or hear a specific person preach, or receive communion, or just to sing a hymn or two. Leave before or during the last hymn if you are not up to greeting people or answering questions.

To do this inconspicuously, it may be a good idea to arrive a little late and sit toward the back (though in most churches, you have to get there *early* to get a seat in the back).

6. Stay regardless. Though this may seem the opposite of number five, it is actually a corollary of it. The point is that it is okay for you to stay *or* go. If you need to leave, do it. But remember that you have a right to be there emoting up a storm, crying through hymns, blowing your nose during the sermon, and sitting when others are standing or kneeling because your legs just won't hold you up. It is, after all, your church too. It is precisely the place where it is, or ought to be, okay to bring *all* emotions to offer up to God for blessing and healing. Decide that you need to experience and express your feelings, that it is in fact a requirement if you are to survive your loved one's death.

The key here is your own need at the time. Some days you will be able and willing to stay and cry, especially if a friend is there beside you, and other days you will need to make a prompt exit. Either one is fine with God.

7. Go someplace new. Returning to the

church where you used to worship may be too painful, and emotionally complicated, or simply no longer comfortable or appropriate. Contrary to popular wisdom, it is not required to go back. After the death of their child, one couple joined a different church where only one or two people knew their circumstances. While the hymns and order of service were the same and thus filled with meaning and memories, the new surroundings and faces they encountered fitted their sense of becoming new people.

The important thing is not to feel obligated or stuck, but rather to do what spiritually feels best, and to find the community in which healing can best occur. For many people that will mean returning to their former place of worship. For others, it will involve finding a new community where they can be known as they are now, rather than who they used to be.

Whether you have a lifetime of memories established in a particular church, or whether going to church is a new experience for you, there will come a time when spiritual resources may be needed. Remember that "the Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath," and know that you may draw on those spiritual resources in whatever way is most meaningful, following your own schedule, and that there is no right or wrong way to do it. Give yourself the freedom to experience the healing of memories and relationships with friends, the loved one, and God at any level where you feel ready, regardless of how much that level may change from day to day.

Hopefully these guidelines will allow you to find the place that nurtures you, recognizing that it may be a different setting from the one that met your needs in the past. As with physical, social, and psychological changes, it is extremely important to allow your spiritual understanding of life to grow and change in response to the indelible experience of death and the incredible journey toward survival. TW



How to survive the sorrow of suicide

by Victor M. Parachin

Jenny had been battling depression and anxiety for more than two decades. During that time she had seen a succession of psychiatrists, psychologists, analysts and clergy. The treatments were as diverse as the people she sought out for help and included drugs, hypnosis, electric shock, talk therapy, prayer and meditation.

In the final analysis there was no effective help for her, and she was unable to deal with the depression and anxiety any longer. Her husband returned from work

one day to find Jenny had asphyxiated herself in the garage.

Suicide is the most difficult loss a family has to bear. With a single decisive act every relationship is irreparably fractured. In addition, the survivors' grief is often complicated by feelings of guilt. Adjustment to the loss is painful, arduous and lengthy.

Fortunately, society has become much more enlightened about the issue of suicide and looks more compassionately upon survivors. While recovery from a loss to suicide is still very difficult, there is more general support for those who have suffered such a blow. Survivors of suicide are now less inhibited about talking and writing about their loss and subsequent recovery.

When there is such a loss people want

to reach out and help. Following are some recommended strategies to offer survivors in the days and weeks following a suicide.

1. Encourage a public acknowledgment. While suicide still carries some stigma of shame, nothing is gained by hiding the fact that the death was a suicide. As a minister and grief counselor I have dealt with many deaths. However, one of the saddest was the suicide death of a prominent area politician. Even though he was highly regarded in the community and known by many people, the funeral was kept extremely private. Only his wife, two sons, their two girl friends, a neighbor, the funeral director and myself were present.

Unfortunately, the family made a very

The Rev. Victor M. Parachin, a Disciples of Christ minister, is a bereavement counselor and grief therapist in Elk Grove, Ill., where he and his family attend St. Nicholas' Episcopal Church. He recently published a book, *Grief Relief: How to Overcome Loss and Live Again*.

poor decision. They have set themselves up to carry a dark secret for the rest of their lives. Also, they deprived themselves completely of the love and support which would certainly have come their way from the broader community through a public funeral where the suicide was acknowledged.

