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*The Witness*

The Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest  
Austin, Texas

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*Is it ever okay to lie?*



## Silence

"BIRTHING A CIRCLE OF SILENCE" struck a chord deep within my soul. I thank the four women priest residents who provide this wonderful resource for hungry spirits. And I thank Julie Wortman for calling me to stillness.

**Carol Rouillard Wolff**  
Portland, OR

AN EXCELLENT ISSUE OF *THE WITNESS* (the essay by Virginia Mollenkott was especially helpful for me) was spoiled by the deplorable lack of understanding of physics displayed in the discussion of "Mutagenic sound." Chants can be healing, and we have long known that "music hath charms to soothe a savage beast." Unfortunately, magnetic fields and electro-magnetic radiation are as different from sound waves as they are from each other.

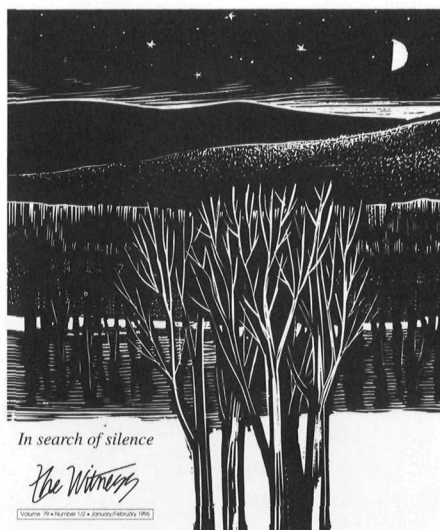
Electromagnetic radiation can do harm to living tissues — sunburn and genetic alterations are but two of many instances. A magnetic field, generated by moving electrical charges and capable of creating electrical currents, is a different phenomenon. The most recent scientific evidence negates the dire examples cited; instead, the hazards of ELF have not been unequivocally established.

My recommendation is for the author to seek assistance from the faculties of either of the fine universities in Detroit, while at the same time advancing the concept that "songs which lift your spirits, are smaller examples of the rhythms that sustain the world."

**John S. McAnally**  
Port Townsend, WA

I LOVED THE ARTICLES ON "circle longing," chanting as prayer, and silence in the Jan./Feb. issue.

**Jo Gillespie**  
Rochester, VT



YOUR JAN./FEB. ISSUE IS GREAT, though I missed an article by a Quaker.

**Charles Demere**  
Washington, D.C.

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR THE Dec. and Jan./Feb. issues of *The Witness*. They are wonderful. I'm especially taken with the Jan./Feb. issue on Silence. I have just finished Joan Chittister's *Wisdom* and the monastic life looks good to me — silence being one of the strong points of the rule. Can we really turn off the news in this election year??

**Onieta Smucker**  
Lacey, WA

I FIND *THE WITNESS* THE MOST consistently challenging reading I've ever encountered. I don't know how you can put together such extraordinarily high quality material in such extraordinarily high quality form month after month.

The issue on Silence inspired me to muse about my own experience. Silence, for me, is a gathering in, a touching of spirits, sometimes a holding of and being held by spirit, a wrestling with demons, a confrontation with demons, a peaceful standing equal with demons, a wrestling with gods, a confrontation with gods, a peaceful standing equal with gods, a work of comfort — both in the popular sense of being enfolded in compassion and in the linguistic sense of being made strong with, a rhythmic flow of images — some of which invite me to pause and taste, a call to

move in, with and from this silence into the noise, filth, struggle, monotony, confusion, sin, sorrow, pain, and mess of the world outside my silence, where the spirit also waits.

**Pat Chaffee**  
Marks, MS

## Holy Matrimony

THE MAGAZINE ARTICLES in the [Holy Matrimony issue] represented a *tour de force* for both thoughtfulness and clarity, in my view. I did want to quibble a bit with one statistic from one article, that statistic often parroted in the popular press; namely, that 50 percent of marriages end in divorce.

Hardly! There are about 2.5 million marriages in the U.S. each year and about 1.2 million divorces. The numbers for both were higher in the Seventies. Those who do not divorce within the first five years of marriage, when divorce rates are highest, are added to the total of 75 million married couples who have never been divorced. Compared to the total then, the divorce rate is 1.5 percent, not 50 percent. With 50 percent odds, no one would cross the street, much less get married. Yet, the myth persists.

It is also true that the age of marriage onset has increased from about 22 years in 1980 to 27 years in 1990. However, the divorce rate has stabilized since 1985 while the marriage rate has increased slightly. Consequently, there are now more married people who will never divorce, if trends continue, than ever before.

Indeed, matrimony is not only holy, but healthy and happy too for the most part. Yet it seems that much more is written about divorce than about marriage in the popular press and that is why Judy Wallerstein's text is so important (she has been married for about 49 years as of this writing), as is the work of John Gottsman. Both tell us what works to achieve stability and happiness in marriage. An exception would be Barbara De Angelis. She tells us how to be happy, but she has been married five times. She has a statistical data base which I have not quite figured out how to classify (maybe "persistence" comes close).

**Jim McMahon**  
President, Marriage Assistance Through  
Educational Seminars  
Ocean Grove, NJ

*Letters*



ENCLOSED IS A CHECK given in honor of the marriage of Erika Meyer. Erika is not only a contributing editor but she is also an alumna of The Church Divinity School of the Pacific where the students continue to *greatly* appreciate having copies of *The Witness* available.

**Fran Toy**  
**Director of Alumni/ae and**  
**Student Affairs, CDSP**  
**Berkeley, CA**

### Righter trial

WHEN BISHOPS IN THE Apostolic Succession seek to deprive a committed homosexual couple of the fullness of love which married bishops enjoy, by seeking to deny the one ordination and to deny both sacramental acceptance as in marriage, and when these bishops seek to depose a bishop who does seek to allow ordination of the one and to allow both the fullness of God's love, those bishops might reflect upon the expansiveness of St. John's affirmations: "God is love: and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (John 4:16). "The Spirit of truth will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13).

**John J. Hancock**  
**St. Bede's Episcopal Church**  
**Los Angeles, CA**

### Fort Worth

I RETURNED TO FORT WORTH, TEXAS a few years ago to retire. As a cradle Episcopalian in the "low church" mode, I have been virtually excluded from the worship I grew up with. Our diocese is so "high" and "near Roman" that I get thoroughly disgusted with what has happened during the 26 years I was away from Fort Worth.

After his retirement it seemed at first that there might be a chance to repair the havoc wrought by Clarence Pope. However, we have seen no improvement at all.

This diocese is the laughing stock of the rest of the Episcopal Church, as anyone living outside of it will tell you. The ranting and ravings of the ESA just bears this out.

These self-appointed "paragons" are a disgrace to the Church and an embarrassment to us all. While they decry homosexuals we understand that there are still some among the priests here who have not been ousted. Their

stance against women priests is outdated and without theological basis.

Something else that should have been said long ago: The ESA and its puppets are not "traditionalists." The 98 percent of the rest of the Episcopal Church, embracing real Episcopalians like us, are the true "traditionalists" and true "Christians," because we are open to embrace with *compassion* all human beings, whatever their gender, sexual orientation, politics etc. The proper name for the ESA is "ultra right-wing radical fundamentalists."

We can only hope that this bishop observes the Spanish proverb, "A wise man will change his mind, a fool never will," and has the guts to either change his mind or quit our church.

**Peter Tringham**  
**Fort Worth, TX**

### Witness praise

BLESSINGS ON ALL OF YOU who work to bring *The Witness* to the rest of us. You nurture and nourish me and give me hope, strength and energy.

**Joan C. Marshall**  
**Asheville, NC**

I LOVE GETTING *THE WITNESS*! The themes are usually interesting and covered from different perspectives, and the journal as a whole is uncompromising (principled).

**Sarah Lawton**  
**San Francisco, CA**

### New subscribers

OBOY! I'M SO GLAD I inadvertently discovered *The Witness*! I'm so glad to discover I'm not the only left-wing slightly anarchistic Episcopalian. What a welcome antidote you are to the encroaching proliferation of conservatism and fundamentalism. I'd rather begun to wonder if I fit in at all with the Church I grew up in and love.

**Carol-Lynn Rossel Waugh**  
**Winthrop, ME**

CAN'T TELL YOU HOW DELIGHTED I am to find that there is a journal for left-wing Anglicans. (Thought I was the only one). Some of our greatest people have been active in the labor movement, the middle-class Brit-

ish reforming movements (especially the suffragists), the Labor Party in Britain, the movement against nuclear weapons, and so forth and so on. Too bad more American Episcopalians aren't aware of our antecedents in the various movements for social justice — but perhaps a publication like *The Witness* can educate them a little bit.

**Lawrence Swaim**  
**San Leandro, CA**

THE FACT THAT Virginia Mollenkott is a contributing writer to your periodical was instrumental in my deciding to subscribe.

Please send me the back issue on "family values." With Republicans spouting their support of family values and with the major proponents of such (Dole, Gingrich, Gramm and (flush) Rush Limbaugh — a group I have recently named "Newtie and the Blowhards") all having been participants in more than one marriage, I have come to the conclusion that I may not know just what family values are. Perhaps your publication will bring about clarification.

**Theodore W. Hayes**  
**Kingston, NY**

## Classifieds

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*This month Vital Signs examines the Walter Righter court proceedings.*

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Cover: *Open doors* by Robert McGovern of Philadelphia, Penn.  
Back cover: *The Resurrection of the Lord* by Helen Siegl.



