

The Witness

Volume 77 • Number 4 • April 1994



Dialogue
Conversing with adversaries

The Sixties

I HATED YOUR LAST ISSUE of *Witness* on the sixties! I HATED the sixties. I HATED all the articles. I got so mad, reading it, that I almost put it on the floor and did a Mexican hat-dance. If I'd had Michelle Gibbs in my living room I'd have swamped her with my squirt guns. "... Most of the people in the world do not believe in individualism ..." Good grief! Cows don't believe in individualism. But people ain't nothing but. I guess she's one of those beanheads who still believe communism was a great idea — they just didn't put together the plumbing right.

Well, it should be obvious that my own experience of the sixties was not a favorable one. Before Kennedy got shot there was a tremendous elevation of awareness. Brave people began to do brave things. People dreamed. Folks started looking at old things, newly, there was a graciousness in the air nobody had seen for a long long while. But after he fell it turned into Bob Dylan whining through his nose. Everybody whined. Creativity must have hit an all-time low. The Complaint Department soared. The first of the really Vulgar Heroes emerged. Mick Jagger led the pack. Mean music. Spoiled kids of privilege biting the establishment's ass which they systematically ripped off. Over in Lincoln Park the kids were throwing bags of shit at the police while yelling, "Love! Love!" Hypocrisy was the order of the day.

Lord deliver me from the sixties. I am 48 and I was there, with my flower-child musician husband, and all of his friends. And their drugs. And their cheap despair. Mostly I find, today, that the people who nostalgize the sixties were in junior high when it happened. Too young to vote for Kennedy; too young to join the Peace Corps; too young to hitch to Woodstock. Too young to pull time in Nam, too. They didn't make the sixties; they inherited its debris. Authentic movements of change are never led by mean-spirited people. And if

you can point out anybody after 1965 who was not mean-spirited—other than the Beatles or the valiant American

negroes, I take my hat off to you. I don't apologize for the sixties either. I just sweep it under the rug.

Now I know not a one of you agrees with me in this. But I thought this would lend some credibility to my regular praise for *The Witness*.

Dierdre Luzwick
Cambridge, WI

THE INTERVIEW WITH Michelle Gibbs was very informative. Having been a victim of the McCarthy period I sure can identify.

Today's news is chaotic, confusing and conforming which leads to control. All of the talk about free press is a cover-up of the control that is exerted on us.

I hope you can print the following item:

At the end of last year, Slovene leaders

were in desperate haste to acquire a constitution in time for the scheduled German recognition. The communists and anti-clerical liberals informed leading Christian democrats that they would withhold the necessary majority unless the projected constitution legalized abortion. It did.

According to the archbishop of Ljubljana, there is no country in the world, with the possible exception of one African state, which has abortion written into its constitution. This did not prevent the pope from promptly recognizing the newly independent state.

—Nora Baloff, author of
Tito's Failed Policy

Rose Touralchuk
Buffalo, NY

Witness praise

I THANK GOD for your wonderful magazine. It always refocuses my attention toward clarity and hope just when I'm slipping off again into, or toward, resignation and despondency.

Nancy Whiting
West Tisbury, MA

I HAVE FOUND *THE WITNESS* to be a stimulating and even comforting part of my reading for the past two years. As a Roman Catholic, it has allowed me to rejoice in the Episcopal Church's openness to the ordination of women, and the elevation of a few women to the office of bishop. At the same time, *The Witness* has shown that your church, like mine, still has far to go on the road to enabling and celebrating the radical freedom

General Convention dinner plans!



Steve Charleston

Steve Charleston, Bishop of Alaska, will address our General Convention dinner in Indianapolis!

The dinner, to be held August 26th at 6:30 p.m., will be hosted at an African-American restaurant in the area. (No hotel chicken and boiled vegetables!)

The Episcopal Church Publishing Company's awards to Christians engaged in the struggle will be made at that time.

Early registration would be appreciated. Send \$30 per ticket to *The Witness* c/o Marietta Jaeger.

Letters

of every human being to use fully their God-given gifts in service to all.

Barbara Enagonio
Germantown, MD

HOW CAN YOU MANAGE each issue to select and focus on a single, significant challenge and deal with it in both fascinating yet trenchant ways? It amazes me.

John H. Burt
Marquette, MI

I DO THINK *THE WITNESS* is better than anything the Methodists have done.

Marjorie Townsend
Windsor, OH

[Ed. Note: We really liked *Motive* when the Methodists were publishing it!]

Witness/Trinity video available



One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, our video series from the forum we held at Trinity School for Ministry, is now available!

The series provides, in living color, a glimpse into the hearts of two radically committed groups within the Epis-

copal Church who often find each other suspect regarding interpretations of scripture, issues of morality and commitment to social justice.

The series features a conversation between Bill Frey, dean of the school and former bishop of Colorado; Virginia Mollenkott, a lesbian theologian and professor in New Jersey; Mary Hays, a pastoral theology professor at Trinity; and, Chester Talton, suffragan bishop of California.

The panel discussion can be used alone or, in a class series, each of the ten-minute workshop sessions which follow can be explored. These include the authority of scripture; sexuality, feminism and faith; the Traditional Way; conversations behind the wall; and the multi-cultural challenge. Each session is marked by a serious attempt to listen to one another and to be honest.

The tape costs \$79.95 plus \$4 handling and is available from the Episcopal Radio & TV Foundation, Suite 230, 3379 Peachtree Rd., N.E., Atlanta, GA 30326; (404) 233-5419.

Classifieds

Internship

EPISCOPAL URBAN INTERN PROGRAM (Diocese of Los Angeles): Work in social service ministry, live in Christian community, share in spiritual formation (for adults 21-30). Apply now for the 1994-95 year. Contact: The Rev. Gary Commins, 260 N. Locust St., Inglewood, CA 90301 (310)674-7700.

Witnessing community

RHODE ISLAND WITNESS READERS: The Episcopal Church of the Messiah, Olneyville Square, Providence, seeks to build an inclusive witnessing community in and with the inner city. Join us! Sunday worship: 10:30 a.m. 401-351-2144.

The Teleios Foundation

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Call (800) 835-3467 or write **The Rev. James C. McReynolds, The Teleios Foundation, P.O. Box 7213, Shrewsbury, NJ 07702.**

One-woman show

ACTRESS AND WRITER Kietry Zychal is available for an educational and comical one-woman show called "This is not a Sermon." Her fee is negotiable, although she adds she'd appreciate dinner and a place to stay for the night. Call 212-388-2727.

Classifieds

WITNESS CLASSIFIEDS cost 75 cents a word \$30 an inch, whichever is less. Payments must accompany submissions. Deadline is the 15th of the month, two months prior to publication. For instance items received January 15 will run in March.

When ads mark anniversaries of deaths, ordinations, or acts of conscience, photos — even at half column-width — can be included.

THE WITNESS

Since 1917

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Breaking the silence

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

Da
Datta: *what have we given?*
My friend, blood shaking my heart
The awful daring of a moment's surrender
Which an age of prudence can never retract
By this, and this only, we have existed
Which is not to be found in our obituaries
— T.S.Eliot, *The Wasteland*

I learned that silence is probably the most brutal way to fight when I was in grade school. Someone suggested that we should all refuse to talk to Anne Hayes and we did. Suddenly, awkward in her St. Hilda's uniform, she ran sobbing from class to the bathroom.

I've watched that dynamic take its toll in other situations. Roger Smith, former chair of General Motors, with a flick of the wrist shut off the microphone at the 1981 stockholders meeting, silencing the voice of a woman whose house and community were being destroyed by the corporation. News editors, judges, priests, political allies, parents separated by divorce can reject the claims of the other.

To ignore, to silence, to avert your eyes, to deny the credibility of an opponent, to shun. It's a seething kind of death.

The most radical thing one can do in the face of silencing power is speak. Speak through graffiti. Speak through demonstrations. Speak through face to face confrontations. Speak a word of compassion. Put a question.

Somehow the word "dialogue" is hardly up to the concept of conversing with adversaries. It sounds polite and, as several of the writers in this issue note,

such conversation can only work if it's passionate.

Consequently it's rarely polite.

Piercing the silence may require calling out through the decorum of a stockholders' meeting or challenging a sermon right in the sanctuary. It may mean pushing open the door so that those most excluded can be seen by those who control the debate. It may mean arranging to see someone you used to call friend or neighbor.

Crying out through the silence barrier hurtles our humanity into something cold. But it gives our adversaries a choice — to pass by in contempt or to respond.

The initial cry, I believe, is the essence of nonviolent action.

Those things that we imagine to be our power — our credentials, our respectability, our citizenship — can't make the fight. It is, instead, our humanity — naked, undefended — that must be confident enough to invite the response.

When *The Witness* went to Trinity School for Ministry last fall many people expressed doubts. They wanted to know why we would dignify Trinity's campus with our presence. They imagined we wanted reconciliation and would sell out our values to achieve it. Some asked if we were on the slippery slope.

But Virginia Mollenkott understood. "You can't form a bridge between opposing interpretive communities with ideologies," she said. "The bridge is our humanity."

At Trinity, students were disturbed because Mollenkott believes that she honors God in her lesbian relationship, but they were moved to hear that she and her lover sang fundamentalist hymns as Mollenkott's mother died.

You give your adversary a gift when you call out. You acknowledge that you can see them. You surrender some power by letting them share the stage with you.

But in my experience there's little that's more satisfying than standing face to face with an adversary. Holding internally to what you believe to be true and listening with your whole body, you wait. Part of the passion of the moment is the incongruity, the dilemma that's before you both. Here you both are — quite possibly both good people — yet you disagree. The rupture may be irrevocably great. You will test that.

The excitement is in wondering how in the mind of God there is room for this discord between children of God. Somehow God is in this.

When I cry out, I intend to present my case with righteousness, leaving an opening for my adversary's mind to change. But in making the case, my adversary may expose a flaw in my thinking.

The encounter is eschatological, inviting the judgement of God.

Whether now or later, something will die. Either my belief or yours — if nothing else, the self-righteous attitudes with which we hold them.

Standing in such a moment, one can feel the affirmations of Paul. "Neither heights nor depths..."

Even here, in this moment, God is present inviting us to see what is sacred in this adversary.

The director of *In The Name of The Father* described the violence in Ireland as dialogue gone awry. Violence, he suggests, is thwarted dialogue.

continued on page 29

editor's note

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is editor/publisher of *The Witness*.

Placing the question

by Ched Myers

There are many reasons why we have such a difficult time engaging in dialogue in the church. But it is surely in part due to the fact that Christian liturgical, confessional and theological discourse has for so long been so thoroughly declarative. Declarative discourse has its place, of course, but its absolute character is not often hospitable to dialogue.

This is particularly true among prophetic-minded Christians today. We have made strident criticism a way of life. Yet look at how fragmented we are! It is a great irony that we who question the “great” orthodoxies of establishment Christianity so often end up constructing “little” orthodoxies to replace them. By relentlessly applying litmus tests to each other, we end up succumbing to the grand sectarian legacy of the North American Left — defining ourselves according to our differences with those closest to us.

Almost two decades ago Canadian theologian Douglass John Hall wrote:

On the brink of overt nihilism in our public life, and neurotically clinging to the positive in our private existences, we fear an open confrontation with the contradiction between our optimistic expectations and our increasingly depressing experiences. ... There can therefore be no more responsible theology than one which tries to provide a climate in which men and women in this society may feel able to expose themselves to that contradictory state. ... We have concentrated on being

an answering theology. ... now we must concentrate on providing a place to which to refer the questions.

I wonder if, in our search for a more dialogical discourse, it is possible for people of strong conviction to learn to speak *more interrogatively and less declaratively*?

We find encouragement from two traditions, one ancient and one modern. In Mark's gospel, more than three-quarters of the pericopes are composed around questions to, by or about Jesus. Jesus is presented not as a sage who explains life's mysteries or has the answer to every social dilemma, but as the great interlocutor of reality. Why?

The contemporary pedagogy of “conscientization” popularized by Paulo Freire suggests an answer. “The educator's role is to propose problems about the codified existential situation in order to help the learners arrive at a more and more critical view of their reality,” wrote Freire. In other words, empowerment and liberation arise more from posing the right question than by insisting upon the right answer.

We might learn from one tradition that has sought to replace declarative with interrogatory theology. I am referring to the discourse of “Testimonies, Advices and Queries” found among the Religious Society of Friends, or Quakers. T. Canby Jones defines this tradition as follows:

A “Testimony” is a standard of faith, ethical behavior or Gospel Order which a group of people covenants together to observe. ...

A “Query” is a sharply focused question designed to challenge persons or a group to live up to a corporately adopted standard of faith and behavior ...

An “Advice” is friendly counsel from the group on what it means to live by a commonly accepted testimony.

As a vehicle for community self-assessment, this discourse tries to preserve a delicate balance. It presents questions to the common life, not accusations, yet they are *hard* questions, not merely rhetorical ones. It is by definition open to constant rearticulation. Historical testimonies endure, but should be reinterpreted into new contexts. Queries stand ever in need of honing so they do not become rote or irrelevant. Advices must be revised as the times change so they will be practical.