One person who knows through experience that a public declaration about suicide is both healthy and therapeutic is author Adina Wroblewski of Minnesota. In 1979 her daughter, Lynn, took her own life. Describing her feelings about community support in the hours immediately following the loss, Mrs. Wroblewski states:

"The funeral period wasn't any different than what others go through, except people didn't seem to know what to say. I'd say to them, 'I don't care. I'm just glad you came.' I just needed to feel those strokes of love. Some people, virtual strangers, helped. There was a woman next door, a recluse. I hardly knew her but she brought chicken and cake over."

2. Invite them to reach out. Because our society has had a harsh and judgmental view of suicide in the past, many suicide survivors still experience feelings of stigma and shame. Even if there has been a public funeral, an almost natural tendency to isolate oneself after the service still exists out of fear of more rejection and hurt over the loss.

However, suicide survivors who have taken the risk to reach out during various times of sadness and depression have been pleasantly surprised by the acceptance and support they received. For example, Robert M. Myer, a pediatrician whose wife ended her life after a bout with severe depression, writes in a book edited by Earl Grollman, *What Helped Me When My Loved One Died*, about the benefit of reaching out:

"In the midst of my adversity I noticed a tendency to retreat, not to bother anyone else with my misfortune. What a mistake! The love and support of family and

friends, in letters, phone calls, visits and invitations, were so gratifying and so enriching as to defy description. This caring continues to stand out in my mind as a bright spot in an otherwise bleak scenario. Reach out! Martyrdom is not a necessary part of the mourning process."

3. Help them view the death sympathetically. A suicide triggers great amounts of anger and guilt. However, some of those feelings can be balanced by struggling to see that the suicide is not so much a deliberate, hostile act but a gesture of utter hopelessness and despair. Reminders that the person was so driven by emotional whirlwinds that it was impossible to sense any ray of hope can temper the emotional impact considerably.

One of the best responses to a suicide I have ever heard came through a sermon delivered by the pastor at the funeral of a young man who shot himself. With great eloquence the pastor was able to convey tremendous hope through these words:

"Our friend died on his own battlefield. He was killed in action fighting a civil war. He fought against adversaries that were as real to him as his casket is real to us. They were powerful adversaries. They took toll of his energies and endurance. They exhausted the last vestiges of his courage and his strength. At last these adversaries overwhelmed him. Only God knows what he suffered in the silent skirmishes that took place in his soul."

4. Recommend they seek information. The people who have managed their grief in healthy ways following a suicide almost always engage in a "crash course" on suicide. They search libraries to find books on the issue, and seek out articles written by survivors in order to gain more understanding. Information is power!

For example, Adina Wroblewski began to research suicide after her daughter's death in order to answer some of her own nagging questions. As a result of her ini-

tial studies she has published numerous papers, pamphlets and books on the subject. The insights she gained were personally healing.

Even the most basic research lets survivors know they are not alone. Almost every article on suicide cites the fact that some 31,000 people commit suicide each year, making it the eighth leading cause of death, according to the National Institute for Health Statistics. While no amount of information can bring the deceased one back, that same information can greatly ease feelings of isolation and abandonment as survivors realize they are not the only ones to experience such a loss.

5. Encourage exploration of faith. Whether one adheres to the tenets of Christianity, the Torah, the Koran, or the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism, one's faith can become an anchor through the emotionally stormy time following a suicide. After his wife's suicide, one man made this discovery about faith:

"Prior to my wife's death I had been spared any great tragedies in my life. And I had regarded religion in the time of crisis as just another prescription for crutches. I surprised myself at just how comfortably I used those crutches. Surrounded by other worshippers at a service, reciting traditional prayers, or singing in unison, it was comforting to find that when my faith was running low, I could turn to another Faith which had stood the test of thousands of years. If that Faith and the people who trusted in it had survived, then so would I."

Fortunately, religious views about suicide have generally been modified and softened during the last few decades. Most spiritual leaders seek to help survivors experience a God of healing and a God of love who will support them through their grief. There is general awareness that the resulting anger and rage often directed toward God are not unusual.

In his book, *After Suicide*, John H. Hewett suggests: "If you're mad at God, tell God. Whatever you tell God is a form of prayer."

Also, he urges those who have had a loss through suicide to "allow the church to care for you. Learn to recognize their loving concern in whatever shape it appears. When they come to care, let them into your life. You need it, you deserve it and God wants you to have that fellowship."

6. Suggest joining a support group. Being with those who have had a similar loss eases the survivors' sense of isolation and loneliness. There, in the presence of others, feelings are validated and survivors begin to feel "normal."