# Truth or consequences

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

Humor was alive in the first conversations held by *The Witness*' staff and contributing editors about whether it is ever okay to lie. We considered Miss Manners' belief that one must try not to lie outright, it being better to mislead. Several of us confessed to convenience lies — to thwart telephone solicitors, to return undamaged goods to a store, to abbreviate a bureaucratic process. None of these were lies that we would defend, nor ones for which we felt much regret.

The conversation got more dicey when we considered whether the truth can ever be enslaved to a lie. In court, for example, when one is asked a narrow question and forbidden to provide context, the answer can deceive the jury. In such cases, a lie might actually be closer to the truth. Or what about when a lie is used to accomplish a higher good?

And, of course, this conversation does not take place in a moral or political vacuum. We live in a society swirling with lies — lies about the supremacy of the powers and principalities, lies that coopt our language, sanctioned lies presented by the police and the CIA, lies that enforce ideologies of consumerism and violence.

## Renouncing the culture's lies

What ethic should people of faith hold in such a system?

Americans on the political Right turn with urgent need to new purity codes. They are trying to define and enforce right conduct, real morality and family values. Like us, they know themselves to be spinning in the vortex of a culture that

is practically without heart or conscience.

*Witness* readers also need a center, yet we do not want to replace manufactured chaos with militant fundamentalism. For us, fundamentalism becomes another serious problem. We suddenly have to defend ourselves from accusations that we are not sufficiently orthodox. The specter of a witch hunt causes us to invest time in protecting our own thoughts from scrutiny, while still trying to challenge the powers and live loving lives.

We are, as Virginia Mollenkott suggests on page 10, in occupied territory. We need to protect ourselves. Yet we know from our own experience that one lie can easily lead to another. Lies can protect us, they can also make us crazy. (See poem on page 7.)

Since *The Witness* has not found an inviolate standard to apply, this issue includes the views of those who advocate situation ethics, those who hold a narrower standard but will practice deception for a good cause, and others who have been hurt by lies and plead for truth. The search for an ethic we can embrace in this political climate can only be multifaceted.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer says it is cynical to assert that the same statement uttered in the same way to everyone in all times is truth. The truth, he claims, is *alive*.

## Magic and deception

Is it ever okay to lie for fun, to poke at people's sense of reality, to loosen their grip on a rigid truth?

Theologian and magic-lover Robert Neale suggests that all our worldviews are fiction. (See p. 16.) At best, they are tailored to allow us to live in ways that are healthy. But for this reason, deception, magic and disclosure have various and ambiguous roles in our life. A deception can betray, but it can provide a sense of challenge and entertainment; it can also move us into actual health, particularly when we understand the deception and either surrender a belief or choose to suspend our disbelief.

Since faith revolves around that which cannot be proven, it operates in a sphere where the lights and mirrors are at various angles. What of the believer who responds to a detractor saying, "You may be right, but I *choose* to hold this faith"?

We have little to gain by mimicking the Right. We need a lively ethic and a sense of humor.

In my own analysis of how to conduct a life with integrity, I turn again and again

to William Stringfellow's essay on "living humanly in the midst of death" in which he writes that there is no code of conduct, no failsafe moral behavior with

*continued on page 6*

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*We are invited to engage life,  
relying on our reading  
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No wrong answer can be  
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Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is editor/publisher of *The Witness*.

which to face the powers. He also argues that any ethic that presents itself as righteously "biblical" will always become idolatrous.

We are invited, he says, to engage life, relying on our reading of the Word of God and on our own exercise of sanity and conscience. No right answer will necessarily be right two times running. No wrong answer can be relied upon to never be right. Our human freedom is at the root of our integrity and its exercise. No formula can replace it.

### Jesus as trickster

And this is what Jesus models for us — a versatile relationship to truth and the authorities in a time when the occupying power was Rome, the complicit power resided in the Temple, the revolutionaries were drawing hard lines and the religious progressives were drafting a new purity code.

With a bridegroom's celebratory spirit, he claimed human freedom. He introduced the subversive values of God's kingdom in parables and in practice, eating and worshiping in ways that declared that the principalities were designed to serve humanity, not vice versa.

Sometimes Jesus spoke out clearly, sometimes symbolically. Sometimes Jesus laid low, swore people to secrecy and made clandestine arrangements. He chose his own timing.

Walter Wink reads Jesus' advice in the Sermon on the Mount as masterful examples of turning the oppressor's rules against the oppressor. For example, Wink writes in *Violence and Nonviolence in South Africa* (New Society Pub., 1987) that giving not only your cloak but your inner garment is a way of shaming someone who is ruthless in collecting your debt. If you surrender your inner garments as well as the cloak, which served as collateral for the poorest, you stand naked in court. And in Judaic law, it was not the one who was naked, but the one

who sees nakedness that is shamed, Wink explains. Anyone in Jesus' contemporary audience would immediately grasp the import of his suggestions.

Likewise, Jesus is adept at turning aside the questions that are meant to entrap him. Or he will answer a question with a question, always turning the system's rules

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*Constantly, deliberately and intelligently, Jesus reshapes the debate, changes the forum or the venue, says the unexpected. Jesus' last reversal, of course, is his own death and resurrection.*

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against the system's advocate.

Ched Myers writes in *Who Will Roll Away the Stone* (Orbis, 1994):

"At a crucial juncture in his mission, Jesus was confronted by members of the ruling Jerusalem establishment, who demanded that he present his political credentials (BSM:306f). 'By what authority are you doing these things; and who gave it to you?' (Mk. 11:28). 'These things' refer to Jesus' dramatic challenges to the scribal status quo: his theatrical, militant march into the capital city, followed by his public disruption of commerce in the Temple (11:1-25). As far as the guardians of civic order were concerned, things had gone far enough....

"By what authority, and who gave it to you? In all times and places, this is the central challenge put by governments to dissidents. Those in power recognize no authority they have not defined, brokered, or mediated. Conversely, any who would contest their arrangement must justify themselves before the bench. It is the circular genius of State logic: There can be no protest except by permission. How

will Jesus counter? He pauses, eyeing his antagonists. He understands that defending his practice is a losing proposition as long as they are framing the issue. Measuring his words carefully, he decides to go on the offensive.

"*'I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will answer you'* (11:29). Here is Jesus' most powerful weapon, with which he lays siege to the citadel of self-referential authority: questions that drive a sharp wedge of inquiry into the cracks of the *status quo* in order to pry open its internal contradictions.

"*'Where do you think John's authority came from?'*" Jesus' opponents stiffen. The case of the recently martyred rebel prophet John is a delicate political matter indeed. They can hardly delegitimize the work of so popular a national hero; yet if they eulogize John, their own duplicity — as the administration that consented to his execution — will be unmasked (11:30-32). Jesus has, in effect, thrown the challenge back in their faces."

### Practicing resurrection

Constantly, deliberately and intelligently, Jesus reshapes the debate, changes the forum or the venue, says the unexpected. Jesus' last reversal, of course, is his own death and resurrection. In that pre-eminent reversal of the rules, Jesus undoes the power of the greatest coercive threat of all time.

In ultimate freedom, may we take to heart Wendell Berry's advice in "Manifesto":

*"Expect the end of the world. Laugh. Laughter is immeasurable. Be joyful though you have considered all the facts.... As soon as the generals and the politicians can predict the motions of your mind, lose it. Leave it as a sign to mark the false trail, the way you didn't go. Be like the fox who make more tracks than necessary, some in the wrong direction. Practice resurrection."*

TW

# Trying to Find Out About Crazy Woman Creek, Wyoming

for Carolyn

by Christina V. Pacosz

First, I look up the definition of *crazy* and I become slightly crazed. Crazy Horse, it says in my American Heritage, was "killed while resisting arrest." Lies can make you crazy faster than anything else. This is not the first lie I have discovered in the dictionary, but I wish it was the last.

What would the last lie look like? How would it feel? Would we miss lies if we didn't have them? Living with lies is a shattering experience. The dictionary tells us the root word for *craze* is *krasa*, Old Norse meaning *to shatter*. This is not a lie.

During kiln firing ceramic bowls can become crazed and we admire them. There are crazy quilts to keep us warm and crazy weed, toxic to some animals. And there are crazy people. Crazy people are shattered, but unlike bowls, we do not usually admire them.

The skin of crazy people no longer protects them from an atmosphere of lies. Lies are corrosive like acid and without a tough skin lies do you in.

Murder, massacre, war. These are lies on a rampage. These are accumulated lies gone berserk, which is also a term from the Norse and means *bear's skin*. I would like to lie down and not think of such things. I would like to lie down with you and not think. But look! Lies spring up like sedge grass between our bodies, rough like bear's skin.

How is this so? Two people. Skin. A lying down that is not a rest, but offers rest, refuge. What are the lies doing here? Let us put on bear's skin and chase them out. Let us chase all the lies as far from the village as we are able. If we have to, we'll chase them all the way up to the sun. The sun laughs at lies and gobbles them up.

I have not forgotten the creek. There is one creek and two legends.

In one, Indians kill a trader who has sold them whiskey. The trader counts his money. But, what is this? The Indians are still thirsty. They want more whiskey. He has none. They are so drunk, so crazed, so shattered, they kill him. The money in his pockets does not save him. His young wife watches the Indians kill him. She escapes, demented, to wander the creek.

In the second legend, *Niobrara*, or Crazy Woman Creek is named after an Indian woman left alone after an attack on her village. In other words: she is the sole survivor of a massacre. Even if she had a bear's skin it could not help her.