We who question the dominant culture today should remember that we *too* stand before Jesus the Interlocutor. It is a good thing for prophetic Christian communities to compare their work and witness — this is the stuff of *testimonies* — as long as we do not hold our own practices up as the *only* legitimate expression of discipleship. We need to offer each other practical suggestions about how to live more simply, or nonviolently, or justly — this is the stuff of *advices* — as long as this does not deteriorate into a new kind of purity code. And the *query* that ought to circulate among us is not “Who is the most faithful?” but rather “How can we all deepen our journey — wherever we are starting from?”

“Criticism is about discomfort,” Cornel West reminds us; “It's unsettling; it's about being transgressive in the sense of calling what one has assumed into question. America does not take well to that. Socrates said that the unexamined life is not worth living. But we could say the examined life is painful.” This goes for all of us.

Perhaps if we learn to share questions with each other and the world, rather than condemnations or categorical statements, dialogue will come more easily. **TWM**

Ched Myers, a *Witness* contributing editor, develops these ideas further in his new book, *Who Will Roll Away the Stone? Discipleship Queries for First World Christians* (Orbis Press, 1994).

Even Me

by Naomi Long Madgett

*For Mildred Dobey
and the
Plymouth Renaissance Choir, Detroit, Michigan*

My Lord
wasn't no stuck-up man.
He was one of us.
He ran with common folks,
spoke up for street women
and lepers
and stuck by friends like Lazarus
when they had given up on life,
Smiled at black Simon
who shared his burden on the road to Calvary,
And when they nailed him
to a cross,
he told one of the crooks
beside him
they could hang out together when they got
where they was goin'.

And even now
when I sometimes feel like
the bottom's dropped out
of everything,
he speaks to me and says,
"Come on, child, you got somethin'
on your mind.
Let's you and me sit down awhile
an' talk about it."

My Jesus,
he ain't no stuck-up man.

Detroit poet Naomi Long Madgett is author of eight collections of poetry, the most recent being Remembrances of Spring: Collected Early Poems, published in 1993 by Michigan State University Press. She is winner of the 1993 Michigan Artists Award and of the 1993 American Book Award.



Passion and dialogue: an interview with Steve Charleston

Steve Charleston, bishop of Alaska, spoke with The Witness by telephone recently. The interview explores Charleston's conviction that the church will enjoy a second renaissance in the next century. To get there, of course, we may have to speak with one another.

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann: You've spoken about a second Reformation in the next century — a time when the church will come alive again. Looking at the Episcopal Church right now — and how divided we are — where do you see room for conversations that might get us from where we are to the church that you anticipate — one which is really multicultural and has a strong role for women?

Steve Charleston: There are several places where bridges of communication need to be built — between traditionalists and progressives; between men and women; cross-culturally we still have a lot of work to do; and, finally, between people of different economic categories — different economic concerns. The last is kind of a hidden agenda. It's one that's not often put out in the forefront, but is beneath several of these issues. For example, between men and women and between people of different cultural backgrounds.

Until we pry open that lid and really start to look seriously at how much we're influenced by economic realities, we may be talking more on the surface rather than really building the bridges that I'm describing. We can try and lay the super-

structure of a bridge, but unless we undergird it with some hard-core, real dialogue about the economic realities of the latter part of this century and a prospectus for the future, we are just going to be building a bridge without a foundation.

J.W.-K.: Do you see any areas where divisions are so deep or are based on something so true that there should be no conversation?

S.C.: No, I don't. We are to be a people of hope and of possibility and never turn away. No matter how big the division may seem between us and others, however we define ourselves as the "us" and the "other" in relation to us — there is no gulf that separates us that the gospel cannot bridge and that we are not called to make the attempt to bridge through the witness of Christ.

J.W.-K.: What do you do with people with whom you disagree?

S.C.: I've had a lot of experience with that. ... That's a joke, but it's true in some ways. I suppose most of us who are active in the church and take our theology seriously can name any number of individuals or groups with whom we are in disagreement.

The first thing I try to do is to listen. It seems like a simple answer to a complicated question, but it is funda-

mental. If we're not willing to at least listen carefully — and I mean listen intently, listen with an open mind, listen through the ears of compassion — then we'll never get anywhere.

J.W.-K.: It seems that you're not feeling discouraged about the life of the church, while an awful lot of folks are. Can you say a little bit about the landscape that you see and where you see the signs of things that may be changing?

S.C.: In my response to the question about naming different groups that are at odds with each other, one of the interesting things about most of those communities that are in conflict with one another is that many of them share a common denominator of feeling discouraged or hopeless. They are motivated by a vision of the future that is colored with dark colors. They feel that there is little resolution. They see images of disunity, even the dissolution of the church. They feel themselves trapped into small pockets that are constantly in states of siege with others and so there's a real strong sense of foreboding and even hopelessness in the life of the church.

We often think of the gospel of Jesus as something so brittle and so fragile that if you question it at all, it's liable to shatter in your hand like a piece of fine porcelain. In fact, the gospel of Jesus is so strong and so flexible that we can push on it and push on it and still find that it makes room for us — for each one of us.

Over against that I keep trying to encourage people to join me in believing that this is perhaps one of the most hopeful times in the life of the church. We stand on the threshold of a renewed witness to the Christian faith that has profound consequences for the future — offering the whole global community a vision of hope and of tolerance, peace, justice and the truth

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is editor/publisher of *The Witness*. **Visminis Company** markets bulletin covers from P.O. Box 10189, Pittsburgh, Penn., 15232.

of the gospel that is wonderfully liberating to all segments of the world's population.

I think we've been put in this place by the hand of God because we are a generation of Christians who have the ability and the insight, the wisdom and the love that can lead us to fulfill that promise of scripture. So I see this as a wonderful time.

J.W-K.: Our nation feels like it's on the point of collapse with gang violence and poverty and a popular culture that doesn't seem to leave room for any kind of personal integrity or family or community life. Our churches have been pretty much abandoned by the generations that are coming up. Say a little bit about where this gospel message is being kept alive and who the folks are that have been given these gifts and who they'll be speaking to.

S.C.: Why in the midst of all of this turmoil and apparent chaos both within the life of the church and the society would I say that this is such a good time for us? An acceptable year of the Lord? I would say that because I believe this is the time of incarnation. My reading of scripture — my understanding of the historical context of Jesus — reminds me that it was a very similar time in world history in which Jesus emerged. In other words, the times of chaos and confusion and of struggle are exactly the moments when God chooses through grace and love to intervene into human history. It is in exactly this time that God *would* choose to suddenly make God's presence felt in the lives of men and women.

The intervention of God to bring peace, to bring calm, to bring the light of the gospel — I see that emerging in the everyday lives of so many Christians. We have wonderful witnesses to this kind of faithfulness all around us.

When I project into the future and talk about the role of women, that's one of the communities I would point to. I'm absolutely convinced that not only have women kept the church alive through times of struggle both great and small, on the local level as well as on the global level, but that inherent in the vision and the ministry of women in the church are those seeds of the future that will lead us to the next reformation. That's only one community, but there are others.



Steve Charleston

J.W-K.: Let me ask you about the others in a minute, but one of the places where I see spiritual life with an intensity that's often lacking in the church-at-large is in communities of women — like in the predominantly Catholic women who've started Women-Church.

They have created ways of worshiping with one another that minimize the effect of not being able to be ordained and feeling outcast in their own church. But the connection between their worship and the traditional Christian church is tenuous sometimes — actually a lot of times

they draw on American Indian spirituality and other forms of worship. Almost everywhere I turn I'm running into women who have a really deep spirituality that's growing, but it's not within the traditional church. Is this the kind of group of women who will help bring in the second reformation or is this separate from your vision?

S.C.: My feeling is that when we talk about communities — in this case women — who are experimenting with a new form of expression of their spiritual faith, they do so within the body of the church. Sometimes it seems as though what they're doing is rejecting the traditional model, but I imagine it in the shape of an egg. That is, the shell around us is the shell of the church — our liturgies, our politics, our hierarchies as we've inherited them over the centuries.

Spiritualities are not formed in a vacuum. They are formed within that shell of tradition and of history that we have all grown up in. The question is in what ways do they affect that outer shell and what are they giving a new birth to? Women or men who begin to experiment and to challenge and to think about new ways of worship and new ways of organizing themselves are all drawing on their own personal histories as well as on the histories of their churches, so there's a direct

*There is no real dialogue
if there is no passionate
commitment.*

connection — an umbilicus — between this experimental vision of the future and the past.

Things don't emerge just out of thin air for us as finite people. They emerge because we have all been fed — for good or bad — by our historical connection with the traditional body of the church. It's like that shell. There's something new growing inside the church. The church is like a womb

and something new is growing within it. There are times when that growth is painful. There are times when you think it may shatter the outer shell altogether. There are other times when that shattering process can be envisioned not as something destructive and negative, but as a necessary part of any growing process — it will occur so that something new can emerge, something new can be born.

J.W-K.: When you see this new vitality coming out of orthodox roots as a gift to our age in this time, you describe it as a “global gift.” But historically whenever Christianity has made a broad sweep through the globe, it has left a trail of ruin behind it — the crusades and the taking of this continent. Is there going to be something different about the way it’s done this time so that it doesn’t end up with the same kind of repression?

S.C.: I am convinced that that’s true. In our past historical experience of the global movement of Christianity, we described it as a tidal wave — the wave of imperialism, or the wave of the missionary movement, or the wave of the crusades. It was always envisioned as something that would start from a central point and then move out and sweep over other people.

When we look to the future, we’re going to see something entirely different. We’ll see an emergence, coming out of places around the world, in which it’s not a wave washing over other peoples. It’s a new vision of the church and a new spirituality that’s going to come from the ground up. It’s like a deep spring welling up from the earth, coming up and giving life and giving nourishment to local communities first and then merging with others that are doing very similar things around the world. You can see this happening in Africa, in Latin America, in Asia and here in North America. It’s occurring all around us.

The global vision of the future I see for the Christian faith is not a vision of a church triumphant that would move out and claim new territories for itself. This is going to be a very organic movement of faith, growing up from within cultures and then spreading out gradually until it connects.

Look how wonderfully we experienced that when the Anglican encounter occurred with women of the Anglican communion in Brazil. You could find women from vastly different cultures and languages and life experiences, but they were speaking in a common language because something touched in their lives. They understood that while their ministry and vision was growing with a resonance of where they came from — there was a connection. There was some human quality to their voice that began to sing in harmony with each other. That’s what I’m seeing in the future.

J.W-K.: Well, when a spring starts to rise up, I guess there are things we can do to help it survive — move the branches out of the way, protect it. What do we need to be doing to encourage these springs?

S.C.: We need to not be afraid of the experimentation and questioning that will happen throughout the rest of our lifetime before we get into the fullness of the reformation in the next century.

What we need to focus on in our theological education is not conformity, but creativity. We need to allow people to have the freedom of expression and the freedom of thought to test the limits of their understanding of the gospel.

We often think of the gospel of Jesus as something so brittle and so fragile that if you question it at all, it’s liable to shatter in your hand like a piece of fine

porcelain. In fact, the gospel of Jesus is so strong and so flexible that we can push on it and push on it and still find that it makes room for us — for each one of us.

We don’t have to be terrified if we find that people are asking difficult questions or raising new ideas or trying new forms in the life of the Christian church — like the spring coming up from the earth or like something being grown within the womb of the church. They’re organic images because they talk about a vision of the gospel that is very flexible.

That’s why Paul’s image of the body is such a wonderful one for the church. It doesn’t say that you just remain in one fixed position forever in the church. It says that it’s alright for us to continue to expand into new ways of understanding. That’s something we have to make room for. Interestingly we need to do that both in a conservative *and* in a progressive way.

Very often progressive Christians look at so-called conservative Christians and say, “Well, they’re not growing at all.” But I would never say that growth only occurs on the ends of the fingertips.

Growth occurs deep within the body itself. For us to remain vital it’s perfectly alright to have both happening simultaneously.

When conservatives stand firmly planted with their

feet on what they think is solid biblical ground and they say, “No, we have to pay attention to this, in many ways they are serving the same function of growth because they are challenging us to think back on where we came from. And in that way they are tethering us to the ground of our being so that those of us who push to the limits and the fringes don’t fly off. So really the funny thing is that those who

Progressives and those who are conservatives are both very necessary dance partners for the symphony of God to continue.

are progressives and those who are conservatives are both very necessary dance partners for the symphony of God to continue.

J.W-K.: In this global welling up of Christian faith and vision, what happens with Muslims and Buddhists and Hindus? If it's not going to be oppressive, I would guess that it's not a campaign to convert. Is that right?

S.C.: I was asked to go to the pre-parliament of the Anglicans at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, which was this international, interreligious dialogue, and in some ways I think my message there was somewhat surprising because I talked about the need for Christians to be very clear about their understanding of who we are as followers of Christ Jesus, and I said that our message must be presented very clearly and in a non-ambiguous way.