One mother whose son took his life just before Christmas credits her support group with restoring her sanity. "Just talking with and hearing from people who have gone through the same thing was a tremendous help and made me feel nor-

mal again. One of the things which was particularly helpful was that we survivors read the letters left behind. Before I joined the support group I wanted to read my letter and talk about it but no one wanted to hear it. However, people who have gone through this know how important that is and are willing to listen and share."

7. Discourage drug use. Even though the depression can become acute, tranquilizers and alcohol should be avoided. Although the temptation to ease the pain is great, resorting to prescription drugs or other spirits usually lengthens grieving. Hewett emphatically cautions:

"Beware of simplistic medical treatment. Drugs may certainly serve a purpose in your situation but they won't cure your grief. In fact, they may complicate the healing process as much as they aid it. I agree with those physicians and counselors who believe that grief is handled best when you're awake, not drugged into

sleepiness. Tranquilizers won't end the pain. They'll only mask it for a while."

8. Recommend professional help. Psychologist Henry Seiden, co-author with Christopher Lukas of *Silent Grief: Living in the Wake Of Suicide*, offers this guideline to determine if a professional counselor is necessary. "If, months or years after the death, grief and anger still disrupt your day-to-day living, consult a psychotherapist. Studies have shown that the sooner people get professional help after a traumatic event, the better."

If a person does not know where to get professional help, a good source for further information is the National Institute of Mental Health Public Information, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20857.

Finally, every suicide survivor should be encouraged to let time do its own work of healing. While the sadness can seem unending and the pain relentless, it will pass, and those left behind will survive.

Opting out . . . *Continued from page 19*

bombs. An entire high-tech arsenal reserved for "superpower" conflict was finally given vent upon a diminutive street corner punk!

In what history will no doubt record as the perfect television war, wherein visuals were crafted and packaged as cunningly as the most expensive television ads, the medium was ironically reduced to its essence — projecting only hollow images of war without pain, war without sacrifice, war without suffering or cost, except to the enemy.

If it were not apparent before, surely it must now be manifestly clear that falsehood is the truth of our nation, that technical supremacy is its compassion, that war is its health. In the midst of this deception, in the heart of this abomination, we would not choose to be other than where we are. Our resolve is unshaken

by the superficial posturings of a morally bankrupt system. In faith our fortitude remains intact, for we are confirmed in our conviction that Jesus Christ is risen and the forces of darkness and deception are everywhere in retreat. War and violence are a sure sign of their inevitable downfall.

While our nation celebrates the vic-

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tory of the "New World Order," we are grateful to be in this jail, silent witnesses to that New World Order in which the last will be the first and the powerful will be vanquished; in which the comfortable will be afflicted and the afflicted, comforted; in which fools will surely speak with the wisdom, eloquence and foresight of the prophets themselves!

(On April 8, Dietrich and co-defendant Curt Grove appeared before Judge Richard Gadbois for sentencing on charges of destruction of federal property. Dietrich and Grove were credited with time served and ordered only to pay a fine and court costs, and to serve probation. They both declared they would return to jail rather than pay the fines and refused probation. Gadbois consequently dismissed all penalties, stating he did not want them to use prison as a forum for their beliefs. — Ed.) TW

Farewell to a feisty woman of letters

by Susan E. Pierce

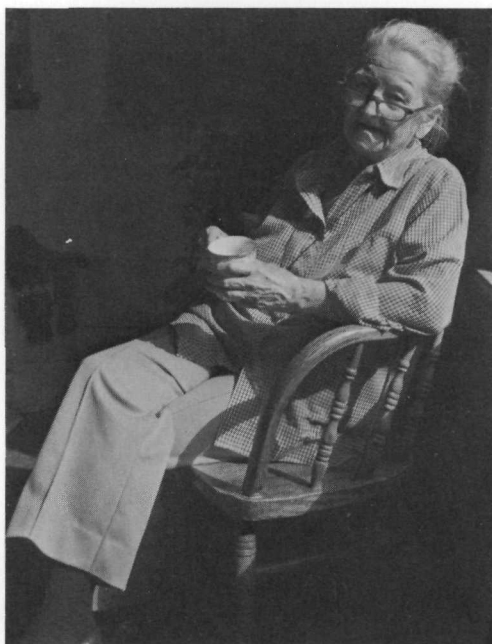
For as long as anyone could remember, a fat letter addressed in red or blue ink would arrive weekly at THE WITNESS office. We knew immediately it was another missive from Abbie Jane Wells, a self-described “crusty old broad” who lived in Juneau, Alaska. Her letters, which went out to a list of over 50 people, contained page after page of articles and essays from a wide range of sources, copied laboriously by hand and enriched by Abbie Jane’s own trenchant, witty observations.