We are not told if everyone is killed by whites or Indians, and it is too bad, in fact it is very bad, that wanting to know this is still important. Here is an example of too many lies in the world. We must chase them to the sun, again and again, no matter how tired we think we are. We must do this until all the lies in the world are herded together and burned up.

The Indian woman is called a squaw in the book. The dictionary notes this is a disparaging term. In other words: a lie. There are no squaws, only crazy women. On *Niobrara*, there are two crazy women, one white, one red.

The white woman wanders up the creek. Maybe a bear eats her. Or a cougar. Maybe she dies of exposure. We hear no more from her.

The red woman, we are told, lives in a "squalid wikiup" until her death. She can be seen on moonlit nights leaping the creek. The bear is her friend. The cougar keeps her warm at night. The Crows know she brings them good luck.

How can this be? A crazy woman? A squaw? The sole survivor of a massacre by whites or Indians? How can she bring anyone good luck? Isn't she shattered? Yes. But she stayed in her wikiup. She refused to run from death. She knew she was the only witness. To be a witness is to not tell lies.

We are not in a court of law, but out here under the sun by the creek. The bear is slapping fish out of the water and the cougar is licking its lips. The white woman is back. She's not dead after all. She is leaning over the creek, doing laundry, washing her hair.

The red woman, who knows she is not a squaw, but a witness, is roasting fish. It is the day the last lie has been chased to the sun.

— Christina V. Pacosz,  
Some Winded,  
Wild Beast,  
*Black and Red*, 1985





# Plain speech and resistance

by Marianne Arbogast

In no branch of Christian tradition has truthtelling been prized more highly than it has within the Society of Friends.

Early Quakers suffered persecution and imprisonment for their refusal to take oaths in court and, rejecting the use of language to define rank, adopted a “plain” style of speech marked by a truthfulness so rigorous that it was sometimes perceived as rudeness.

“Some were not willing to say ‘good morning’ or ‘your humble servant’ — nothing except a salutation, ‘Friend,’” says Jerry Frost, director of Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore College. “The Quaker testimony on truth is connected with the testimony against superfluous language.”

Truthtelling is “basic to the whole Quaker theory of worship,” Frost says. “A silent meeting demands absolute truthfulness. You say only what comes from the Spirit of God; if you ‘outran your gift’ with words beyond what the Holy Spirit directed, that was an untruth, and destroyed the experience of the inner light.”

Although 19th-century Quakers dropped the distinctive language forms which till then had set them apart, the emphasis on truthtelling persisted.

American Quakers involved with the Underground Railroad accepted the need for secrecy to protect escaping slaves, but they often preferred to mislead their pursuers with truth, rather than lies.

“If someone asked whether a slave had passed that way, they would say some-

thing like, ‘I saw no slave,’ — because they didn’t believe in anyone being a slave,” says Margaret Walden, librarian at Friends school in Detroit. “Most Quakers were very scrupulous about truthtelling even in those situations.”

Thomas Garrett, a Delaware Quaker who worked with Harriet Tubman, concealed fugitives in the bottom of bricklayers’ wagons to get them across a guarded bridge. But while hiding the individuals he helped to safety, Garrett never hid the fact that he engaged in such activity. When confronted by angry and occasionally violent slave owners, he refused either to deny their charges or to give them information which would endanger others. Even after his property was auctioned to pay a slave owner who had won a lawsuit against him, Garrett proclaimed to the sheriff his intention of continuing his work.

There are also stories of Quaker parents entrusting to their children the responsibility for greeting and hiding refugees — which enabled the adults to truthfully declare their ignorance concerning the presence or whereabouts of illegal guests.

A preference for openness has persisted through subsequent generations of Friends.

Stephen Carey, former chair of the American Friends Service Committee, recalls that the AFSC was one of the few relief agencies in Germany after World War II which declined to maximize their

resources by trading on the black market.

“On the black market you could get 100 German marks for the dollar, while we could get only 20 at the bank,” he says. “But the rule of the Service Committee was not to operate under the table.”

The AFSC has also steered clear of any involvement with espionage. Carey tells of being approached by an FBI agent who questioned him about a trip to Poland.

“He asked what ships we had seen in the harbor, and we told him if we had seen any ships, we wouldn’t tell him,” Carey says. “It would have been deceptive to the Polish government if we said we went in to help, but were spying for the U.S.”

Carey believes that, in the long run, the AFSC’s reputation for honesty has served their cause.

“Because we have tried to be trustworthy, we have often been able to get into places that others don’t,” he says.

Contemporary Quakers, engaging in civil resistance activities that “speak truth to power” (the AFSC motto), have also

tended to choose a straightforward approach.

Friends’ organizations have gone on record as supporting war tax resistance, declaring that “Quaker institutions have a corporate responsibility to assist their employees in

responding as openly and honestly as possible” (*Friends Journal*, 3/87).

“In nonviolent actions, I think it is always critical to be honest,” says David Hartsough, a San Francisco Quaker with a long history of resistance work. “In a society where there is so much lying and deception, it is important to be consistent, rather than buy into the disease the rest of

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*“If someone asked whether a slave had passed that way, they would say something like, ‘I saw no slave,’ — because they didn’t believe in anyone being a slave.”*

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—Margaret Walden

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Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of *The Witness*. Artist Jeanette Winter illustrated *Follow the Drinking Gourd* from which this illustration is taken (Knopf, 1988).

society has.”

For Hartsough, this means giving his name to police and being willing to suffer the consequences of civil disobedience.

“I’ve always felt I have nothing to hide,” Hartsough says. “I’m glad to have my name associated with these actions.”

Hartsough’s principles do not mandate revealing the details of nonviolent actions in advance. In recent actions in which Hartsough and others have occupied houses slated to be bulldozed, they have notified the police of their plans while not disclosing the exact location.

Similarly, Jim Corbett and other Friends in the Sanctuary movement told authorities of their activities — but not till Central American refugees were safely across the border.

“We would notify the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) every time that we were helping someone to reach safety on the border,” Corbett says. “We wanted to make sure that in the practice of civil initiative, we didn’t simply become some kind of vigilante dogooders. We felt we had to give the government every right to indict and make charges. But we didn’t tell them when and where we were crossing, and we sent the letter of notification at the time we were going to help the refugees, so it didn’t arrive till afterwards.”

Corbett distinguishes between the Quaker principle of civil initiative — “trying to protect good laws from a government violating those laws” — and the kind of action that might be called for under a lawless regime.

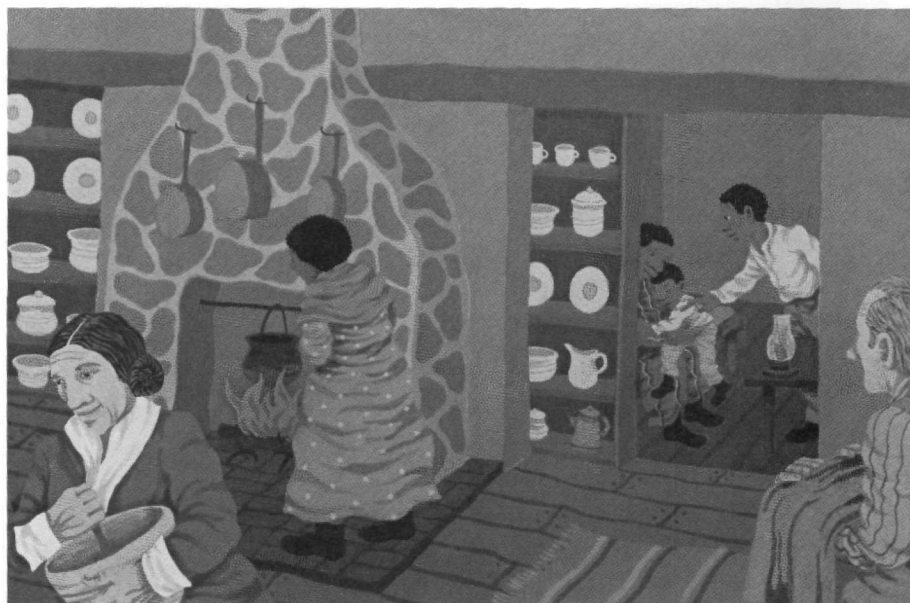
“If we were in Nazi Germany trying to protect Anne Frank the circumstances would be different,” he says. “Whether I speak as a Quaker or not, I don’t know for sure, but I can see a lot of reason for subterfuge to keep people from being captured and killed.”

Corbett’s own experience has included “occasions when there was an element of

subterfuge that I wasn’t comfortable about or entirely clear on,” he says.

When visiting refugees awaiting deportation in a Mexican penitentiary, the Mexican priest who accompanied Corbett used to sign him in as “*Padre Jaime*.”

“Mexican law excludes the church from having a civil role, but in actual practice, a priest could get in readily, while someone out of nowhere couldn’t,” Corbett says.



“... a hoot like an owl . . . opened the door to a Quaker farm.”

Jeanette Winter

“When I was asked about it, I was truthful, but not as truthful as I could have been. Folks noticed I said things like ‘Good luck,’ rather than ‘Bless you, my son,’ and asked, ‘What kind of a priest are you?’ I told them I was a different kind of *padre*, that I didn’t hear confessions, that I was concerned primarily with the *Sociedad de los Amigos*. Clearly, I was misleading people. But as long as the forms seemed to be met, the jailers and the *commandante* of the prison didn’t care about the rest of it.”