The other person on the agenda with me had talked about how Christianity should not maintain any unique or exclusive truth claim for fear of offending Buddhists or Muslims or Jews or any other religious tradition.

One of the BBC [British Broadcasting Company] teams interviewed me later. They asked, if I am such a forward-thinking bishop, why would I come to this international dialogue and say we need to be clear about who we are as Christians? My answer is — and because I am a person of intense faith I feel passionately about what I believe in — I believe Jesus Christ is the son of God. I believe that the scriptures are the inspired word of God. I believe there's a liberating message for all of humanity in that. And I would much rather be in a dialogue with Muslims, or Jews, or Buddhists or any other persons of religious faith who felt just as passionately about their faith as I do about mine.

There is no real dialogue if there is no passionate commitment. The ground of



Apocalypse of Baron Heinecker, 1415-1420

courtesy of Visminis Company

our religious faith is our commitment to something in which we believe so strongly that we are moved by the spirit to share it with others. It is like holding an extremely valuable treasure in the palm of your hand — something life-giving, an

antidote to illness. To withhold it or to be blasé about it would be almost criminal. To share it with other people and to say, "Come and see what I've found," is what I believe initiates real interreligious dialogue. I am not a believer in the "I'm okay

— you're okay" school of thought of the new age.

I need to be able to stand firmly rooted in my understanding of the Christian faith and my absolute devotion to Jesus Christ as my savior and share that with other people with a passion and an intensity that challenges them

and invites them to share theirs with me. Now the key is — in the past, Christianity was willing to share its witness, but wasn't willing to listen to anyone else's witness in return. Our tragic experience of what that does to us as people has taught us that those of us who still are passionately dedicated to the gospel of Jesus can share that witness unashamedly and with fervor, but at the same time listen just as pas-

sionately to others. There is a quality of passionate listening — it means opening up your whole being to what another person is trying to communicate to you, to show them respect and tolerance.

J.W.-K.: What about the mandate that we're supposed to make disciples of all nations? A lot of people would agree that this kind of conversation should take place, but there's this expectation that at the conclusion of the conversation, the people who are not Christian will take Jesus as their Lord.

S.C.: When Jesus says that we are to go and make disciples of all nations, he also reminds us through the scripture that our sense of time and his sense of time are very different. When he was asked the question, "When does all of this finally end?" he said, "I have no idea. God knows,

but I don't." It's not as though, if I am in a dialogue with a person of another faith, we have a fixed end-point, a one-hour time line, at the end of which if they're not willing to be baptized, I've failed in my mission. The dialogue that we have as humanity in our search for God will go on

far beyond any stretch of our imagination. My job is only to be faithful to the commission placed on me through Christ Jesus. That is, I am to go out and love God with all my heart, and all my mind, and all of my soul, and to communicate that love of God to others.

J.W.-K.: And if we're faithful in this second reformation, what's the gift? What is it that's uniquely

Christian in origin that we'll offer?

S.C.: One of the things that we will offer to the world, is, first of all, peace for the world. It is something that was at the heart of our message that we truly are dedicated to peace. We share that with other world religions in different ways, but it is a very powerful message coming out of the Christian witness.

J.W.-K.: Does that mean non-violence?

S.C.: Mmhm. That's right. I believe non-violence is a part of that. It is an attempt to say that we are envisioning a world in which the use of arms to resolve conflict will no longer be acceptable. I would hold that as a standard for the Christian witness. We are called to work toward a world in which violence no longer threatens the lives of any persons.

Secondly, we are a faith in which the

need of the poor is paramount in our lives. Our mission is largely shaped and colored by the degree and the depth to which we are compassionately concerned with the lives of the poor and that encompasses both those persons who know hunger and refugees who know displacement and families who are broken and children who are abandoned. I think peace and concern for the poor are two of the most important things that Christianity can bring into the next century.

J.W.-K.: You said early on that women wouldn't be the only people that were encouraging these wellsprings, that there would be other people as well.

S.C.: Absolutely. Some of the strongest, hopeful visions of the future are occurring in communities of color throughout our church. Certainly that's true here in Alaska. Those little springs of hope that I talk about are bubbling up all around us if we'll only take time to see them. In villages in the bush of Alaska, there is such a depth of faith and such a commitment to Christ and love for humanity. That's true in inner cities and in other dioceses all across the country. They're not always noticed, they're not always appreciated but they're happening in communities of color everywhere. And of all colors, and by that I mean I think they're happening for European Americans too and that's the joy of it — that whether we realize it yet or not, those springs of hope are emerging and it's only a matter of time before they merge and we have something new.

J.W.-K.: That sounds wonderful.

S.C.: It's going to happen. I have *no* doubts in my mind. I'm not a troubled bishop. I'm not somebody that's hanging my head or wringing my hands. I've never felt so joyful and so glad to be born into this time. I feel blessed by God that God would have allowed me the joy of living in times of trouble for the sake of the gospel.

TAW

Building on common ground: opponents in the abortion controversy join forces

by Marianne Arbogast

Two years ago, Missouri legislators were startled by the signatures on a letter they received in support of a bill which funded a drug rehabilitation program for women with children. The names of Loretto Wagner and Andrew Puzder — prominent pro-life activists — appeared alongside those of pro-choice advocates B.J. Isaacson-Jones and Jean Cavender.

"We're all very well-known on our respective sides," Cavender says. "The legislators said they were surprised."

Public, joint advocacy of programs to benefit women and children is one outcome of a pro-choice/pro-life dialogue begun in St. Louis in 1990, shortly after the Supreme Court upheld Missouri's restrictive abortion law in *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*.

Dialogue between pro-choice and pro-life supporters has been "growing from the grassroots," says Adrienne Kaufmann, co-director of the newly-formed Common Ground Network for Life and Choice in Washington, D.C., which offers linkage and resources to people engaged in local efforts. It is happening in St. Louis, Buffalo, Cleveland, Denver, and Washington, D.C.

"Common Ground" is an approach to dialogue in conflict situations which emphasizes areas of agreement while respecting profound differences. The national network is affiliated with Search for Common Ground, a 12-year-old agency which has sponsored projects in Russia, the Middle East, Eastern Europe,

and South Africa.

It offers opponents a space in which "to sit down together, hear each others' stories, and rehumanize people on the



Meinrad Craighead

other side of the conflict," Kaufmann says. "The aim is to understand, not to agree."

She insists that "Common Ground is not middle ground," a refrain echoed by many who take part in the dialogues.

St. Louis

The St. Louis group began with a conversation between Andrew Puzder, the pro-life attorney who wrote the Missouri law, and B.J. Isaacson-Jones,

president and board chair of Reproductive Health Services — the agency which filed the lawsuit that led to the Supreme Court decision.

"Shortly after we lost the case, Andrew Puzder wrote an op-ed in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*," Isaacson-Jones says. "He suggested that regardless of what happened with abortion, something needed to be done to help women who had unplanned pregnancies."

"I called him after reading it and asked if he would like to get together just to talk, with no agenda."

"I have always understood that people with different views are not my enemy," she says. "During all of our clinic invasions — there have been thousands of arrests, and one of our clinics was firebombed in 1986 — I have understood that the people involved in violent acts are really the fringes."

"Andy had always treated me with dignity when we were at the Supreme Court. Within just a few minutes, we discovered that we had more in common than we had differences."

They decided to continue to meet, and invited others. Loretto Wagner, a former president of Missouri Citizens for Life, and Jean Cavender, director of public affairs for Reproductive Health Services, joined them.

Few could match Wagner's credentials in pro-life circles. She has led lobbying campaigns, planned educational programs, organized demonstrations, and gone to jail for the cause which she says "has practically consumed my life since 1973 [the year of the *Roe*

"I have always understood that people with different views are not my enemy. During all the clinic invasions, I have understood that people involved in violent acts are really the radical fringe."

—B. J. Isaacson-Jones

Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of *The Witness*. Artist Meinrad Craighead spent 14 years in monastic life in England.

v. *Wade* decision].”

She also co-founded two shelters for pregnant women which serve more than 600 women and children each year.

“I learned that you have to work with people who don’t agree with you,” she says. “Most of the women who come to us have been abused, and about 70 percent are addicted to drugs or alcohol. Many of the people we have found to help them don’t agree with us on the abortion issue.

“We can’t say we aren’t going to associate with one another and pool our resources and our compassion and help someone when we can agree,” she said.

Cavender tells of a ten-year-old girl, pregnant by her stepfather, who sought an abortion but was beyond the legal limit. Since the pregnancy was high-risk, she was confined to her home, and needed a baby-sitter to stay with her while her mother worked.

“Because of my relationship with Loretta Wagner, I called her, and she went out and raised money to secure a babysitter,” Cavender says. “One of our doctors gave her care, and she was able to carry her pregnancy to term.”

Cavender, who was confirmed in her pro-choice commitment by the discovery that her maternal grandmother had died after an illegal abortion, says that it has been “healing” to meet with pro-life people in a non-hostile environment.

“There have been years of hurt,” she says. “We have been yelled at and screamed at by protesters. Common Ground has given us an opportunity to heal from the pain.”

But they encountered a new form of hostility.

“When we first began meeting it was painful because we found it was our colleagues in our respective movements who were the most critical,” Cavender says. “People were highly suspicious; they felt we were out to compromise.”

Wagner says her participation in the dialogues shocked some pro-life leaders.

“They could not understand that Common Ground doesn’t demand a retreat from our principles,” she says. “I don’t think we can depolarize. I don’t think we can become one mushy middle. I don’t



have to give an inch in my opposition to abortion, and pro-choice members are as determined as ever to keep abortion legal.

“But I don’t think we can withdraw to the safety of our own mindsets and speak only to those who agree with us. I think the resolution of this issue rests on the arguments themselves. People haven’t been able to hear the arguments because the debate has been so shrill. How can anyone hear if we refuse to acknowledge the other side except to shout at them?”

“The longer I work, the stronger I feel about choice,” says Isaacson-Jones, whose commitment

dates back to her college days, when she obtained money from her father to help friends who had to travel out of state for legal abortions. “I think caring for a child is the greatest human responsibility. I think it should be very intentional and planned.

“At the same time, I have always known I don’t necessarily have ‘the’ right answer about choice — God hasn’t spoken to me.”

Isaacson-Jones says that she has “broadened the agenda” of reproductive services as a result of her work with pro-life people. Three years ago, she established a state-licensed adoption agency at the clinic. The clinic has also expanded its birth control services for women on Medicaid.

“I believe abortion is a woman’s r-i-g-h-t, not a woman’s r-i-t-e,” she says. “If we can combine some of the passion and some of the resources [of the pro-choice and pro-life movements] we certainly can reduce the need for abortion. That

would be very, very positive.”

Buffalo

In Buffalo, the 1992 Operation Rescue “Spring of Life” campaign left in its wake a bitterly divided city.

“People who had been friends suddenly couldn’t talk to each other,” says Karalyn Schmidt, a former Planned Parenthood regional president with a long history of commitment to women’s issues. “We had been

“I don’t think we can withdraw to the safety of our own mindsets and speak only to those who agree with us. The resolution of this issue rests on the arguments themselves. People haven’t been able to hear the arguments because the debate has been so shrill. How can anyone hear if we refuse to acknowledge the other side except to shout at them?”

—Loretta Wagner

thrown into what felt like a war.”

The Buffalo Council of Churches sponsored the formation of a steering committee of people on both sides. After a year of weekly meetings the committee sponsored a “Dialogue Day” in February, 1993. Three more have been held during the past year, and three ongoing Common Ground groups now work in the Buffalo area.

“I was in a small group with two pro-choice and two pro-life people, and the pro-life people both talked about having been involved in the peace movement,” Schmidt says. “I remember being just stunned that people coming out of the same roots I did had arrived at such a different place.”

Through Common Ground, Schmidt met Karen Swallow Prior, a high-school principal who is media spokesperson for the Western New York Rescue Movement, an Operation-Rescue-style group.

“The first time Karen and I met, we had a heated battle,” Schmidt says. “I thought she was just this young stupid upstart who didn’t know what she was talking about. I now know that she has given incredible time to thinking about the position she holds. I respect that, I respect her — and I like her.”

Though she says that “Common Ground is about dialogue, not about solution,” Schmidt holds on to the hope that “if we hit the walls enough times, we will get through them.

“Karen recognizes the inherent difficulty of making abortion illegal,” she says. “She hopes that if that happened there would at least be fewer. I say, what about those who give their lives? That’s one of the walls.”

A conversation between Schmidt and Prior was broadcast by a local TV station, and they served as co-facilitators of the Dialogue Day in February.

Prior believes that by focusing on areas of shared concern, activists can

achieve gains that cannot be made “with so much collective energy focused on abortion.”

At the same time, she remains committed to rescue work and to stopping legal abortion.



Common Ground method

“Common Ground work is compatible with pro-life and pro-choice activism, but not in the same space,” says Kaufmann, who is integrating her experience with Common Ground into doctoral work on conflict.