But earlier this spring, we were deeply saddened to hear, appropriately enough in a letter from her long-time friend Judith Maier, that her prolific hand had been stilled forever by a heart attack at age 75.

To be on Abbie Jane’s mailing list was to be the recipient of a wonderfully unique and dedicated ministry. Judith Maier wrote, “We are the wealthy ones to have known her wisdom, her uncompromising integrity, her courage to go it alone.”

Night after night for decades, Abbie Jane would sit at her kitchen table in her cluttered one-room apartment down by the docks in Juneau and begin to copy. Outside her window, ships sailed up and down the Gastineau Channel as she, who rarely left her apartment, worked until dawn to prepare mailings of numerous copied articles on subjects she was passionate about — justice, peace, nuclear disarmament, economic justice, human rights and a host of others. By morning, a stack of envelopes were ready to be sent to a disparate and far-flung group of social activists, theologians, writers and friends scattered across the country.

A deeply faithful life-long Episcopalian, Abbie Jane had no time, however,



Abbie Jane Wells
1915-1991

for the institutional church. “I don’t think there was any church authentic or uncompromising enough for her — she felt there was too much watering down,” said Michael Kenny, Roman Catholic Bishop of Juneau and noted peace activist.

She spared neither herself nor others in the pursuit of truth. Kenny said when he got a letter addressed in red — Abbie Jane’s system was to write personal letters in red ink; batches of copies were done in blue — “I knew it meant she was talking directly to me, and probably chiding me. She was a very honest woman with herself and with others.” He welcomed her critiques, tough as they might be, “because her creative mind would always see what others would miss.”

This unswerving determination to speak the truth as she saw it often put Abbie Jane at odds with the world. When

she first came to Alaska from her native Texas, she operated a hairstyling business out of her home. Maier, who was one of her first customers, said, “You had to take Abbie Jane’s philosophy and theology along with a \$3 haircut.” In the 1960s, Abbie Jane became an increasingly vocal critic of the Vietnam War. Her customers, most of whom preferred reading movie magazines to debating politics while getting their hair done, began to drift away and her business eventually went under.

Her refusal to compromise was part of a strong ethic. Even though in later life Abbie Jane reluctantly subsisted on a small income from oil stocks, she refused to take Social Security or Medicare payments from a government she found morally bankrupt, though that meant living in virtual poverty without access to adequate medical care.

But her concern and caring for others knew no limits. One of her most famous correspondents and closest friends was the noted Jesuit, Daniel Berrigan, who recalled that when he went to Juneau in 1980 and finally got a chance to meet Abbie Jane in person, she had a pot of chicken stew waiting on the stove for him. Listing her in the company of William Stringfellow, Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton, Dan Berrigan wrote in a letter mourning her death, “That great woman . . . created of whole cloth a life we could all creep towards.”

Theologian Robert McAfee Brown was another well-known name on her list. Their decade-long correspondence began after she sent him copies of articles she thought would interest him. “She always would give me some new knowledge — I wouldn’t have known about a lot of things

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The price we pay for homophobia

by Raz Mason

I work at Bradley-Angle House, a battered women's shelter in Portland, Ore. Women wanting to do volunteer work with us go through a 30-hour training period. Three of those hours deal with homophobia. We find it impossible for trainees to understand how abuses, sexism and racism can exist in the world without understanding the role homophobia plays in keeping them all in place. Society hands us the homophobic myth of the lecherous gay man abusing young boys. Statistics show that most sexual abusers are heterosexual — some studies report the percentage to be in the 90s. This kind of myth serves to marginalize a whole group of people, but it goes deeper than that.

What heterosexual people may not be aware of is that homophobia affects us all. It sets a tone in society in which the tools of healing — sharing stories, crying, having deep trusting relationships to turn to in crisis — are seen as indications that one is gay.

The stigma of being labeled gay keeps men from having intimate relationships with other men, which would facilitate their healing, and this stigma also discourages men from developing the tools to have intimate, non-sexual relationships with women. Since men are the primary perpetrators of violence in the world, they need a great deal of healing.