Corbett would place the fundamental burden of truth-telling on the community, rather than the individual.

“It is extremely important for the church to maintain its integrity even when individuals who are members can’t,” he says. “I’m thinking of integrity as broader than truth-telling — not being hypocritical, not misleading people. With the underground railroad, when Quakers were hiding out slaves, it was important for the Society of Friends itself to be firmly on record against slavery. In Germany, under the Nazis, it was very important for

the church to be firmly on record against Nazism. Perhaps individuals need to be underground, but as participants in the larger community they can participate in that broader integrity.

There is a strong tendency to want to shove off responsibility onto the individual. But real integrity is a community responsibility — ultimately, there is only one integrity.”

TW

### Reminder:

Third class mail does not forward.  
Send address changes  
when you are moving.

# Practicing privacy and timing: an ethic for lying when necessary

by Virginia Ramey Mollenkott

A person of faith's views on lying cannot be simplistic. Fortunately, the Bible is helpful in the development of a complex moral clarity if one avoids simplistic proof-texting.

If one limits the conversation to: "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord" (Proverbs 12:22), the ethical discussion ends with a resounding thump. But when interpreted *contextually*, as every book deserves to be interpreted, the Bible is very helpful indeed.

## Rebekah

Rebekah is told by God that she is pregnant with twins who are struggling in the womb and will continue to struggle after birth, with the elder serving the younger. "Armed with this information from God," points out Gwyneth Mapes, in an unpublished paper, "Rebekah becomes the only one who can see that this switch of inheritance-power takes place." So, how does one-without-power gain power? Rebekah shows us through teaching her younger son, Jacob, to become a trickster. Jacob first tricks his older brother Esau out of his birthright, and then with Rebekah's guidance and help, tricks his father Isaac into giving him the blessing and the inheritance of the older son.

"Jacob becomes the archetypal trickster, a role that is lauded in many cultures because it is so versatile and ultimately necessary in the survival of the species," Mapes says. "But what we forget is that Rebekah trained Jacob in this, thus forg-

ing the very nature of survival in him and in their descendants. What we also forget is that this trickster trait is the very quality for which women and minorities are lambasted throughout history: deception, subterfuge, lying, cheating, etc. These qualities are necessary qualities of any person or group who is denied social power and has to achieve it in ways other than the system allows. So, we laud Jacob in this story, but lambaste the Rebekahs of the world — unless we reinterpret the story and realize the important role Rebekah played and why she *had* to resort to lying and deception — in order to achieve God's plan for her sons."

Did Rebekah lack integrity because she subverted patriarchal custom in order to fulfill the counter-cultural will of God? I think not. Neither do contemporary women lack integrity when they must lie or deceive, perhaps by professing faith in an all-male trinity, in order to try to bring about the will of an inclusively loving God in a church that turns deaf ears to the words of the one they call *Lord*.

## Situation ethics

I am aware of the dangers of espousing a complex ethic that includes the integrity of subverting injustice. I know all too well that the human ego can deceive us about our real motives, so that we can wrong ourselves and others while simultaneously assuring ourselves that what we are doing is necessary and good, indeed that we were guided to do it. Fur-

thermore, I have heard various lesbian and gay leaders insisting that there must be *no* secrets in our lives.

But I would argue that there is a difference between emotional dishonesty to ourselves and our trusted friends, and the preservation of privacy in occupied territory. Despite the prying of talk show hosts and the news media, we do *not* owe the public complete disclosure about our lives; and in that sense, everybody has secrets — or ought to! I am arguing for a grounded, realistic, complex ethical vision that honors the integrity on *both* sides of the closet door.

I do so in fear and trembling because I remember the enraged debate that erupted when Joseph Fletcher published his rather subversive book called *Situation Ethics*. In certain circles, Fletcher's name became a synonym for unprincipled immorality. But the fact remains that *every* ethical decision *must* be made within a situation, and that even our most trusted moral absolutes must sometimes bend in

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*Rebekah had to resort to lying and deception — in order to achieve God's plan for her sons.*

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the service of the common good, or in the service of the divine will as it is revealed to us by the voice of Sophia, the Wisdom of God.

I used to believe that killing was the one absolute that a person could never, never bend; but then I learned that the profoundly Christian Dietrich Bonhoeffer had taken part in a plot to assassinate Hitler. He took part in the plot not because he thought killing was right, but in order to try to save millions of innocent lives. And then I read accounts of people in the underground movement of French resistance to the Nazi forces occupying their country. Those people vowed to one another not only to lie about their membership in the resistance movements, not only to live a lie of pretending to accept

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**Virginia Ramey Mollenkott**, author of *Sensuous Spirituality: Out From Fundamentalism* (Crossroad, 1992), is a contributing editor to *The Witness*. Artist **Claudia Bach** lives in Sarasota, Florida.



the Nazi occupation, but also to kill any member who was being entrapped by the Nazis and who might reveal names of colleagues under torture.

It was at that point in my moral development that I realized that the categorical imperative developed by Immanuel Kant is an imperative that works well only to the degree that we are in control of our own destinies, only to the degree that we are privileged to share in the structures of power. Kant taught that we must always act in such a way that our action could be willed as a universal law. Thus, we should never lie or steal because it would be chaos if everyone lied to everyone else or stole from everyone else.

But for people who are living in occupied territory, the categorical imperative would lead to widespread death and the destruction of all that they value. Certainly if I had been a Jew in Nazi Germany or a member of the French Resistance movement, and if the Nazis had been hot on my trail, I would never have chosen to hide in Immanuel Kant's house! Fearing he would value his own moral stainlessness more than my life and the cause I was serving, I would prefer to hide with someone less grandiose, someone more gutsy, someone who would lie through their teeth to protect my survival.

### Resistance conduct

We are living in occupied territory.

Racist, classist, sexist America is not really our country, and sexist and heterosexual churches are not in our control. To the degree that we have any public power, of course, we do remain responsible for the use of that power. For instance, most men have more public power in the church and society than most women because of the sexism that governs our incomes and our opportunities; so Christian men are therefore called to responsibility to use their power to move church and society toward greater justice for their sisters. And those of us

who are white have more public power than those of other races, because of the racism that still governs our incomes and opportunities; so as white people we are called to combat racist structures. But to the degree that we are internally or externally disempowered by the inequitable

things are beneficial. 'All things are lawful,' but not all things build up. Do not seek your own advantage, but that of the other."

I was brought up to believe that it was a Christian's responsibility to avoid even the *appearance* of evil (I Thessalonians



*Jacob blessing the children of Joseph by Rembrandt*

systems of this world, to that degree we are in occupied territory and must recognize the presence of an underground or resistance-oriented situation ethic.

Even the apostle Paul espoused a relativistic situation ethic. In I Corinthians 6:12 he said, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are beneficial. 'All things are lawful for me,' but I will not be dominated by anything." How else can we decide what is beneficial for us, or when we might be getting addicted to something, except in specific situations and contexts? In I Corinthians 10:23 Paul said, 'All things are lawful' but not all

5:22, KJV). It was many years before it dawned on me that in the story of the Good Samaritan, the two priests who refused their help to the man fallen among thieves were doing exactly that — they were abstaining from all appearance of evil. If they had helped the bleeding man, they would have gotten dirt and blood on their stainless garments.

### The church and workable ethics

It is time, I think, for the church at large to become much more mature in its ethical stance, learning to show less concern for stainless absolutes and righteous images, and more concern for helping people

in the often painful and messy realities of their lives.

John Milton, the great 17th-century Puritan poet and theologian, had something very important to say about integrity: "I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, *not without dust and heat.*"

What the church needs to learn, what we as the church all need to learn, is precisely that it is impossible to be active in this world while avoiding even the appearance of evil. No worthwhile race is run without dust and heat; no justice-oriented life is lived without mistakes, without occasional cooptation, without controversy, or without making some people angry. Some of us face anger and contempt because we are working for justice outside the closet, and I refer to all

our beliefs and behaviors, not just sexuality; others of us face the distressing claustrophobia of working for justice inside various closets.

The important thing is that we Christians follow Jesus by working for justice. We also need to be careful of judgementalism and of seemingly innocent celebrations of the liberties of being able to be open about our beliefs and lives. These celebrations may unconsciously assault the integrity or courage of our more closeted, less privileged sisters and brothers.

The dictionary associates integrity with soundness or an unimpaired condition; with firm adherence to a code of moral or artistic values; with completeness, incorruptibility, and honesty. Our society and especially our churches have put a lot of pressure on feminists and other marginalized people, in many cases succeeding in polluting our consciences so

that we think our subversive behavior is evil.

During her coming-out sermon, Jeanne Audrey Powers pointed out several strategies for subversion: deception when necessary; operating under pretense and making false claims when necessary; being careful not to get caught; not hesitating to confront when we know it is the right time; and fleeing when we have to. She said that although "the church has never used these words in any kind of a positive way at all, the fact is that the church is intended to 'overcome [the] powers and principalities of this world.' Therefore the whole Christian church is vocationally called to be subversive."

The Bible taken as a whole really does teach a situation or contextual ethic — not just Paul's remarks about all things being lawful even when they are not expedient, but the whole direction of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. For instance, Jesus told us that the whole law and the prophets hang on the first two commandments, to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves. But as we all know, the idea of living lovingly provides us with a lot of latitude. It is up to us to decide, within each context, what is the way to love God and neighbor. Sometimes we only wish that a voice out of heaven would tell us exactly what to do! But in fact if we quiet ourselves and ask for guidance and then listen expectantly, the loving response eventually makes itself known to us in the dark still center of our being.