Those who apply to attend Common Ground workshops are asked to identify themselves as pro-choice or pro-life. Kaufmann has learned to recognize refusal to do so as a warning sign. “If you say you’re on neither one, how can you talk to the other side?”

Applicants are also required to sign ground rules, agreeing to “respect the humanity of all present,” and to “offer our ideas without attempts to convert and convince.”

Kaufmann developed a values questionnaire which she gives to workshop participants. People are asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with 25 statements (eg. “It is a worthwhile goal to lessen the number of abortions in this country.”) on a scale of one to five. Ev-

eryone fills it out twice — once for themselves, and once as they think people in the other camp would answer.

“It not only surfaces the commonalities and differences, but also the misperceptions of each other,” Kaufmann says.

“Pro-choice people do not think pro-life people value equality, but pro-life people score very high on valuing equality. Pro-life people do not think pro-choice people value spirituality, but pro-choice people score very high on valuing spirituality.”

In small groups, participants are invited to share the story of how they came to call themselves pro-choice or pro-life.

“We can’t argue with a person’s experience,” Kaufmann says. “It’s amazing how often the common denominator is a painful experience — sometimes I wonder if that’s not why there is so much passion on this issue.”

Other topics include: “How have you been stereotyped by the other side and how has that affected you?” “What is your stereotypical view of the other side?” “Which parts of the stereotype fit you and which don’t?” “What question did you always want to ask but were afraid to ask someone on the other side?” and “I wish this group could work together to do Project ‘X’ because of Reason ‘Y.’ ”

Common Ground works for “people who don’t have to create an enemy in order to do their work,” Kaufmann says. Participants “realize they may meet the same people next week at a clinic on opposite sides of the sidewalk. But many say, ‘When I go there I’m looking at people differently because I have met them in another space.’” TV

[For more information, write or call the Common Ground Network for Life and Choice at 1601 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 200, Wash., D.C. 20009; 202-265-4300.]

Disrupting the hegemony in God and in us

by Walter Brueggemann

Pluralism is not simply a matter of competing or multiple truths, but is always ... a matter of conflicting centers of power, so that all our *truth-claims* are at the same time *power assertions*.

Hegemony and change

I believe pluralism characteristically appears *after* something else, namely a previously established hegemony; pluralism is the crisis which comes when that hegemony has collapsed, been threatened, or called into question.

By "hegemony" I refer to a social relationship in which one set of faith claims or one voice of authority... holds unchallenged sway. The hegemony may hold sway because it is intellectually compelling. More likely, it holds sway because of the political force which establishes it, or the moral force which legitimates it. In any of these cases, hegemony comes to exist ... either because no alternatives are permitted, or because in a more or less "tribal" context, no alternatives have yet appeared. ...

In such an established and unchallenged hegemony, there is, of course, no problem of pluralism. Adherence to the hegemony may in part be glad assent, or in part coerced assent, or in part a habitual indifference that simply does not bother.

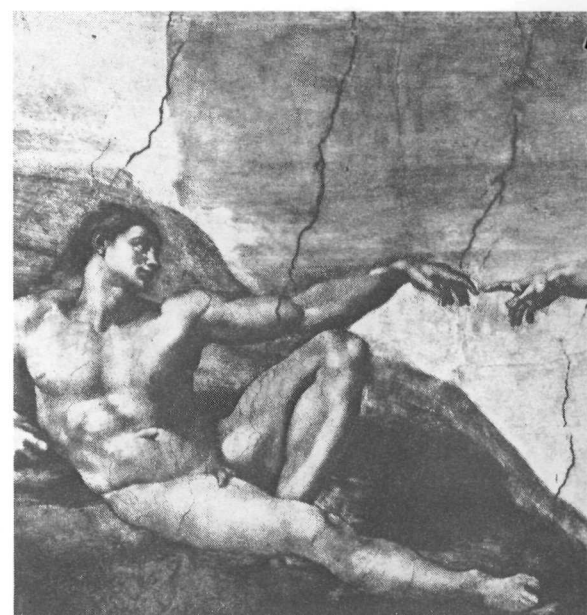
Walter Brueggemann is an Old Testament scholar at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Ga. This article draws from a presentation Brueggemann gave at the Trinity Institute in February, 1994, titled *God's "Othering" and Our "Otherness."*

I suspect that in a stable, well-ordered church, society, or family, hegemony operates mostly unnoticed. And, of course, the agents and beneficiaries of hegemony characteristically much prefer that the hegemony be unnoticed.

The maintenance of such an hegemony characteristically entails repression, that is, the silencing and censoring of any counter-opinion. In Christian practice, that repression might be done through the power of excommunication, or less formally through "shunning." While the power of these is more dramatic and visible in Roman Catholicism, there is among Protestants at every level of the church, including national offices, an effective capacity for shunning and silencing those who hold unacceptable counter-opinions. One simply disappears from the conversation. Thus, so long as the hegemony can keep the lid on counter-opinion by repression, there is no pluralism and no practice or problem of pluralism. Insiders have a confident sense of "coherence" and "consensus."

Pluralism arises when the hegemony is no longer able to repress, silence, deny, or censure counter-opinion. Thus, pluralism as a real political emergent does not come about through the benign proposal of an equally plausible alternative, but pluralism comes about as an act of dissent against dominant opinion, a dissent which

Pluralism cannot be a polite parlor game of respect and distance, but requires a serious regrouping of power and truth under the impetus of the spirit.



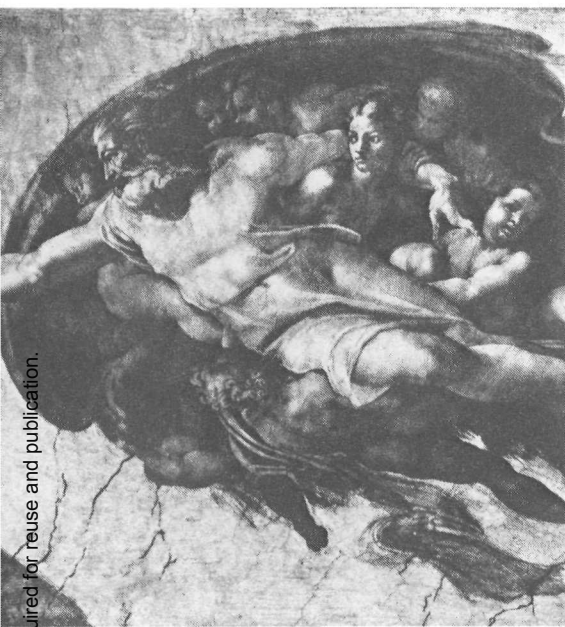
Creation of Adam, Michelangelo, 1511.

may be mild, civil, and respectful, or may be abrasive, threatening, and seemingly violent. Pluralism seen as a counter-voice of power in the community, characteristically, is no problem for the practitioners of dissent. It is, however, a serious problem for the custodians and beneficiaries of the old hegemony. And thus the issue for the hegemonists is how to honor and engage the dissenting alternative, or conversely, how to silence the dissenting

alternative and re-establish the authority of the one voice which conventionally has overridden all others. ...

What passes for conversation is frequently a power struggle, a battle for the microphone,

and the erstwhile holders of hegemonic power usually do not admit (or oftentimes even recognize) that they are defending a power advantage. Characteristically they



imagine themselves only to be defending truth.

The complexity of God

[Brueggemann suggests that our understanding of power and of challenges to reigning power is rooted in our beliefs about God. By stressing that God is one God, omniscient and omnipotent, we oversimplify the complexity of God, of ourselves and of the social order.]

Our Christian theologies about God, though rooted in the biblical text, tend to be reductions concerning God in the interest of some kind of domesticity. That is, our several monotheisms tend to have a monist view of God which allows for no ambiguity or incongruity in the character of God. ...

But things are not so easy for God.

In Numbers 14:20, God will pardon and forgive as Moses urges; but in the next breath (vv. 21-23), God resolves to kill the entire generation, except for Caleb. In I Samuel 15:29, God will not recant or have a change of mind, but in the same

chapter with the same verbs, God does have a change of mind. God dismissively consigns wayward Israel to Egyptian punishment in Hosea 11:5-7 but immediately, in one of God's most poignant texts (vv.8-9), God has an interior rumble that turns to compassion. In Jer. 30:12, God asserts of Jerusalem:

*Your hurt is incurable,
your wound is grievous ...*

At the end of the same poem, however, God declares to the same folk,

*For I will restore health to you, and
your wounds I will heal, says the Lord
(v.17).*

The biblical God is, in God's own character, a model for pluralism in terms of hegemony, repression, and dissent. The hegemony of God's life is in mercy and justice. That is who God resolves to be and mostly is. But the repressed stuff breaks out, and we are given scenes in which God repents, and I dare say, reincorporates the repressed, dissenting material into the now deeply changed ego-identity of God. God's own life, in the Bible, is a pluralistic transaction, in which God's own identity is always under transformation by incorporation of God's "otherness," as the "id-ish" truth speaks to ego-power and insists upon being heard and taken seriously. It is as though God, in seasons of regression, says shrilly, "That is too who I am!" I dare imagine

that the church's trouble with pluralism and our inability to host ways other than our own established way, derives at least in part from our flatly monotheistic, monolithic,

monarchic notion of God, rather than accepting that God's own life is a continuing practice of the fine art of hosting incongruity.

The "otherness" of self

My second [observation] concerns human personhood. We are, we confess, made in the image of God. Because our notion of God is characteristically one-dimensionally monotheistic, monolithic, and monarchic, i.e., reduced and domesticated, we imagine that "image of God" is most faithful, full, and effective when we become unified personalities capable of "willing one thing." ...

The problem with such a sense of "self," of course, is that it takes enormous energy to keep the thing together. It takes equally repressive energy to deny those parts of self which do not conform and cohere with the dominant self. Pushed to its extreme, as we all know, such a well-ordered self is required to live with considerable discipline and intentionality, often with considerable denial, until something explodes that is destructive of others, or more likely, until something internal explodes that is destructive of self. Or *apropos* our subject, a self that cannot entertain the "otherness" of self is likely to be a failed self. Such a one-dimensional self, I suggest, is theologically derived from a misconstrual of God, for the God of the Bible is indeed an endlessly negotiated plurality, not without dominant characteristics, but for whom disparate dimensions are always being

reexpressed and re-incorporated in transformative ways.

Likewise a healthy, faithful self is one who has rich interiority, i.e., the self is a drama of many voices that interact and that are

*I dare imagine that the
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endlessly under negotiation to see to what extent this or that voice will prevail. In that drama, there are for each of us characteristically dominant voices who have

been in power over other selves for so long that they do not wait to hear other voices or honor other selves, but tend to disregard, censure, and silence such alternatives. There are, nonetheless, diminished, marginal selves in our bodies, often voices of hurt and hope, who do cry out and who sometimes grow shrill and demanding. And when the dominant self must finally, reluctantly heed such lesser selves, the dominant self may continue to prevail, but having heeded, must change profoundly. And if refusing to heed and change profoundly, the regnant self may be fated to dethronement and demise.

Resisting conversation

It is our long, slow *nurture in monolith*—our unreflective monotheism, our confident ego-strength as maturity, our Constantinian certitude, our white, male sense of domination now frequently imitated by non-males and non-whites, our military metaphors that people our imagination—all of that together is enough to preclude conversation which is an act of negotiation between center and border. And when conversation is transposed into non-negotiable struggle and confrontation, the center is unable to yield, the border is destined to gracelessness, and winning becomes more important than newness.

The work of conversation is not to dislodge the hegemony. It is rather to incorporate into the vision and purpose of the hegemony the truth to which the hegemony itself does not have immediate access, but which is offered by these voices of inconvenience.

One may, of course, wonder if that means giving up some normative claims. But it is not known beforehand what happens when one undertakes such a conversation, for it is the very act of conversation itself which is the mark of fidelity to the neighbor and to the God of the neighbor. Such a practice of hegemony in pluralism means that the hegemonic agent

is prepared to credit the dissenting self or voice as having an important claim to which attention must be paid, and conversely, acknowledging that one's hegemonic claim is not yet fixed.

God and hegemony

In ancient Israel, in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, prophetic faith insisted that there are times

*Who can listen seriously?
Well, not those who are
mushy and find one notion as
good as another. And not
those who are so insecure of
their place in the conversa-
tion that they have no critical
reference by which to “test
the spirits.” I suggest that
serious, transformative lis-
tening can be done only by
those familiar enough and
confident enough about faith
that it can be risked in disclo-
sure and vulnerability.*

when God *scatters* and when God *gathers*.

The *scattering* is a time of exile when risks are run, truth is reconfigured, and power is redeployed. The *gathering* is a time of homecoming and consolidation. Both the *scattering* and the *gathering* are of God's hand. But of course God cannot do both at once. There is a dialectical relation between the two.

It is my judgment that ours is a time of scattering when old configurations of truth and power are ending, when old certitudes are necessarily impinged upon,

when old forms of domination are necessarily threatened. Or as Mary sings:

He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly (Luke 1:51-52).