While women are allowed more access to their emotions and the inherent human sense of connectedness, the threat

of being labeled “lesbian” is enough to keep many women relatively mute and unresisting in the face of social injustice. This label is almost certain to be leveled against any woman who does challenge violence or oppression.

Where does this intense fear of closeness with members of our own sex come from? Largely from the societal stereotypes that have been handed down to us all, branding “other” as inappropriate and this particular kind of other as especially horrifying. Like victims of abuse who continue to be victims or switch to the role of abuser because they don't know how to step outside the cycle of violence, society hands down its unhealed wounds from one generation to the next.

We are abused by coming into a world in which people deprive, hurt, and kill other people. Whether or not we have encountered direct forms of interpersonal abuse, we all share society's brokenness. I'm convinced that homophobia is a reflection of this early hurt, and of our deep, rarely-spoken fears that maybe we are unlovable, and that's why our lives and our world don't work right.

When men love other men or women love other women they are challenging our defense mechanisms. We are all reminded how much we have to heal, and how much we would really like to have close, same-gender relationships. Why shouldn't *they* suffer like we have?

I wonder if people who have truly open, affectionate friendships with people of their own sex are able to harbor the intense hatred of lesbians and gays that some people do. Stereotypes, perhaps, but I think people with such friendships have resolved for themselves

that they are worthy of love, and there is really no good excuse for not getting it.

Integral to Bradley-Angle House's understanding of homophobia is the idea of loss. It's useful for heterosexuals to imagine how the threat of the following might impact their lives if heterosexuals were the ones oppressed:

- Loss of privacy: inability to be openly affectionate in public.
- Loss of family: risking ostracization for being “out”; being unable to be honest about the most important person/aspect in your life.
- Loss of job: very few laws protect people from being fired because of their sexual orientation. Most companies rarely hire people who are “out” in the first place.
- Loss of children: custody can be summarily denied.
- Loss of life: hate crimes continue to increase. There is a real threat of physical assault or murder based on one's (perceived) sexual orientation.

This list is by no means exhaustive. And remember that heterosexuals hold the power in society and are responsible for making a stand. Assuming that lesbians and gays are responsible for ending their oppression is, actually, like asking children to end child abuse.

I hope all heterosexual people can find the willingness to confront the acceptance of the lies we were told as children, both about lesbians and gays, and our own abilities to love and to be loved. It may be hard to say, “I don't think that joke was funny” or “I don't see that it makes a difference whether she's gay,” but it's a lot easier than living with the vehement hatred in society directed toward gay men and lesbians.

Raz Mason is director of volunteer services at Bradley-Angle House, Inc., in Portland, Ore., and attends St. Michael's and All Angels Episcopal Church.

Heterosexual questionnaire

The following questions are reversals of questions frequently asked of lesbians and gay men. (How do you feel as they are asked of you?)

1. What do you think caused your heterosexuality?
2. When and how did you first decide you were heterosexual? Was there something that happened to you?
3. Is it possible your heterosexuality is just a phase you may grow out of?
4. Is it possible your heterosexuality stems from a neurotic fear of others of the same sex?
5. Isn't it possible that all you need is a good gay/lesbian lover? Have you ever had a positive lesbian/gay sexual experience?
6. Heterosexuals have histories of failures in gay/lesbian relationships. Do you think you may have turned to

heterosexuality out of fear of failing again?

7. If you've never slept with a person of the same sex, how do you know you wouldn't prefer that?

8. If heterosexuality is normal, why are a disproportionate number of mental patients heterosexual?

9. Why do you insist on being so obvious and making a public spectacle of your heterosexuality? Can't you just be what you are and keep it quiet?

10. Heterosexuals are noted for assigning themselves and each other into restricted, stereotyped sex-roles. Why do you cling to such unhealthy role playing?

11. How can you enjoy a fully satisfying

sexual experience or deep emotional rapport with a person of the opposite sex, when the obvious physical, biological, and temperamental differences between you are so vast? How can a man understand what pleases a woman or vice-versa?

12. How could the human race survive if everyone were heterosexual like you, considering the menace of overpopulation?

13. Why are heterosexuals so promiscuous?

14. Could you really trust a heterosexual counselor to be objective and unbiased? Don't you fear s/he might be inclined to influence you in the direction of her/his own leanings?

Farewell . . . Continued from page 25

without her."