### Jesus' lineage

Furthermore, not only does the Bible call us to a subjective and therefore relativistic love-ethic; it also provides us with many examples of people honored by God, who were nevertheless forced by the context of their lives to do things that would never pass the test of the categorical imperative. We have already looked at the example of Rebekah and Jacob. I

## Huck tells a lie

[Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn considers turning in Jim, an escaped slave.]

My conscience got to stirring me up hotter than ever, until at last I says to it, "Let up on me — it ain't too late, yet — I'll paddle ashore at the first light, and tell." I felt easy, and happy, and light as a feather, right off. All my troubles was gone. ... When I was fifty yards off, Jim says:

"Dah you goes, de ole true Huck; de on'y white genlman dat ever kep' his promise to ole Jim."

Well, I just felt sick. But I says, I got to do it — I can't get *out* of it. Right then, along comes a skiff with two men in it, with guns, and they stopped and I stopped. One of them says:

"What's that yonder?"

"A piece of raft," I says.

"Do you belong on it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Any men on it?"

"Only one, sir."

"Well, there's five niggers run off to-night, up yonder above the head of the bend. Is your man white or black?"

I didn't answer up prompt. I tried to, but the words wouldn't come. I tried, for a second or two, to brace up and come out with it, but I warn't man enough — hadn't the spunk of a rabbit. I see I was weakening; so I just give up trying, and up and says —

"He's white."

[David Nyberg, author of *The Vanished Truth: Truth Telling and Deceiving in Ordinary Life* (The University of Chicago Press, 1993), contrasts Huck's experience with that of André Trocmé (see profile, p. 30).]

think also of the mother of Moses, who “lived a lie” by pretending to be simply a wetnurse and took money from Pharaoh’s daughter for nursing her own son — a son whose life she had already saved by committing civil disobedience. Shiprah and Puah, the midwives whom Pharaoh told to kill all the Hebrew boy babies during the birth process, apparently agreed to do so. When it became clear that there were as many healthy Hebrew boys being born as formerly and Pharaoh confronted them, Shiprah and Puah told their ruler a very creative lie: “The Hebrew women are so lively that they deliver before we can get there.” We are told in Exodus that God rewarded the midwives for their gutsy and subversive behavior.

Tamar, who entrapped her father-in-law into making her pregnant by pretending to be a temple prostitute, had been married to the man’s eldest son, and when he died prematurely, was given to his second son. But when the second son also died prematurely, the man was afraid to give her to his third and only surviving son. When Tamar saw he had no intention of doing that, she took matters into her own hands and got pregnant through lying and subterfuge. Her father-in-law was going to execute her when he found out she was pregnant; but she had been smart enough to have obtained proof of her father-in-law’s identity, and when she produced the proof, she was able to live and have the honored status in Israel that only motherhood could bring. She is mentioned in Matthew’s Gospel as one of only five women named in the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah.

Then there’s Rahab, the innkeeper who is identified as a prostitute in Scripture, who sheltered the spies Joshua sent to Jericho and who helped them escape

safely over the city wall. By lying to her own government and betraying the city of Jericho to Joshua, Rahab was able to save the lives of her entire extended family. She is the second woman Matthew honors by naming her in the bloodline of Jesus, the Messiah.

Then there is Ruth, the woman of Moab who bonded with Naomi in the beautiful vow that has been used for centuries in heterosexual wedding ceremo-

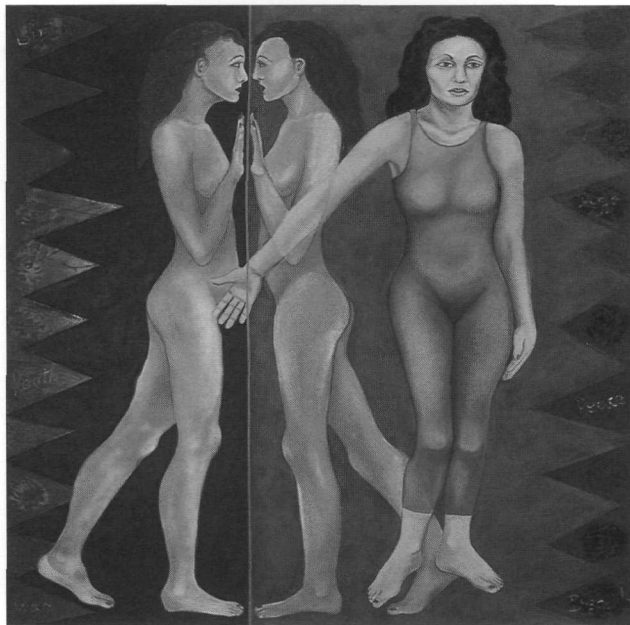
the women remained so closely bonded to each other that Ruth gave her first son Obed to be Naomi’s own son. Like Tamar and Rahab, Ruth is mentioned by name in Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus the Messiah. The other two women in that genealogy are Bathsheba, King David’s partner in adultery, and Mary, Mother of Jesus, an unwed mother who has been gossiped about for centuries. If indeed the point of Christian living is to avoid

even the appearance of evil, Matthew’s Gospel is in grave error to honor such women as Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba and the mother of Jesus, every one of whom was associated in some way with sexual and moral irregularity!

Even more to the point is the story of Esther, who was chosen as the Queen of the Persian King Ahasuerus. For the first part of her reign, Esther was “in the closet” because she never told anybody that she was Jewish. But when the egotistical Haman plotted to destroy all the Jews in Persia, Queen Esther saved her people by using the power of the royal diadem, power she had achieved during her closeted days. She

risked her life by going into the king’s presence uninvited, but not before she and all the Jews of Persia had fasted. Her petition was granted.

When Esther had at first hesitated to approach the king uninvited in order to come out of the closet and claim solidarity with her people, her uncle Mordecai urged her on with some words that are also memorable: “Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this” (4:14). It is my personal conviction that each of us will know when the moment comes that we are to drop all subterfuge and utilize whatever public power we have achieved, on



*Lines of existence* by Claudia Bach

nies. At Naomi’s suggesting, Ruth slept with Boaz on the threshing floor in order to stimulate him into acting his proper role as her kinsman-redeemer according to the laws of ancient Israel. And when Boaz responded by marrying Ruth and providing her and Naomi with a home,

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*Despite the prying of  
talk show hosts and the  
news media, we do not owe  
the public complete  
disclosure about our lives.*

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behalf of ourselves and our people.

Finally, Jesus frequently told people to keep quiet about the miracles he had performed. Just imagine being healed of leprosy and then being told that you had to keep the whole thing secret (Matthew 8:4). What a closet! Furthermore, Jesus sometimes closeted the fact that he was even capable of doing miracles. He did no miracles at all when he was in a place where the people had manifested very little faith, and he refused to offer a sign to religious leaders who asked him for one (Mark 8:11, Matthew 13:58). He kept his own counsel in Jerusalem, too (John 2:23-25).

Please be clear that I am not denying our capacity for deceiving ourselves about our motives; nor am I asking anybody to stay in the closet about their behavior or their beliefs. It is true that social change will be brought about mainly through organized public community efforts, so that we need as many of us "out and open" as are able to be "out and open."

## The 'living truth'

by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

An individual utterance is always part of a total reality which seeks expression in this utterance. If my utterance is to be truthful it must in each case be different according to whom I am addressing, who is questioning me, and what I am speaking about. The truthful word is not in itself constant; it is as much alive as life itself. If it is detached from life and from its reference to the concrete other man, if "the truth is told" without taking into account to whom it is addressed, then this truth has only the appearance of truth, but it lacks its essential character.

It is only the cynic who claims "to

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Excerpted from Dietrich Bonhoeffer's "What is Meant by 'Telling the Truth'?" *Ethics*, Eberhard Bethge, ed. (MacMillan, 1965).

But it is also true, as Thomas Merton said, that "political action is too often rendered futile by the massive corruption and dishonesty and faking which neutralize it everywhere." Better a prayerful, loving life that preserves its secrets than a dissonant brassy life with no secrets at all!

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*It is my personal conviction  
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we are to drop all subterfuge  
and utilize whatever public  
power we have achieved, on  
behalf of ourselves and our  
people.*

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### Living without guilt

My point is simply that as long as we are sincerely listening for God's guidance

and responding fluidly to it, we need feel no guilt about whatever degree of secrecy or subversion our work may require of us. It is the church's sin that forces so many people to be secretive if they want a ministry within it. And it is society's sin that forces so many teachers and business people into the closet and punishes so many people for being open about their feminism or their conviction that wealth should be redistributed.

All of us have integrity as long as we are doing our best to be whatever it is God seems to want us to be. I hope we will affirm the subjective, relativistic love-ethic of Scripture without shame and without embarrassment, holding our heads high as we celebrate the challenges of doing whatever is necessary to sustain loving lives and the cause of justice for all people. Freedom is coming tomorrow. All of us are moving the world toward that freedom.

We have come into our power for just such a time as this. **TW**

speak the truth" at all times and in all places to all people in the same way, but who, in fact, displays nothing but a lifeless image of the truth. One dons the halo of the fanatical devotee of truth who can make no allowance for human weaknesses; but, in fact, one is destroying the living truth between people. One wounds shame, desecrates mystery, breaks confidence, betrays the community in which one lives, and laughs arrogantly at the devastation one has wrought and at the human weakness which "cannot bear the truth." One says truth is destructive and demands its victims, and one feels like a god above these feeble creatures and does not know that he is serving Satan.