Specifically, I believe that the loss of the old Western white, male, colonial hegemony which long thought it embodied God's “preferential option” is indeed our time of *scattering*. And that assault hits at the certitude and domination of the Christian establishment, and derivatively it hits at the established power of the church, even if that white, male agency of certitude and domination is partly peopled by non-whites and non-males who now control budgets and printing presses.

With that scattering comes a deep loss of certitude in old faith affirmations, old ideological orthodoxies, and old preferred moralities. With it comes, moreover, a scattering of old politics and old denominational patterns of church authority and influence.

I believe that this deep and broad *scattering*, (a) is of God, (b) touches all aspects of life, public and personal, and (c) touches every dimension of reality for both liberals and conservatives. The great fact of pluralism, I believe, is that the wind of God is blowing where it wills, and as is usual, that wind is deeply disturbing to us who have been accustomed to wind-resistance.

I believe that the great theological reality is that God is ending our several hegemonies, and requiring us to attend to the repressed voices of dissent which now enact a shrill transformation of how we know, how we believe, and how we live. That is, Pluralism is not everywhere, always the same. I want to insist that this is our time in God's hand, and I do not say that with any jubilation, for I understand myself as a tenured member of the hegemony.

Pluralism and power

I am led to conclude, if my sense about the "scattering" is correct, that pluralism cannot be a polite parlor game of respect and distance, but requires a serious regrouping of power and truth under the impetus of the spirit.

But who can listen seriously? Well, not those who are mushy and find one notion as good as another. And not those who are so insecure of their place in the conversation that they have no critical reference by which to "test the spirits." I suggest that serious, transformative listening can be done only by those familiar enough and confident enough about faith that it can be risked in disclosure and vulnerability. And that requires greater clarity and greater discipline in faith than I sense to be usual among us.

The church, to be faithful in pluralism, must understand not only its intellectual inheritance, but must understand, appropriate and appreciate the long history of ideas, practices, and assertions by which things have been sorted out. That is, pluralism requires us to go back to basics.

My own sense about our "hegemony in pluralism" is that the most urgent conversation is not with other religions, but with the powerful claims of consumer ideology. In our slovenly pursuit of "management" and "therapy," we have made easy peace with consumerism, whereby conservatives readily confuse faith and free-market ideology, and liberals worry most about the size of the office and retirement packages. I submit that serious engagement and obedience in pluralism begins in repentance, in order that in our conversation the voices of dissent may regard the claims in the center at least as credible.

In such an exchange, God will work transformation. Such a trustful and risk-taking conversation is a way to the news that the Creator has promised to all the creatures, even the ones baptized. **TW**

Transforming Sarajevo

Jim Douglass, longtime anti-nuclear activist, is fasting in Rome in an appeal that Pope John Paul II and other religious leaders will intervene in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Starting February 12 through the 28 days of Ramadan, Douglass took nothing by day and juice by night. For the following three weeks he plans to drink only water. Excerpts of his appeal follow:

On Saturday, February 5th, the day the market was bombed, my friend Jagger and I were caught in downtown Sarajevo behind a fence between two open areas that were being hit by sniper fire. I shall always remember a small, hunched-over woman in her kerchief and winter coat, perhaps 80 years old, trying with all her might to run faster than the sniper's bullet could find her. She made it, as did the others around us.

Jagger and I made it safely to the President's Building. There I learned of the market massacre.

The reason why I went to Sarajevo to meet with religious and government leaders, and why I am now fasting in Rome, is that I want to support Sarajevo but without contributing to World War III. The decision to use NATO planes to bomb Serb artillery positions if they are not removed reminds me of the chain of events represented by the Princeps Bridge which I walked across many times in Sarajevo, the site of the beginning of World War I. Government leaders believe the forces of Radovan Karadzic and Slobodan Milosevic do not have nuclear weapons. That is probably true, but it will not be very long. If the lesson to be learned is once again that the possessor of the more powerful bomb wins, then the lesson to the loser will be that he needs a nuclear bomb.

From the massacre at Sarajevo's market and the 22 months of horror which preceded it, we need to learn a new lesson — that there is in truth a power of nonviolence which can stop those massacres. It is a divine power represented in the old city of Sarajevo by the four great religious traditions whose places of worship stand only a few meters

from one another: Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic and Jewish. I believe the transforming nonviolent power of each of these ways into God is relatively unexplored. I am fasting and praying that the leaders of those traditions as well as other religious leaders will go on pilgrimage to Sarajevo as a transforming alternative to the global war we are all risking.

Plowshares trial

The trial of Philip Berrigan, John Dear, Lynn Fredriksson and Bruce Friedrich ended in an uproar February 15th. The defendants admitted hammering and pouring blood on an F-15E fighter jet December 7, 1993. Despite the objections of U.S. District Court Judge Terrence W. Boyle, the defendants read a statement condemning "the high crimes" of the U.S. government and military, then turned their backs on the judge as did the 20 supporters in the court room. The judge declared a mistrial and said he would recommend that the four be tried separately.

National Catholic Reporter, 2/93

Artists and technocrats

If William Ruckelshaus [the first administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency] had it to do over again, he would fill the EPA with not only technicians, but also with poets, artists and priests. These explorers of the heart and soul are needed to articulate and distill the ethical and spiritual values that shape society's relationship with the environment.

Earth Letter, 1/94

short takes

Frustrated dialogue

by Blaise Tobia and Virginia Maksymowicz

We are facing each other, producing a continuous vocal sound.

We slowly build up the tension, our faces coming closer together until we are screaming into each other's open mouths.

(from the performance work "AAA-AAA," 15 minutes, 1978)

How often have we become enmeshed in a situation of frustrated dialogue such as this: making sounds at each other, rather than communicating ... talking at once without pausing for a response ... cranking up the volume until, like artists Marina Abramovic and Ulay, we find ourselves literally "screaming into each other's open mouths?"

Artists Ulay (who goes by one name) and Marina Abramovic met in Amsterdam in 1975. Marina, born in Yugoslavia, had studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Belgrade; Ulay, German by birth, had been involved with experimental photography. They began making artworks together in an artistic collaboration that was to last for more than a de-

cade, choosing jointly to pursue the new genre of "performance art" rather than either of their more traditional specialties. (Performance art is a hybrid of visual art and theater that grew out of the "happenings" of the 1960s when many artists had grown dissatisfied with the limitations of painting, sculpture and photography. It allowed for an expanded form of representation, could incorporate sound and movement, and could directly involve the responses of an audience. Many of the modes pioneered by performance

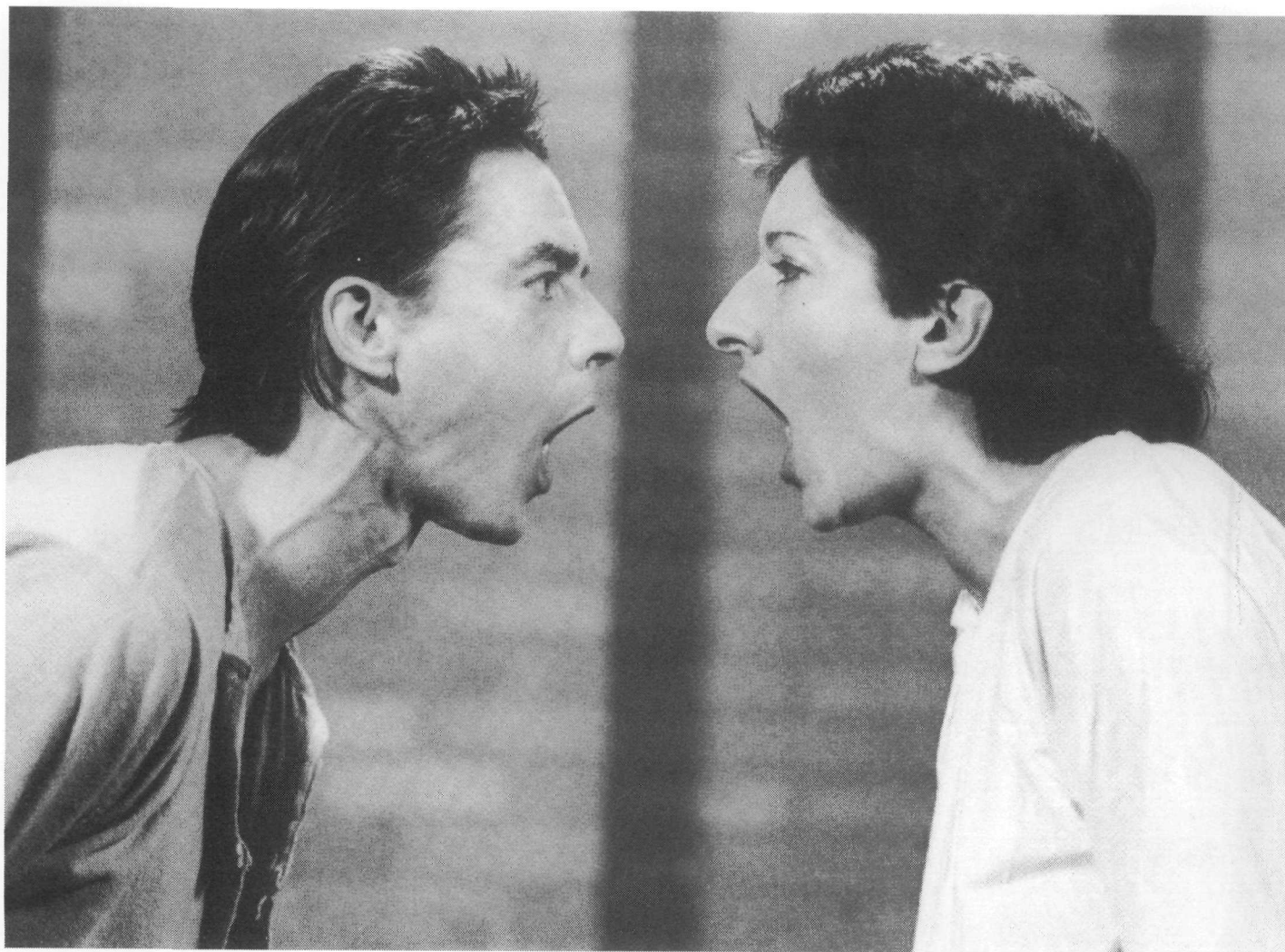
artists have become part of the "symbolic" protest actions of groups such as Greenpeace.)

Most of the pair's performances took a highly emblematic approach to their own relationship, and by extension, to the relationship between women and men, between individuals. They once sat back-to-back for 17 hours in a gallery, with their hair tied together. Another time, kneeling face-to-face in the dark, illuminated by two spotlights, they alternately slapped each other's faces for twenty minutes. A year earlier they had spent nearly an hour running past

They extended their exploration of interpersonal dynamics to include the participation of the audience as well. In a 1977 performance titled "Imponderabilia," Marina and Ulay spent 90 minutes standing naked at the main entrance of a museum in Bologna, Italy. Facing each other in the narrow doorway, those who wished to enter the building had to pass sideways through the small space between the artists, and, consequently, had to choose which one to turn towards while squeezing by.

art and society

Blaise Tobia and Virginia Maksymowicz, Philadelphia artists, edit the Art & Society Section of *The Witness*.



AAA-AAA, 1978, Marina Abramovic and Ulay Photo courtesy of Ulay/Marina Abramovic from the book *Relation Work and Detour* © 1980. Loaned by Burnett Miller Gallery, L. A., Calif.

each other at close proximity, touching, until at high speed they finally collided.

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squeezing by.

Art like Marina Abramovic's and Ulay's makes people uneasy. Part of the queasiness comes from the nature of performance art. Occurring in real time and real space, without rehearsal and without a predicted end, there is an undeniable sense of uncertainty and suspense. (The actions of the audience are unpredictable as well; during one performance, a member of the audience ran up and attacked Marina.) While conventional genres like painting and sculpture interpret visual experience, performance art interprets

lived experience and distills it into a concentrated and heightened form.

An even more unsettling aspect of their work comes from the sensitive and intimate nature of the questions these artists have asked us: How do we relate to and interact with each other? What kind of dialogues do we set up among ourselves? How can we live in community? These are questions that continue to plague us all—whether we see ourselves as Christians in particular communities, or whether we see ourselves as citizens of the world.

TW

Indianapolis '94

Church decision-making: an interview with Pamela Chinnis

In 1991 Pamela Chinnis became the first woman to be elected president of the House of Deputies, one of the two legislative bodies (the other is the House of Bishops) that address the vital matters before the Episcopal Church during the church's triennial General Convention. The House of Deputies consists of lay and clergy representatives or "deputies" from each of the church's dioceses. Resolutions brought forward for General Convention action must pass in both houses in the same form before becoming official actions of the church.

Julie Wortman: What's the job of president of the House of Deputies?