"She had the ability to take ordinary Christian doctrine and put a whole new light on it," said Brown, who encouraged her to finish her book, *The Gospel According to Abbie Jane Wells*, which was published in 1985 by Thomas More Press.

But even everyday people were drawn into her circle of compassion. Annette Jecker, who is active in the Episcopal Church women's movement, got a note from Abbie Jane commenting on a Letter to the Editor Jecker had written to THE WITNESS, which started a 15-year exchange. "She raised my consciousness about war, peace, disarmament and nuclear weapons, and I raised hers about feminism." They often did not agree on issues, said Jecker, but when Abbie Jane learned that Jecker was coping with a serious illness, she told her that she was trying to pray her back into good health.

Molly Rush, one of the Plowshares

Eight, whose anti-nuclear protest actions and subsequent imprisonments made international headlines in the early 1980s, said Abbie Jane wrote to her in jail and was "was so encouraging." Rush said, "She sent things I hadn't seen but were real important, and I would think, 'How did she know I needed this?'"

Abbie Jane's sense of humor was as strong as her compassion. She so disliked the bother of housekeeping that she never cleaned her apartment nor took down her Christmas tree. She told friends her philosophy was, "dust should rest in peace" and that if "celebrating Christmas was good one day, it was good every day." Above the piles of books, papers, and magazines, a poster on an equally crowded wall said, "A place for everything and everything all over the place."

But in the past winter and spring, with the recent Gulf War, the death of beloved friends such as homeless advocate Mitch Snyder, publisher Dan Herr, and her neighbor Frank Maier, she was over-

whelmed by grief. She told Judith Maier, Frank's widow, that she had cried for three months straight after not crying for years. Maier felt that Abbie Jane had died not of a heart attack, but of "a heart broken by a world gone mad."

Her friends held a simple memorial for her in Juneau and her ashes were to be scattered at sea, as she had wished. But her voice lives on the pages upon pages of looping handwriting reproducing the words of those who spoke to issues she found important.

She always cherished what she considered her greatest accolade from Thomas Merton, who was on her list for many years. In one of her last letters to THE WITNESS she noted, "(Merton) once wrote, 'You have all the best instincts of a monastic copiest,' and I consider that my diploma. I almost framed it and hung it on the wall over where I sit copying, copying, copying. A hermit and a monastic copiest in an inner city one-bedroom walkup, that's what I am!" TW

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OK, so it doesn't look a lot like Christmas. But do we have a gift offer for you! Many WITNESS readers have told us that due to their preoccupation with the Middle East crisis, plus other major end-of-year distractions, they were unable to avail themselves of our three-for-one Christmas offer. So here it comes again. And since we even had some envelopes left over, you will find them inside this issue to use to your advantage. Ignore the old stamp rate; as we said, they're leftovers.

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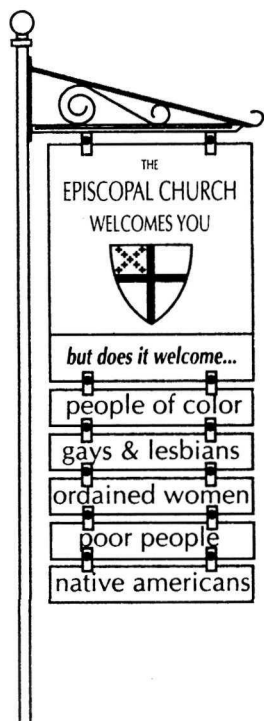
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Sexism, Racism, and Phoenix

Dear Friends,

This is the first chance I've had to be in touch with you folks who are bishops, deputies, alternates and Triennial delegates about the forthcoming General Convention of the Episcopal Church in Phoenix.

Situated in controversy, it is sure to prove a place where resolutions will test the question, "Which side are you on?" That's why we are sending you this Convention issue of THE WITNESS as a gift, with a special offer on the back cover.

Our lead article by Dr. Pamela W. Darling — **Sexism, Racism and Phoenix** — spells out historically how institutions change and why people hurt. She cites the opportunities this Convention will present to move the church toward a more just and inclusive body.

And if you are not familiar with The Consultation — the umbrella group of Episcopal Church organizations dealing with justice and peace issues — here is your chance to familiarize yourselves with its Convention agenda.

Also in this issue, Chaplain Sam Portaro examines the "H" word — Homosexuality — in terms of vocation and not just ordination. The Rev. Carter Heyward and Dr. Virginia Mollenkott discuss how the church deals with sexual ethics.

All this and more! (*See back cover.*)