Every utterance or word lives and has its home in a particular environment. The word in the family is different from the word in business or public. The word which has come to life in the warmth of

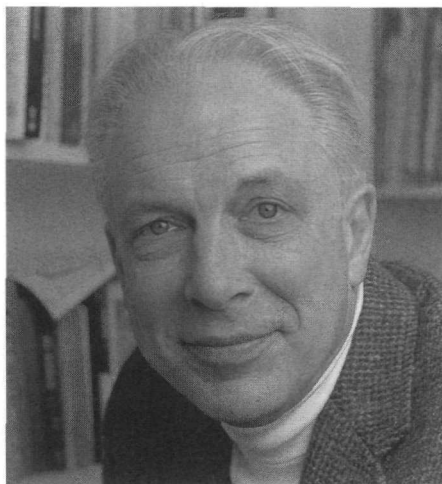
personal relationship is frozen to death in the cold air of public existence. The word of command, which has its habitat in public service, would sever the bonds of mutual confidence if it were spoken in the family. Each word must have its own place and keep to it.

It is a consequence of the wide diffusion of the public word through the newspapers and the wireless that the essential character and the limits of the various different words are no longer clearly felt and that, for example, the special quality of the personal word is almost entirely destroyed. Genuine words are replaced by idle chatter. Words no longer possess any weight. There is too much talk. And when the limits of the various words are obliterated, when words become rootless and homeless, then the word loses truth, and then indeed there must almost inevitably be lying. **TW**

# Illusion, magic and faith: an interview with Robert Neale

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

*Robert Neale began doing magic at a hotel when he was 12 years old. Adults would confide serious matters in him because he had successfully fooled them with a sleight-of-hand trick. Once ordained in the Congregational Church, Neale gave up magic tricks. But later, teaching at New York's Union Theological Seminary, he brought his enjoyment of magic back into tension with religious faith. His views tend to be personalist and irreverent, but then, as he says, "If you're going to play around with this theme of magic and religion, you're into powerfully ambiguous material."*



Robert Neale

**Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann:** How were you drawn to the field of play and magic?

**Robert Neale:** There's a playful spirit in Zen and in the Christian mystical tradition. Christians tend to call magic primitive or childish. I see it as going on all the time. We use ultimate structures and ultimate beliefs to get things and that's okay.

**J.W-K.:** *The Witness*' reason for coming into the topic is that we're looking at whether it's ever okay to lie. It occurred to us that there are times when a lie may be closer to the truth than the truth would be. Can you say something about deception and truth?

**R.N.:** My favorite quote on the subject is from Wallace Stevens: "Final belief is to believe in a fiction, which you know to be a fiction, there being nothing else. The

exquisite truth is to know that it is a fiction and that you believe in it willingly."

**J.W-K.:** Say a little bit more about why you're confident that there is only fiction.

**R.N.:** One of our great illusions is that we can know reality. A lot of stuff hits the eyeball and the brain turns it into something, puts it right-side-up and puts it back out there. That's an incredible thing the brain does. It's even turned right-side-up. So what we have to deal with is what we've constructed. The glory of it is that it helps us so well.

**J.W-K.:** Is this simply utilitarian — we made it up because it helps us?

**R.N.:** A human being is not like a beaver. A beaver's got things pretty well worked out. But a human being has to learn, develop patterns and get a general sense of the or-

der of things. When this fails us, we get into trouble. We get demoralized, kill people, whatever.

This general sense of the order of things is a religious thing. What religion does is help make patterns real and viable for us.

**J.W-K.:** Does your belief that we made it up make it not real?

**R.N.:** Oh no! I asked my students to make up a story about God. The results were highly idiosyncratic. Reading them out loud was a spiritual occasion. We don't forget them. We just made them up and all of a sudden — boom! — they are very real, because they express so much.

When someone asks "Is it true or not?" or "Do I believe it or not?" they are leaving themselves outside. If you're in the middle of telling a story or hearing a story fully, you don't ask if it's real. The same is true when you play a game and participate in a worship service — then you are inside.

**J.W-K.:** Tell me about illusion.

**R.N.:** Basic tricks done by secular magicians were first done by clergy in so-called primitive religions. Magic is very strong in the shamanistic traditions and in a lot of healing rites. Native American Indians produced rabbits, not out of hats, but out of baskets. They would make a feather float.

But some theorize that religion is the one place where truth is the most important thing. Since human beings can lie, cheat and deceive each other, they believe there needs to be ritual that is so real that people do not lie and deceive. What you have in that case, on ritual occasions, is the strong need for absolute truth which

is supported by absolute deception or trickery.

**J.W-K.:** Can you give an example in current liturgies?

*Illusion means "in play."*

*Something is in play, a reality that works.*

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is editor/publisher of *The Witness*. Artist Grisha Dotzenko illustrated *African Folk Tales* (The Peter Pauper Press, 1963).

**R.N.:** No, I don't think it occurs in the blatant forms. Let me give you some more examples from early traditions and then we'll move into the modern parallels.

In Australia, boys are trained to believe that there's a good spirit and a bad spirit. They're out in the wilderness where the older men are to take them through rituals but the boys get a tooth knocked out. They are told that the bad spirit did it and is going to come back and kill them. All along this is accompanied by a strange noise, a loud noise, that the little kids have never heard before. And then the bad spirit comes. They hear the noise and they're petrified.

Then all of a sudden they're shown what is making the noise. It's a stick on a string that you whirl around — a bullroar — and it makes this weird, wonderful

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*The problem is how to be healed and not kill your neighbor. How can you in this highly pluralistic situation — many different stories and games about these most serious things — enjoy something and be served by something without killing your neighbor?*

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sound. There's a process here — to create an illusion and then expose it. They're *disillusioned*. Then they're inducted into

the society, turned into adults and told not to give away the secrets. They make their own bullroar which becomes a very holy object for them.

In some Navajo ceremonies in the early days, the men would do a trick — like make the sun rise out of a basket — and the women watching this, *as a part of the ritual*, would be required to say "I see the thread by which you're moving the sun. You aren't fooling us."

The symbolic importance of this is what is crucial. If I say, "You've got a stomachache" and reach into your belly and pull out a black stone, which I simply palmed in my hand, you may know that I cheated, but that's not important. What's important is the symbolic meaning of it. So you have a very complex attitude here. You have trickery, acknowledgement that it is trickery and deliberate suspension of disbelief.

I have books on card tricks with very clever methods, because the audience wants to know how it's done. But suppose instead of pulling playing cards out of the air, I produce dollar bills? That grabs your interest more and you become less concerned about how I'm doing it. If you move from an intellectual puzzle to an emotional puzzle, the trick can be less elaborate. Supposing you predict the future? Magicians who do this don't have to be very clever, because the audience doesn't give a damn how it's done, the *issue* is what is important.

If you move all the way to a religious miracle or a spiritual trick of some kind, you don't have to do a damn thing. You can almost have no method; all you have to do is proclaim something. It's not just that the hand is quicker than the eye, because the magician is working with your mind, your feelings *and* your spiritual needs. The great magician doesn't have to do anything! He's just there and — boom! — all of sudden people are saying "Gee, miracles are happening."

## Illusion and faith in Narnia

"One word, Ma'am," he said, coming back from the fire; limping, because of the pain. "One word. All you've been saying is quite right, I shouldn't wonder. I'm a chap who always liked to know the worst and then put the best face I can on it. So I won't deny any of what you said. But there's one thing more to be said, even so.

"Suppose we *have* only dreamed, or made up, all those things — trees and grass and sun and moon and stars and Aslan himself. Suppose we have. Then all I can say is that, in that case, the made-up things seem a good deal more important than the real ones.

"Suppose this black pit of a kingdom of yours *is* the only world. Well, it strikes me as a pretty poor one. And

that's a funny thing, when you come to think of it. We're just babies making up a game, if you're right. But four babies playing a game can make a play-world which licks your real world hollow. That's why I'm going to stand by the play world.

"I'm on Aslan's side even if there isn't any Aslan to lead it. I'm going to live as like a Narnian as I can even if there isn't any Narnia. So, thanking you kindly for our supper, if these two gentlemen and the young lady are ready, we're leaving your court at once and setting out in the dark to spend our lives looking for Overland. Not that our lives will be very long, I should think; but that's small loss if the world's as dull a place as you say."

— *The Silver Chair* by C.S. Lewis



**J.W-K.:** Are you saying that all miracles in the Bible are illusion?

**R.N.:** That's what I would assume. Does that diminish their power? By no means. Deception, carefully done, can heal people. Illusion means "in play." Something is in play, a reality that works.

My field is psychology. I've gone for psychological treatments that cost me \$125 an hour! If you're the right sort of person you can get the same basic things from a fortune teller charging \$20 an hour: Somebody cares about you; there is a possibility of help; there is hope for the future and an institution that helps you understand yourself. The basic ingredients run through all these different therapeutic systems.

**J.W-K.:** What magic remains in mainstream churches?

**R.N.:** Much magic in the traditional sense is word magic — charms. The focus on words, the benediction, and so forth, has very powerful effects.

**J.W-K.:** I wonder if the decline of the mainstream churches is partly because the churches have sacrificed a lot of the play and illusion?