Pamela Chinnis: The main thing people think about is that the president presides over the House of Deputies at General Convention, but as a matter of fact that's a very small part of it — a very stressful part, but that's only a couple of weeks out of every three years. One of the important things that I do in conjunction with the presiding bishop is to make the appointments to the interim bodies of the church [that address church music, ecumenical relations, peace with justice and other matters important to the church between General Conventions]. He appoints the bishops and I appoint the clergy and lay members of those 23 interim bodies. I also appoint the members of the legislative committees which will function during the General Convention. There are 26 committees, so that's quite a few people.

I've also tried to attend at least one



Pamela Chinnis

Episcopal News Service

meeting of each interim body during the triennium. And there's an awful lot of correspondence.

J.W.: General Convention is primarily a legislative entity. What do you think of reform-minded talk that urges a less legislative approach to church governance?

P.C.: Bishop Sam Hulse, who is chair of the committee [that has been planning the bishops' meetings], has been in conversation with me and with my advisory council and others to look at ways whereby the deputies and the bishops might move into a new model of working together by reducing legislative sessions and providing time for discussion of issues. And the Joint Standing Committee on Planning and Arrangements has decided to extend the bible-sharing and eucharists on two mornings during the 1994 General Convention to allow discussion of the bishops' pastorals on racism and sexuality. Still, I know that the deputies are concerned that if we give a whole morning over to discussing issues, it cuts down on the legislative time and that we're already stressed for enough time. You're also talking about maybe 150 bishops who get together twice a year *vis à vis* 850 deputies who've never met together before — this will be the first

General Convention for about a third of them. So what does that do to the dynamics of the whole thing? Now that the House of Bishops is meeting more often, it gives them a sense of building community and knowing one another, but we don't have that advantage in the House of Deputies. Meeting once every three years, it's hard for us to come together and hit the ground running.

J.W.: More conversation seems important, but doesn't a legislative model favor a broader democratic participation in the governance of the church?

P.C.: I think it does because it's a bicameral system and all resolutions have to be concurred in by both houses. At table groups you might easily find shy lay people being dominated by clergy or bishops, but when it comes to voting everyone has the same vote except if it's a vote by orders. [In a vote by orders, lay and ordained deputies within a diocesan deputation vote separately. However, a "yes" vote requires a majority voting "yes" in each order. Split votes within an order are recorded as a "no" vote. The end result is that with a vote by orders it takes more "yes" votes to pass a measure than with the regular voting procedure.]

And I have not perceived in the House of Deputies that we have often been so dysfunctional [as the bishops who had to call several closed-door executive sessions during the 1991 Phoenix convention in order to settle personal disputes]. Only once can I remember that we've had an executive session and that was in Louisville in 1973 when Jack Allin was elected presiding bishop and the House of Deputies went into executive session to decide if they were going to concur. I'm not saying the House of Deputies is perfect or all sweetness and light, but it seems to me that they have an ability to disagree on issues. They don't attack one another personally — of course that's very much out of order in a legislative process.

I respect the democratic process but oftentimes we don't give it a chance to work, we just start criticizing it. We don't realize that parliamentary procedure really

Vital Signs

protects the rights of the minorities as well as effects the will of the majority.

J.W.: The Executive Council [which governs the church between General Conventions] is asking the 1994 General Convention to mandate a task force to look into making the General Convention a unicameral body. Would you favor a unicameral structure?

P.C.: I'd be willing to try it. I know it has worked well for the Church of England. They vote separately but they do meet together. One of the pros of the suggestion that we meet around tables, bishops and deputies together, is that so many deputies have said, "We never have any opportunity to interact with the bishops. They don't listen to us." So there are many people, bishops as well as deputies, who feel that more interaction between laity, clergy and bishops would be very helpful. However, I wonder if the bishops wouldn't dominate, both in the presiding and in the debates.

J.W.: The Executive Council has also asked that the Standing Commission on Structure review the need for the present interim bodies with an eye to either reducing their numbers or size. What's your reaction to that?

P.C.: I think it's a good idea. We always need more efficient ways of working — reviewing the need for interim bodies is supposed to be the ongoing function of the structure commission. We might find there are some commissions we no longer need or new ones we do need. However, I think it would be a big mistake to do away with interim bodies altogether. They're part of the policy-making arm of the church, making recommendations to the General Convention on positions the church should take, ministry priorities, worship and other matters. I wouldn't like to leave such matters to the employed staff at the church's national headquarters. Also, the members of the interim bodies [which include bishops, lay people and other clergy] don't have to be deputies to the General Convention, so it is possible to appoint members who have special expertise or valuable perspectives to offer but who might not otherwise be involved in the church's governance.

J.W.: Some have said the church's current manner of doing business favors a "left" agenda. Do you have a perspective on that?

P.C.: I've heard it said that the people who are elected deputies tend to be much more liberal than the person sitting in the pew, but somebody has to elect them. Maybe the longer one works in the church the more liberal one gets. Nobody could have been more conservative than I was when I first became involved.

J.W.: I don't think there were any vestiges of that former conservatism in your speech to Integrity [the national organization of gay and lesbian Episcopalians and their friends] last year in which you said you were interested in hearing of qualified gay and lesbian deputies whom you might appoint to General Convention legislative committees. You took a lot of criticism for saying that.

P.C.: I said a lot in that speech, including that the presiding bishop and I had made the appointments to interim bodies based on ability and we did not have a litmus test for how we appointed people. Some of those people were gay men and lesbians and they've done a terrific job — I don't think anyone could deny that, even people who might not have wanted them appointed. I said I had been impressed by the work they had done and that when I made my appointments to legislative committees of General Convention that I

I respect the democratic process but oftentimes we don't give it a chance to work, we just start criticizing it. We don't realize that parliamentary procedure really protects the rights of the minorities as well as effects the will of the majority.

would consider appointing qualified gays and lesbians to those committees as well. What was picked up was that I was going to "stack" the legislative committees of General Convention with gay and lesbian deputies. Well, there are approximately 550 deputies who are appointed to legislative committees and, so far as I know, only about six or at the most 12 deputies have identified themselves as gay men or lesbians. So it's a little hard for me to see how I'm going to stack the legislative committees with those few people, assuming I appointed every one. I said exactly the same thing to the National Network of Episcopal Clergy Associations about giving me qualified names of people to appoint, but that didn't make the papers.

The thing that disturbed me was that I have a son who is gay. I could go on for hours about how bright and well trained he is. To think that anybody would consider him not qualified to serve on anything simply because he is gay, when he could run circles around a lot of people, I can't reconcile that in my mind. I think what also surprised and depressed me was the viciousness of the response I got — from bishops, from male priests in this church. For instance, one priest wrote and said, "I'm sorry you have such a dysfunctional family." And then he wrote again and said, "Please read Article 20 of the Book of Common Prayer [which addresses the authority of the church, including the authority of Scripture], that is, if you still believe in the Book of Common Prayer." Now, how can someone read a little article in a news magazine that is inaccurate and then pass judgment on your faith? You think, "Where's Christianity in all of this?"

J.W.: You've put yourself on the line in this case. It brings up the question of personal witness among the church's elected leadership.

P.C.: I think that if someone is in a position where they can speak out and make a difference it's wrong for them not to. On the other hand, I feel very strongly that when I'm in the chair at General Convention it is absolutely imperative that I be impartial and that I not try to influence

legislation in any way. But I don't think that means that for three years I have to keep my mouth shut if I can make a difference about something that I really believe in and think is right.

J.W.: At the last press conference at the 1991 General Convention you said you believed the House of Deputies had been more "prophetic" than the House of Bishops during that convention. It's hard to know how a General Convention can be prophetic.

P.C.: The example that comes to mind when I say prophetic is John Hines going to the General Convention in Seattle in 1967 and saying, "We have a crisis in this country and in this church and it can't be business as usual any longer—something has to change." And it did. Of course, there were a lot of people who thought it was a change for the worse—from then on the General Convention Special Program [to give grants to empower community organizations] was in hot water all the time. Still, I think that's the thing I mean by being prophetic and not just business as usual—how can you change things to make a difference in the church and society?

J.W.: It's easy to understand the need for the church to make decisions about "church" matters like changing the prayer book or ordination requirements. But many people find it harder to see any benefit to the General Convention taking a stand on, say, the death penalty or bringing peace to Bosnia. Do you think there is any benefit to peace and justice resolutions?

P.C.: Some of those resolutions have been very useful. The one on sanctions against South Africa, and certainly those on peace in the Middle East. In concert with those of other denominations and other groups such resolutions or stands have had an impact. I think that too often we pass resolutions without knowing what we're doing. We think we have to speak on everything without really having background information.

There have been lots of other

resolutions that haven't had any impact at all. On issues like the death penalty, it's important for a Christian body to say where it stands.

Many of the interim bodies seem to be moving away from resolutions and more into "position papers." Instead of asking the General Convention to take a particular position on, for example, human sexuality, they're hoping to come up with something that will further the dialogue. I think that if we could move in that direction we would be light years ahead of where we've been by being forced to say "yes" or "no" on an issue, which only polarizes us.

J.W.: Would you be in favor of limiting the topics considered?

P.C.: It may be a possibility. One of the things the Standing Commission on Structure is looking at is the possibility of taking up only the "A" resolutions first—

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in the church the more
liberal one gets.*

those are the resolutions that come from interim bodies—because they say these bodies have been

meeting for three years [and have had more of a chance to study and deliberate on the General Convention-mandated topics before them. "B," "C," and "D" resolutions come from bishops, diocesan conventions and deputies].

J.W.: How would you change the way the church operates?

P.C.: I would like to see less bickering over "my" agenda or "your" agenda and more concern with the common good. I guess I'd like to see more Christian charity. I'd like to see people really listen to one another and try to engage in dialogue instead of speaking at one another and really not hearing what the other person is saying.

J.W.: You're talking about a change of heart. Is there any practical change you'd make in the way the General Convention operates?

P.C.: Well I think you have to have a change of heart before the other comes. I don't think you can legislate people listening to one another. They have to want to listen.

PB okays air strikes in Bosnia

Last Feb. 18th the Episcopal Church's Presiding Bishop, Edmond L. Browning, issued a statement on air strikes in Bosnia in which he said, in part, "While I believe violence is not the answer to violence, I cannot oppose NATO air strikes against military targets as long as they hold the promise of ending the despicable siege against the civilian population of Sarajevo and provided they are accompanied by a firm resolve, especially from the United States, to bring all diplomatic means necessary to achieve a fair and just negotiated settlement. Hopefully, the withdrawal of Serbian forces from Sarajevo will be permanent and follow-up negotiations fruitful.

"My decision not to oppose such air strikes is predicated on providing humanitarian relief to the people of Sarajevo and an expectation that such strikes be limited to that sole objective, and not as a step to widening the conflict.

"Until this awful war is ended and there is peace once again in the Balkans, I call on every congregation to pray at every public service for the suffering people of Bosnia. Let us not forget."

Phil Jacobs, chair of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, said he regretted the presiding bishop's stand, "both tactically and theologically.

"Notions of limited, target-specific bombing and conflict-containing belligerency are hubristic," Jacobs added. "Aerial bombing is not surgery and military escalation will lead only to greater bitterness and escalation, now or in the future.

"I agree that violence is not the answer to violence. Rather than perpetuating the myth of redemptive violence and the fallacy of bombing our way to peace, we need to seek non-violent solutions. In addition to further negotiation, I would hope the church would support a peace presence in Bosnia, not more warfare."

Can we talk?

by Julie A. Wortman

Frustrated and exhausted by seemingly endless and often rancorous debate over the acceptable parameters of Christian sexual behavior, the 1991 General Convention meeting in Phoenix, Ariz., finally embraced the impasse, declaring a "discontinuity" between the church's official teaching that physical sexual expression is appropriate only within the lifelong monogamous "union of husband and wife in heart, body and mind" and the experience of its members. The Convention also required that deputies and bishops, along with provincial representatives, design a process of congregational dialogue "to deepen understanding" of the issues and report to the 1994 General Convention on the results.

No one expected miracles, but an estimated 30,000 Episcopalians in 86 dioceses were involved in the discussions, including 212 people who were trained to facilitate the five-session process. The organizers offered dioceses the option of using a curriculum prepared by the Lutherans, one offered by the Episcopal Church's Province VII or developing their own. Judging by the sometimes euphoric tone of reports issued afterwards, the exercise demonstrated that chances to speak honestly and openly in respectful company have been in short supply throughout the church.

"Parishes had few dropouts, which is an outstanding affirmation to the process and the curriculum," Ellen Wondra, chair of Rochester's diocesan task force on human sexuality, reported in her diocesan newspaper last fall. "The overall feeling is that this was a wonderful beginning that should not end. People want more dialogue on other subjects and participants want the diocese to suggest ways to keep the spirit [of the dialogues] alive."

Similarly, Judith Carlson, director of education in New Jersey, observed, "Skeptical at first, most [participants] came to feel strongly that the climate of

respectful, non-judgmental listening created a safe place to explore issues, many of which had never been talked about in the church before."

The skepticism Carlson noted seems to have been widespread. "There were strong feelings among participants that the national church was trying to influence the dialogues to a more liberal point of view through the study materials it supplied — the language, the way issues were stated, scriptural texts included as well as not included," commented Ken and Layne Racht, co-chairs of the dialogue committee in Southeast Florida. Likewise, a West Texas report quoted a local participant's observation: "When we started, some of those participating felt the course was 'propaganda' from the national church designed to pave the way for a more 'liberal' attitude toward certain sexual

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practices." However, this man admitted, this turned out not to be the case. "The study materials reinforced the traditional scriptural-based stand of the Anglican communion on sex outside of the bonds of marriage," he said, noting that participants did change their attitudes that sexual issues are clear-cut. "We discovered the other point of view," he concluded.

In a post-dialogue questionnaire prepared by the national church committee assigned to study Episcopalians' attitudes towards human sexuality, however, participants revealed that the differences between them had as much to do with authority as with questions about when and with whom sexual relations are okay. The 18,000 who filled out the

questionnaire were asked, among other things, whether they agreed or disagreed with this statement: "It is more important for the church to offer guidance on what to think about human sexual issues than on how to think about them." The final tally has not yet been released, but in at least two dioceses more than 50 percent of the participants agreed with the statement.

Nevertheless, there are already signs that the dialogue process is being appropriated as a tool for building consensus. At last February's diocesan convention in Colorado, for example, a resolution asking for the blessing of same-sex relationships proposed by a Denver parish was withdrawn in favor of a commitment to substantive congregational discussions using a process developed by Timothy Sedgwick, professor of Christian ethics and moral theology at Chicago's Seabury-Western Theological Seminary. Congregations are mandated to hold the discussions prior to June 18, 1994, the date of a special diocesan meeting on the topic involving clergy and vestry leaders.

Shelley Brown, a member of the diocese's commission on human sexuality, was positive about the Colorado decision. "We'll be discussing first instead of voting on an issue first and simply hoping dialogue follows," she said.

National church leaders are also hopeful that debate and confrontation of the sort which prevailed in Phoenix in 1991 are at an end.

"People are beginning to realize that the goal is no longer to win," said Gene Robinson, a member of the national study committee.

According to O'Kelley Whitaker, retired bishop of Central New York and chair of the committee, the people trained to facilitate the sexuality dialogues could be used more widely, such as in small group study of the pastoral teaching on sexuality now being completed in the House of Bishops. "We hope the bishops recognize what a valuable resource we have at our disposal," Whitaker said.

— based on *Episcopal News Service*
and diocesan news reports

Anglican Church of Canada

Carolyn Purden is editor and general manager of the Anglican Journal, the national newspaper of the Anglican Church of Canada.

Over the past 20 years, there has been a lot more concerted effort to keep people informed and get people involved in dialogue on the local level. This has happened particularly around the issue of homosexuality. Everyone knows the church cannot go blasting right ahead with legislation for the whole church without knowing how people are thinking.

I couldn't commend the unicameral synod highly enough.

When I first started in this job the bishops sat and met separately. Now they only meet separately when electing a primate — about once every ten years.

You now have the bishops sitting at the table with the delegates through the whole synod. What you get in the debate on the floor is a more unified approach to a question. Lay people feel closer to the bishops, and they feel they are on a more equal footing.

Quakers

Edward Sargent is a staff member of Friends Journal and a member of the Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting.

A lot of people would say the Quaker decision-making process is consensus. That's an oversimplification, but it's close to consensus.

For meetings affiliated with Friends General Conference — most Quakers in the East — there is no hierarchy, no legislation, no show of hands, no voting.

Everyone can come to a business meeting. The clerk, who is chosen by the members of the meeting, presides and reads the sense of the meeting. If the clerk feels there is not unity, the issue is held over, and maybe discussed again in three months time.

I'm sure if you got a hundred Quakers

together, some would say, I wish there was a way to resolve things more quickly so they don't drag on.

In the late 1700s and early 1800s, one meeting agonized for 40 years over whether or not Quakers could hold slaves.

Our meeting struggled for six years over a request by one of our members who wanted to marry his lover — another man — in the care of the meeting (with the meeting's blessings and good wishes). For years, if we had raised hands, there would have been a majority for whom there wouldn't have been any problem at all, but there were maybe a half-dozen people who felt a "leading" that this was not the right thing to do. They weren't standing in the way, but all the members understood there was not a unity. It took about six years before the monthly business meeting finally decided that this was all right.

In this process, everybody's voice counts for something. Decisions are as much a part of those who were against them as those who favored them.

[Some have suggested that] the Quaker process is likely not only to lead to a better decision spiritually, but that it leads to a decision less likely to be sabotaged by people who don't want it. Major policy decisions, like what do we do about Bosnia, or about same-sex marriages, are discussed at the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, which is made up of about 50 meetings within 100 miles or so of Philadelphia.

There are a number of yearly meetings around the country. This provides an opportunity for discussion based on other meetings' experience. There is no enforcement there, but decisions of other monthly meetings would suggest precedent.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Edgar Trexler is editor of The Lutheran, published by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

We have a biennial churchwide Assembly every two years, which is the

chief legislative body of the denomination. In between there is a 37-member Church Council which meets twice a year.

In general, the topics that come up at Assembly will already have been discussed at Synod Assemblies.

With things like social statements that tend to be more controversial, it's routine for us to have task force or committee reports available [well in advance of the Assembly]. There would be Listening to the People conferences or some other kind of forums set up around the country. The responses that come back in might well effect a revision. It would also be revised by the Conference of Bishops and the Church Council before the floor debate.

There is a rather wide opportunity for discussion and consensus-building before anything is voted up or down.

People will still say, "That's not the way I would have done it," or "They don't speak for me," but the intention is clearly to have as much feedback as possible in order to inform the final document.

For instance, we have now a new study on human sexuality. I belong to a congregation that has put together an adult forum. We will have four meetings, and then mail in a response that becomes part of the feeding-in process.

I can remember when there was not nearly so much emphasis on forums around the country or feedback. In those days the best minds of the church could assemble and decide things and people tended to go along. That's not true any more.

I don't find that there's much dissent about the structural way we do our decision-making. The larger issue is that people today tend to think they have the answers or know better locally. The allegiance they give to some large and in-their-mind distant body deciding things is not as strong.

We could not do things the way we used to. This more open dialogic process is the only way things can be done today. It's harder, longer, more expensive and cumbersome, but I also think it's right.

Digging graves with dialogue: the views of Marc Ellis

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

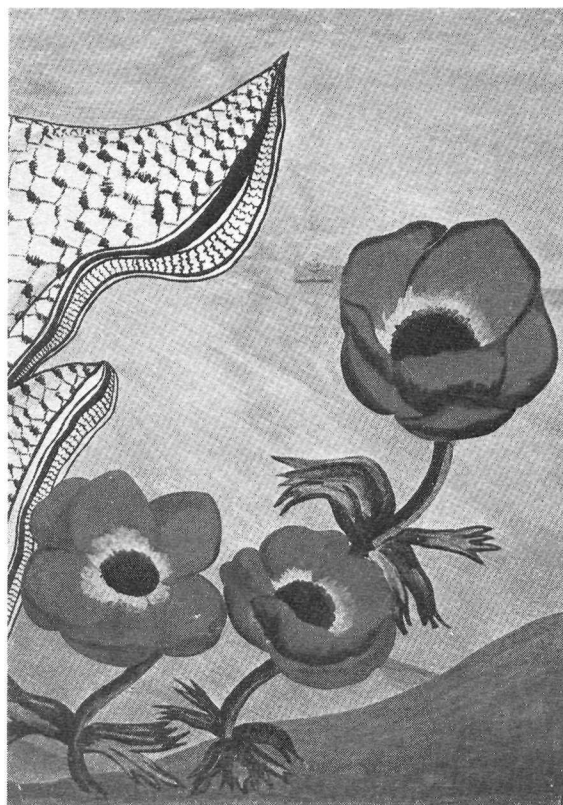
Marc Ellis, an author and professor at Maryknoll College in New York, addressed the limits of dialogue during a speech several years ago. While the situation in the Middle East has changed, Ellis' controversial remarks serve to challenge our ideas about the virtue of dialogue and offer some cautions for ecumenical work. On a hopeful note, Ellis noted that the American Jewish community is now more open to discussions challenging blind Zionism. More recently, since the Hebron massacre, thousands of Israelis have demonstrated for the elimination of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The current ecumenical dialogue between Jews and Christians "takes on a criminal aspect" when one considers Israel's oppression of Palestinians, Marc Ellis told members of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship in Royal Oak, Mich., in 1990.

"The ecumenical dialogue as we

know it today means the end of traditional Palestinian life," Ellis said.

Ellis spoke of his Jewish roots and the ethical tradition of his faith, but said that events in Israel — particularly since the 1967 War — are destroying Judaism even



as they destroy Palestinian lives and homes.

Yet "Christians won't speak out, because they entered the dialogue in a spirit of repentance" for their complicity in the holocaust.

The innocence of Jews and the complicity of Christians is the foundation of Jewish-Christian dialogue, Ellis said. This

has evolved into an "unhealthy and unholy dependence between Jews and Christians." Participants in the dialogues end up "ingratiating themselves with one another and reassuring each other that they will move beyond the bloody history."

Yet, as Christians avoid confronting their Jewish counterparts with the abuse of Palestinians in Israel and the territories, *both* Jews and Christians become complicit in yet another genocide.

"Christians demonized us and now romanticize us," Ellis said. "We are ordinary people with a special heritage. Israel is many things, but it is a state like other states."

A new foundation for ecumenical dialogue must include admission of Christian guilt, he said. "You *have* been persecuting us for 2,000 years — 'fess up to it." But it must also include a clear challenge to Jews for Israel's current actions.

"We must begin moving to a Jewish-Christian dialogue that shows mutual repentance. We are not innocent. We must move into a shared humility and renewed honesty. Our histories are beautiful *and* bloody.

"Set some rules. If an ecumenical group won't agree to work for a Palestinian state, then end the dialogue. The meetings serve as a cover. These discussions add up to a public support or at least a public silence.

"Place the Palestinians at the center of the ecumenical discussion, have Palestinians present, because

they are dying.

"Those who are suffering — those who have lived on the other side of Israeli power — call us to more than guilt and redemption. They call us to a shared land.

"I think that to have a Palestinian state would be a miracle," Ellis said. "I believe in miracles. I believe in working for them. That's a very Jewish understanding." **TW**

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is editor/publisher of *The Witness*. Graphic is from the original murals painted in occupied Palestine in 1989 by the **Break the Silence Mural Project**, a group of Jewish women artists in solidarity with the Palestinian people's quest for freedom and independence. This was a collaborative effort with Palestinian artists combining traditional and contemporary images. Break the Silence Mural Project, 1442A Walnut St., No. 252, Berkeley, Calif.

Loving Our Enemies

by Virginia Ramey Mollenkott

Jesus insisted that it was no virtue to love those who love us — those of our own interpretive community — because anybody can do that much. Instead, Jesus said, we should pattern ourselves after the Most Holy One, who is “kind to the ungrateful and the wicked” (Luke 6:35).

According to Jesus, we are expected to be “merciful, just as our [Mother and] Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36). To anyone who has ever spoken to large groups of people of an opposing interpretive community, as I have, this can sound loony and even self-destructive, too idealistic to be of any earthly use. My phrase for speaking in “enemy territory” is “going into the lion’s den.” I don’t do it very often, because at best it is an exhausting experience, at worst a battering one. Even a one-on-one conversation can sometimes be exhausting and battering! Yet I assume that Jesus was not only sane, but a wise and loving teacher who would not tell us to do what is impossible or harmful for us. So it is worthwhile to explore the meaning of this command.

Neil Douglas-Klotz, whose study of the Aramaic words of Jesus has been so helpful to me, gives us a translation of “Love your enemies” that tries to capture the many nuances of the Aramaic statement:

*From a hidden place,
unite with your enemies from the inside
fill the inner void that makes them swell
outwardly and fall
out of rhythm: instead of progressing, step*

*by step,
they stop and start harshly,
out of time with you.
Bring yourself back into rhythm within.
Find the movement that mates with theirs
like two lovers creating life from dust.
Do this work in secret, so they don’t know.
This kind of love creates, it doesn’t emote.*

Douglas-Klotz explains that the Aramaic for *enemy* conveys the image of being out of rhythm, moving with harsh movements that don’t keep the beat, like

*The Aramaic for enemy
conveys the image of being
out of rhythm.*

a really clumsy dancer. What a great description of how people from opposing interpretive communities sometimes seem to us! And the Aramaic language depicts injustice with similar imagery — being out of tune, out of rhythm, and with an inner emptiness and vanity that causes the unjust person to seem to swell up like a boil. Our personal “enemies” are all of these things *only in relationship to us*: “out of step, impeding, vacuous, and puffed up.” The “enemies” of a whole interpretive community, or a nation, or the whole planet, are “out of step, impeding, vacuous, and puffed up” in relation to a much larger sphere. But *relationship* is always the key to understanding what “enemies” are. Because of the subjective evaluations involved in relationships, one person’s enemy is another person’s friend.