**R.N.:** There have been new things, people creating their own services of worship. As individual and local symbols get involved, the sense of play is increased. I've known people who don't want any symbolism in their religion, not that it can be avoided. But then they get into magic, they love it. They feel free. Somehow there's been some kind of anti-symbolism going on in their religious upbringing.

**J.W-K.:** Or they're afraid of being fooled in an arena where they think it matters.

**R.N.:** The most powerful words we have are empty: God, love, humanity. They are powerful precisely because we all put ourselves into them.

**J.W-K.:** Where imagination, healing and rituals are thriving is in New Age circles.

**R.N.:** And there are dangers here. It can be a highly individualistic and isolating experience if pursued without a community to hold it together.

**J.W-K.:** How do magic and imagination relate to what you care about most?



Grisha Dotzenko

**R.N.:** I'm in love with making up things. When I was a little kid, I couldn't draw. My handwriting is ugly — it's illegible and I can't spell. But I started folding paper, origami, in my late twenties and all of a sudden I started to create things. I just recently got a book out on my paperfolds. Then I started making up magic tricks. What is it to be creative? Making up meaning is what's most important to me and most wonderful.

I started working with this in the classroom. I said, "Let's draw death or let's draw God. You don't have to believe in God, just draw whatever comes to you."

There are two sides to imagination — one is making things up and the other side is using what you created in the magical sense. How marvelous that we've made up all these things. It's absolutely incredible! I could say Christianity is the best nonsense I know. There is no taller tale. We made it up and it's glorious. And we

keep changing it and people tell their own versions.

**J.W-K.:** Is there a relationship between this creativity and magic and a Judeo-Christian understanding of God? Is there affirmation for imagination in Scripture?

**R.N.:** I think there is. The institution tries to control it too much. What I get mad about is what I call the bureaucratic terrorism of belief and disbelief where a creed or any kind of belief structure is abused, is made to be something I have to assent to.

The problem is how to be healed and not kill your neighbor. How can you in this highly pluralistic situation — with many different stories and games going on about these most serious things — enjoy something and be served by something without killing your neighbor? This is a contemporary problem.

**J.W-K.:** Do you believe that the power of magic and ritual are rooted in the collective unconscious, in a kind of truth that's bigger than the myth that I might write?

**R.N.:** Good question. My answer is I don't give a shit.

**J.W-K.:** I was afraid of that.

**R.N.:** You want to make up a theory? I love to make up theories.

**J.W-K.:** You do care how magic is *actually* related to healing. Where I would go from the collective unconscious question — if you gave a shit, which you don't — is to an understanding of the will of God. My interest in magic would be minimal if

I didn't think that I was interacting with some force, with God. So I am looking for whether the Creator's still got a playful relationship to what's happening. Is that something you would speak to?

**R.N.:** What I'm doing with creativity is no more firm than anything that you want to do with the collective unconscious.

**J.W.-K.:** I'm trying to anticipate people's question, "What about God? What about doctrine?" Lots of people will find it alarming that magic can lead to healing.

**R.N.:** Magic is probably a dirty word for them. It's beyond rational. These things can work. They make you feel a little more comfortable. You can get in an airplane and kill other people if you are in a war — or gamble at Las Vegas. This is magical thinking that goes on in life.

**J.W.-K.:** Do you believe in magical thinking?

**R.N.:** Entertainer magicians tend to be big-time cynics. They make a living exposing phony psychics. I'm a part of that too. I know all the research in paranormal psychology. Nothing holds up.

Something new comes up, the public keeps doing it, television keeps showing it and none of it holds up. The rationalists just throw fits. I say, "Loosen up, try to learn a little bit about what it is like to be a human being, not just a mind." So I'm kind of in the middle of the skeptics and the believers. The only way I can do it comfortably is with imagination.

**J.W.-K.:** Imagination and acknowledging that it's made up.

**R.N.:** And maybe it's not, but I haven't got any hard-core evidence yet.

**J.W.-K.:** The imagination you have been describing clearly relates to healing. Does it relate to justice?

**R.N.:** Let me just say what comes to mind. What concerns me so deeply is that we hurt ourselves with our bureaucratic terrorism and try to get rid of people who challenge our approach to our structures of meaning.

Maybe justice comes when you not only enjoy your own story but enjoy other people's stories — that's a start because then you aren't killing them or putting them down. Maybe justice comes when you can see that they are connected. It's the connection of stories where justice might really come in. How does your



Grisha Dotzenko

story connect? Can you learn from their story? And the stories change each other. That's where I think justice might come, or at least community.

**J.W.-K.:** Your whole attitude and freedom is kind of antithetical to what's going on in the culture right now — where everything is shutting down into a need for right answers.

**R.N.:** Human beings are terribly limited. And, as my wife can tell you, I am free in a few, tiny little areas that aren't too interesting to anybody but me — except maybe you. But in other areas I am a hard hat. I talk about tricksters as the merry mess-makers, but actually I like things neat. My wife is the messy one and I don't like it.

Most of us can't tolerate very much freedom and imagination. One of the real problems that happened at Union Theological Seminary, I think, is that we prided ourselves on our pluralism, tried to increase it — while also dragging our feet as white, male, middle-aged people. We tried to get every brand of deviation in any realm. We got people there and then said, "We can't cope." I think we got overwhelmed. Anybody in the minority could sniff out our denials pretty quickly.

This country may be in some kind of circumstance where it can't cope well with freedom. I don't know a solution.

**J.W.-K.:** Is there a reassuring thing to say to people who are busy trying to put up the bulwarks?

**R.N.:** You can say, "I don't blame you." In psychology the stupidest thing to do is to make fun of someone else's defense mechanisms. We can't live without them. We need to be able to say, "I'm protecting myself here. Hey, I'm a human being." We have to give ourselves massive protection. Let's respect that. I don't know if you can ever get a playful sense of protecting oneself. You could say in a ritual, "Let's create protections." Have some fun with it, make it in clay or whatever.

**J.W.-K.:** I guess that's what New Age people are doing with angel cards. But they're too tame.

**R.N.:** Angels are in, huh? I like terrifying angels. And I write about the trickster tradition in religion: coyote, sacred clowns, con-artists.

**J.W.-K.:** I guess the trickster's main role is breaking down rigidity, isn't it?

**R.N.:** Yeah! Mess-makers who come in and use the structure against itself. It can be very dangerous and destructive, but it can also liberate.

**J.W.-K.:** Do you consider Jesus a trickster?

**R.N.:** Certainly Jesus was a trickster. Look at the parables. Tricksters take the system and use it against itself. **TW**

# Lying outside K-Mart

**T**he first lie I ever remember telling was outside K-Mart. I cannot have been much more than three or four years old.

We had been browsing in the Garden Shop, and while my mother talked with a clerk, I wandered over to one of the displays. Examining it with a child's eye, I was irresistibly drawn not to the leafy branches, not to the colorful flowers, but to the layer of white pebbles in the base of the planter.

I must have been going through a rock phase, because there were already two other important pebbles in my pocket. I picked up one of these intriguing new white stones, which upon closer examination actually sparkled, and it suddenly hit me: I could take it. I remember justifying the act to myself: they would never miss it. K-Mart had so many, and I had none at all.

Was there a series of furtive looks? A small fist slipping the pebble slowly into the pocket? I don't remember. But after we hit the parking lot, perhaps 20 yards from the store, childlike enthusiasm overcame me and I suddenly cried out,

unedited, unthinking, "I HAVE ROCKS!"

The second half of deceit, the calm controlling pretense that nothing has transpired: I had known nothing of that. The second the words were out of my mouth, however, my heart sank with the realization that I had exposed myself. To be a thief, one had to be a liar too.

"Where did you get them?" my mother asked, with seeming interest but in that tone that tells children that the game is up. "... I found some of them," I mumbled, jesuitically.

"Where did you get the others?" We stopped walking and my mother put out her hand. "Let me see."

Out came the two pebbles and the fairytale white stone, which any adult would recognize in a minute as belonging in a dreary K-Mart garden display. There was quick dialogue, and then we were hurrying back to the cashier. All the way in I was trying to convince my mother of the gross injustice of corporate America, lounging idly amidst huge, unappreciated piles of money and toys and pretty white rocks while denying me even one.

What did I say to the woman at the

*Tell us about  
lies  
in your life.*

***The Witness'  
invitation  
on the internet.***

counter? "I stole?" "I took this rock?" And what did she do? Was she kind? Did she try to contribute to my mother's lesson-teaching by telling me if I did it again the police would come? I don't recall any of that. But 30 years later, that one moment in the parking lot, the moment I saw a need to hide myself, is still unforgettable.

— *Beth Maynard is assistant to the rector at Trinity Church and Episcopal Chaplain at Marshall University in Huntington, W.V.*

## 'Afraid to tell'

**B**ack in the late 1960s, Carmella, a woman I knew, had kidney surgery at a large university hospital in the east. The surgeon was the chairman of the department of urology, an eminent practitioner. At the conclusion of the surgery, he met with the family in the visitors' lounge, and told them the following:

"One kidney is totally riddled with cancer, and the other is operating at less than 50 percent. It also is full of cancer. We checked everything, tried to think of

some way to help her, and wound up sewing her up. I was unable to do anything for her. I expect that she'll live for another 6-12 months. I'm very sorry."

The patient was a very strong and dominant woman. The family was afraid to tell her that she was going to die. The eminent surgeon, who generally entered patients' rooms followed by 7-10 little doggie doctors, always sent the doggie doctors in first when he visited her. He, too, couldn't find the courage to tell her

the truth about her condition and prognosis.