In the command to “Love your enemies,” Jesus used an Aramaic word that suggests an impersonal force acting in secret to bring separate beings together to create new life. (The root of the word can refer to planting seed or to having sex.)

But Jesus used a different word for love when he talked about loving our neighbor as ourselves: that word referred to having compassion and mercy on our neighbors.

In the context of interpretive communities, Jesus seems to be saying that to communicate across the gap between such communities, we must align ourselves with an impersonal and mysterious creative force that is beyond anything our “separated” egos can drum up. Therefore he is not telling us to placate our “enemies,” to concede the whole store, or to let them walk all over us. Rather he is talking about finding within ourselves and them a rhythm that can harmonize and thus perhaps move us toward greater harmony, as a very good dancer can help a clumsy partner to dance more smoothly. He is talking about searching within our common humanity to find something that would fill the inner emptiness of the “enemy” and then *addressing only that* within them.

Perhaps it would help us to remember how we feel when we are being lavishly entertained in someone else’s home. Even if we disagree with them, we try to find a polite and gracious way to do so because we are dependent upon them as our hosts. Obviously, if we all behaved this way, our ecological, interpersonal, and intercommunity problems would be solved. Although communication would still be difficult across interpretive gaps, we would all treat our “enemies” as if they were our hosts and would treat the earth, air, and water the same way.

I want to reiterate that we are not asked to love the cruel behavior of our “enemies.” We are *not* asked to pretend agreement with interpretations that we consider cruel, misguided, insupportable, or illogical. But we *are* asked (for our own benefit) to recognize and speak to the Divine Ground of our opponent’s Being, a recognition that will make us happy because it is the same Divine Ground upon which we ourselves stand. **TW**

Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, an English professor at William Paterson College of New Jersey, is author of *Sensuous Spirituality: Out From Fundamentalism* (Crossroad, N.Y., 1992), from which this essay is drawn.

Reconstructing a racist

by Doug LeBlanc

Hodding Carter: The Reconstruction of a Racist, Ann Waldron, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill. 1993, 369 pp.

In his college years, Hodding Carter moved out of his dormitory room because a black student was moving into the building. He spoke the word “nigger” easily.

But later in his life, *The Boston Herald* called Hodding Carter “the Alan Paton of the American South”. Carter, who died in 1972, may well deserve comparison to the author of *Cry, the Beloved Country*.

Carter experienced no epiphany in shedding racism. Waldron traces Carter’s slow reconstruction to three key events: working as a cub reporter for *PM* in New York City; joining the Army during World War II (which convinced him that racial equality is important to democracy, and that racism is a form of fascism); and a trip to India during the 1960s, during which Carter said he lost whatever prejudices he held until then.

As the founding editor of the Greenville (Miss.) *Delta Democrat-Times*, Carter urged his fellow Southerners to behave more as Christians than as racists. Journalism ran in the family: The Carters’ oldest son, Hodding III, took over the newspaper in the 1970s before joining Jimmy Carter’s administration. Another

son, Philip, wrote for *Newsweek*.

Carter defended segregation, but argued — against the tide — for “decent housing, adequate medical care, equal educational opportunities, equal pay for work, and equal justice in the courts.”

Carter probably seems unreconstructed today, but as Waldron writes, “Virtually all southern liberals believed in a gradual approach.” Carter was heroic because he eventually *overcame* racism, not because he was always free of it.

Carter paid a heavy price for taking important stands. Waldron speculates that some of Carter’s Mississippi neighbors literally drove him mad in his final years, after decades of threatening to kill him.

Carter, born a Presbyterian, became an Episcopalian when he married Betty Werlein of New Orleans. (Betty’s father taught her a concise chant of self-identity: “I’m Betty Werlein. American. Episcopalian, Democrat.”)

Episcopalians make cameo appearances in Waldron’s narrative.

Eight faculty members of Sewanee’s School of Theology resigned in 1952 when the school threatened to exclude black ministerial students. Carter agreed with the professors that “Jesus Christ is

more important than Jim Crow.”

Parishioners at St. James Episcopal Church, Greenville, voted Carter off the vestry in 1955 after he said the church should welcome worshippers regardless of race. They reinstated him as senior warden two years later.

Carter ran a front-page story when the University of Mississippi withdrew a speaking invitation to Episcopal priest Alvin Kershaw because he had donated

book review

money to the NAACP.

For such stands as these, Carter attracted the attention of Byron De La Beckwith, who reportedly planned to kill Carter. Just this year, a jury convicted Beckwith of murdering civil-rights worker Medgar Evers.

Carter often stressed that racism knows no geographical boundaries, and one library patron in Colorado Springs proves the point. Beneath a quote from U.S. Rep. Frank Smith of Mississippi in which he says Carter made Greenville a civil town, one bitter person scrawled this inquiry: “Nigger or Kike?”

Hodding Carter, pray for us.

Breaking silence,

continued from page 5

In that vein, Gandhi said that it is better to resist oppression with violence than not at all. Best, he says, is to resist oppression — break the silence — without weapons.

Brueggemann says pluralism is always a struggle for power; it is not a parlor game. It is a tug-of-war over how reality will be defined and how

the public debate will be shaped.

The tension of the power struggle can only be worth withstanding if your heart is woven through the argument that you present.

Standing wide open, holding only to what you believe and the certainty of God “seen and unseen” is to test spirits, to ask what spirituality stands in the heart of your adversary and in your own.

Doug LeBlanc edits *United Voice*, the newspaper of Episcopalians United. In suggesting that he do this review, LeBlanc wrote, “Some *Witness* readers may be surprised to find an Episcopalian writer addressing racism as an evil, which I hope will make the review proposal intriguing.” Like Hodding Carter, LeBlanc was born in Louisiana.

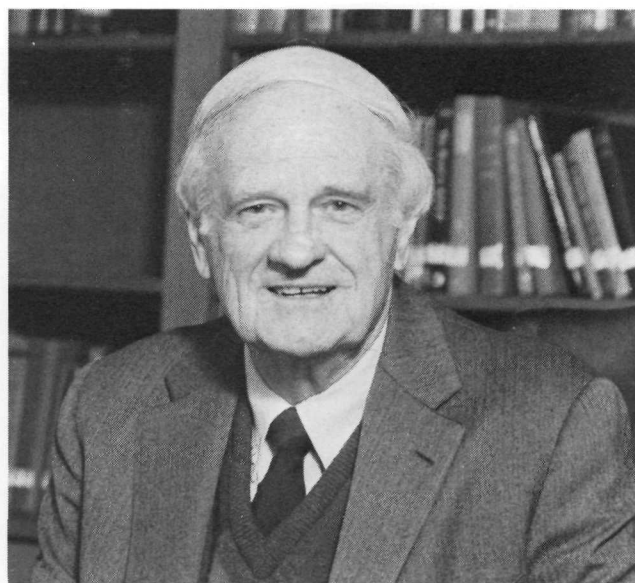
A parishioner once spat in his face, she was so enraged by one of his anti-Vietnam War sermons, but angry disagreement has never prevented H. Coleman McGehee, Jr., from following his conscience and speaking his mind — not during his 11-year tenure as rector of the large parish of Immanuel-on-the-Hill in Alexandria, Va., not as bishop for 20 years in Michigan, not now at age 70 in the midst of an active retirement.

“Unity in the church means that people should be able to speak up, regardless of their point of view,” McGehee says. “[Church leaders especially] should speak their minds — not carelessly, not recklessly, but they should speak their minds.”

While rector of Immanuel from 1960 to 1971, a parish only a few miles down the road from the Pentagon and nearly in sight of the Capitol across the Potomac, McGehee found himself at loggerheads with church members by speaking his mind not only about Vietnam but also about the need for local fair housing legislation. As Bishop of Michigan (he was elected coadjutor in 1971 and became Bishop of Michigan in 1973), he drew bitter criticism for his support of diocesan efforts to combat heterosexism and for his public defense of Pennsylvania’s Robert Dewitt (who subsequently became editor of *The Witness*) and the other bishops who performed the first ordinations of women to the priesthood in 1974 — a stand which also raised the hackles of then presiding bishop John Allin. To the irritation of many within his diocesan fold, McGehee’s liberal commentaries on, as he says, “all the issues of day,” from abortion and the equal rights amendment to Cold War stockpiling and deployment of nuclear weapons, were for many years broadcast on WDET, Detroit’s local public radio station.

Julie A. Wortman is managing editor of *The Witness*.

“Unity in the church means that people should be able to speak up, regardless of their point of view.”



H. Coleman McGehee, Jr.

Outspoken listener

by Julie A. Wortman

Four years into retirement, McGehee continues to be reproached for work with the Triangle Foundation, a Michigan gay-rights advocacy organization, the Poverty and Social Reform Institute headed by former Michigan Department of Social Services director Agnes Mansour and with the Michigan chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union.

But unlike many other outspoken activist church leaders, McGehee also has been committed to spending time — a lot of time — listening to those with whom he strongly disagrees. And listening has had unlikely consequences. Today McGehee counts a former Republican president, a four-star general and an assortment of conservative clergy among his longtime associates and friends, friends who still call on him from time to time for pastoral care. The president, Gerald Ford, has asked that McGehee officiate at his funeral.

“My own feeling is that Christian teach-

ing tells us that people are to be valued,” he says. “No one has all the answers. It’s out of respect that you should listen.”

Under his tenure as rector of Immanuel, the parish voted to formalize this baptismal precept by instituting a half-hour sermon response period before the final benediction at each of the two main Sunday services. After the late service there was also a separate discussion group for the same purpose. This coffee-hour discussion format was something he later continued as part of parish visitations during his tenure as bishop in Michigan.

“People could say what they wanted. It was an opportunity for people to disagree with what we [clergy] were saying,” recalls McGehee of those sermon discussions at Immanuel, noting that between 80 and 90 percent of the congregation would participate. “It was a time — we’re talking about the 1960s now — when things were changing and there was controversy and people were disturbed

— more so then than now because the church had been through the 1950s, during that upbeat period when we were building buildings and increasing congregations and not much more. People just seemed to want to say something about what was going on but didn't have the opportunity to do that."

Two prominent parishioners who opposed his anti-war stance, Gerald Ford and Robert Ellsworth, both serving in Congress at the time, asked McGehee to come into the city to meet with them and other members of Immanuel who worked on Capitol Hill to talk about how their Christian commitments might play out in their work. The group numbered about 35, with 15 to 18 showing up every other week. Besides Ford and Ellsworth, the group regularly included General Lucius Clay, Lewis Odan, the chief of staff for the Senate banking and currency committee and John McFall, majority whip in the House of Representatives. These and others in the group often disagreed with McGehee's social and political views.

McGehee enjoyed those Capitol Hill meetings. "One of the things that was very obvious in that group was that the person with whom I would have some debate knew that I respected him or her and they respected me. I had a pastoral relationship with most of these families. Also, at this time there was a lot of respect for the institution [of the church] and for the leader of the institution. Not only a respect, but a commitment."

McGehee believes both his back-

ground as a lawyer — he served as assistant attorney general of Virginia for five years in Richmond, Va., before pursuing ordination and is still a paid-up member of the Virginia State Bar Association — and a stint in the army won him additional credibility in Immanuel's generally pro-government and pro-military community.

His legal training also had a lot to do with his willingness to discuss and debate a matter to consensus.

"I came out of a legal tradition of people sitting down and talking about things. In the attorney general's office we would sit down together to decide what we were going to do. It would be a consensus-type thing, but we would really argue it out. And then, in seminary, this was a period when pastoral theology was high on the agenda and geared to encouraging people to express themselves."

The catalyst for McGehee's decision to give up his legal career and pursue ordination was a 10-day preaching mission in Richmond by Church-of-England evangelist Bryan Green.

"At that time I was attending church primarily to enhance my reputation as a lawyer in the community," McGehee admits. "Green was very engaging — a sort of Billy Graham on a more intellectual basis. I listened for 10 days and then began reading and attending other lectures. My boss, [Virginia Attorney General] Lindsey Almond, who was an active Lutheran, tried to argue me out of it. He said that law and politics needed more committed Christians. I felt he had a good

point and I struggled with the decision for two years."

His legal mind may expect that every issue will have its opponents and defenders, but that doesn't make McGehee blind to the fact that for some, like the woman who once spat in his face, the rage stirred up by discussions and debates may make it impossible to continue the dialogue.

"I've talked with many gay and lesbian people who have just given up on the church," he reflects, but says he wishes they and others who feel the same would hang in there.

"When people disagree and walk away they lose sight of a larger picture — they lose sight of the greater things we have in common — the faith, the scriptures and the Eucharist."

Not immune to feeling pain and hurt at the personal attacks which have sometimes been the price of his up-front style of engagement — and despite the fact

*Witnesses,
the quick and the dead*

that he can point to few occasions when debating an issue has led him to change his mind — McGehee still contends that taking the time to listen is most valuable for reminding a person of the value of the individual.

"I don't know that I've ever met someone with whom I totally disagree." **TW**

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