In fact, Carmella was never told the truth. She had no way of knowing that she was supposed to die of kidney cancer, so she didn't. Twenty-five years later, two years after retiring from a lifetime of heavy work in the laundry of another hospital, Carmella did die. I don't recall the diagnosis then, but she was in her mid-seventies, still unaware that she was expected to die a quarter-century earlier.

— *John D. Lane is rector of Trinity Episcopal in Staunton, Virginia.*

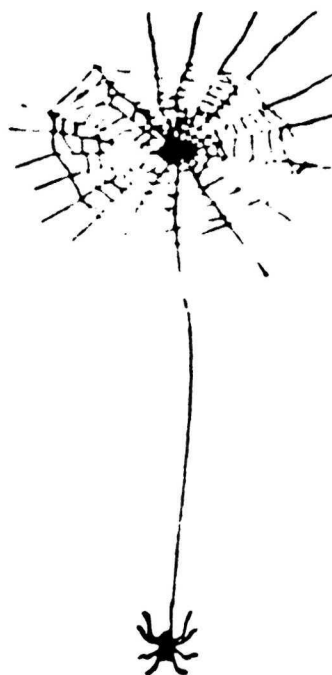


# The web

**M**y sisters and I used to play a game on rainy days making spider webs with yarn. One of us would fill a room with as complicated a web as possible and then the others had to untangle it. I was well into my thirties before I realized what a web of lies my mother had spun.

I first began to suspect something was wrong after I was married. Every time my parents visited I got sick. They greeted me with kisses and said they loved me, but they also said and did things that belied their pretty words. It took me years to realize there were deadly secrets being kept.

After my daughter was born I began to remember abuse at the hands of my father. A couple of years later I realized that my mother had also been abusive. My



Jean Church, CSJ

mother's lies made it difficult to unravel what had happened. Once I faced my mother's habit of deception I remembered many times she had lied to me—though at the time I had believed her. She had lied about our family's medical history, about her own history and about the circumstances of my birth. She had lied about my behavior as a child. It was staggering to discover the extent of her falsehoods.

I am still unweaving the warped picture of my childhood. As the web comes down, the truth about my past comes to light. The truth has often been hard to bear. It has caused me much grief. But mostly it has freed me from the cycle of hurt and deception, the cycle of lies and abuse, that I grew up with. When I look in my daughter's face, I have no question that it has been worth it. When I look in the mirror I know it has been worth it, too.

—E.B. Iris

## Tell us lies

# Go fish

by Sean Twomey

**I** have an all-right singing voice; it can be quite good, but that's kind of rare. I get shy and that turns it all around and I go way off-key. I don't know what I was doing, but I took this job delivering a singing telegram to a group of old women who were playing cards by an outdoor pool. They had about 50 decks stacked up with rubber bands around them, some of them double- and triple-wrapped. There were about 30 cards at the bottom of the pool on account of the tremendous wind and their inattention.

I sang them the song. It was a really bad song. It didn't even rhyme. I should have gone over it before I got there. I was so embarrassed I started laughing hysterically. I'll do that — laugh so I don't

have to cry. This really got their attention. One of them wrote on a napkin, "Would you please sing it again," and there was a lot of fierce nodding of approval. "But it's horrible," I said.

They just smiled, and the woman wrote on a score card that it felt good. "Not to me," I said.

She just looked at me, then wrote, "That's because you are listening and not feeling."

I looked at her blankly. She smiled and wrote, "We are all deaf."

"In that case I'll sing it twice," I roared. I had them almost falling out of their chairs. I had tears in my eyes from belching out this nonsense.

I was turning to leave when the woman who had been writing me the notes asked if I'd mind getting the cards from the bottom of the pool. The women were all quiet and giggly like schoolgirls. She had

asked me, not written. I looked at her and pointed out that the cards were in the deep end. She smiled and said, "Does that mean no?"

"Shouldn't you be writing this down?" I asked.

"Why would I do that?" Suddenly it was quiet.

"Because you're deaf."

"I lied." The women really began to laugh, like only grandmothers can at the expense of someone a quarter their age. They were having a grand old time, and they still wanted me to go diving for those cards. I was a little ticked off. I thought it was funny and all, but who wants a bunch of fake deaf ladies laughing at you? So I slipped off my sandals and took off my shirt. You could tell they thought the shorts should stay on, but you can't let other people rule your whole life.

—Reprinted from  
The Sun Magazine.

# Detroit newspaper strike arrests

Episcopal bishops R. Stewart Wood and H. Coleman McGehee were arrested March 6 with Detroit's city council president in what may prove a string of community protests in support of the Detroit newspaper strike which is entering its ninth month.

In a nonviolent witness, 23 Detroiters, including two Baptist pastors, several lawyers, two welfare rights activists and a member of the Jewish Labor Council, blocked the driveways at the *Detroit News* building in an effort to keep the "permanent replacement" workers from getting to work.

The Detroit Newspapers (DN) have thrown 2,500 people out of work, while hiring 1,500 replacements who, executives say, claim their primary loyalty. Strikers will only have jobs as they open up, management says. This despite a \$1 million a week profit during the year preceding the strike.

Protesters argued that the use of permanent replacement workers was both unlawful and unconscionable.

"It's a position that that the Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholic Church have consistently held," Wood said. "It is immoral to permanently replace workers who have gone out on strike."

The newspaper strike began in July when the DN refused to let workers, who had made concessions for three years running, continue working under the terms of the previous contract. In fact, *Detroit News* executive editor Robert Giles recently told a group of pastors that the DN refused to let workers stay on the job because they didn't want a strike to start in the Fall during their pre-Christmas rush. The DN was thinking ahead regard-

ing police service as well, having paid the Sterling Heights police a half million dollars for extra presence at their suburban printing plant.



**R. Stewart Wood, Bishop of Michigan, is arrested by Detroit police.**

Daymon Hartley, newspaper striker

The six affected unions have managed to stand in solidarity with one another, refusing to negotiate agreements with the company individually. However, due to the constriction of labor laws (which will be explored in an upcoming issue of *The Witness*), the unions' options are few. They have appealed to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) and they have won rulings against the DN that should ensure that they get their jobs back, but the process takes two to three years. Meanwhile, any strikers that act out their frustration can be fired and lose their advantage with the NLRB. The DN has secured an injunction against protests at the suburban printing plant where their

"scab" papers are produced.

The community has done much to stand in solidarity with the unions. Two hundred thousand people have stopped buying the papers. The city and county governments have pulled their advertising from the papers, as have many businesses. Two hundred religious leaders have signed a statement urging people not to read the papers because they are produced by permanent replacement workers.

However, the community is increasingly in crisis. Community groups cannot in good conscience request coverage of their concerns, their events or their fundraisers. Elected officials who are boycotting the papers cannot in good conscience grant interviews to reporters, even when the topic is a critical community issue. Residents who are not reading the paper are operating with an inadequate understanding of city development issues, schools, public health, and even deaths.

To underscore the importance of this labor-management struggle to the community, Readers United called for this direct action.

"We're taking this extreme action because the Detroit Newspapers has shown complete unwillingness to negotiate in good faith with the unions," Roman Catholic bishop Thomas Gumbleton explained.

*The Witness*' book review editor Bill Wylie-Kellermann and production assistant Maria Catalfio were among those arrested. A court date is scheduled at the end of March. Following the action, several constituencies including women, college faculty and members of unions not engaged in this strike, expressed interest in continuing protests at the Detroit Newspapers in the style of those that were held at the South African embassy. **TW**

— J.W-K.

# Debating core identity: a matter of search or certainty?

by Julie A. Wortman

*[Walter Righter, retired bishop of Iowa, is facing possible trial for heresy because 10 conservative Episcopal Church bishops, with the approval of one-quarter of the church's other bishops, have officially charged him with violating the church's doctrine and teaching — and his ordination vows — by knowingly ordaining a non-celibate homosexual man a deacon in 1990 while serving as assistant bishop in the Diocese of Newark. A hearing this past February addressed the question of whether the church has sufficient doctrine on homosexual ordinations to proceed with a formal trial.]*

No one denies that when Walter Righter ordained Barry Stopfel to the diaconate five years ago he was refusing to conform to a long-standing institutional practice of denying ordination to homosexual persons who decline to hide or renounce their committed relationships. Hotly disputed during an ecclesiastical court hearing in Wilmington, Del., on February 27, however, was whether Episcopalians should take that practice as an article of faith.

During the day-long public hearing Michael Rehill, the Newark chancellor who is serving as Righter's defense lawyer, was doggedly persistent in his "minimalist" argument that a person's fitness for ordination is not in itself a matter of doctrine.

## Rehill: a minimalist view

"Whether we agree or disagree on matters of human sexuality is not a matter of doctrine," Rehill asserted during his afternoon presentation to the nine-member court of bishops who must decide the case — like Righter, his accusers and their attorneys, all of them white men, middle-aged and older.

"Are you saying the General Convention cannot speak with authority regarding its interpretation of doctrine?" asked North Dakota's Andrew Fairfield, referring to General Convention resolutions that have affirmed "the traditional teaching of the church" on sexual morality.

Rehill, who had earlier noted that an often-cited 1979 General Convention resolution on human sexuality only articulates a negative position on ordaining "practicing" homosexuals, replied: "It can, but rarely does — doctrine has to do with what we believe and what our relationship to God is."

"Surely you're not arguing that the church doesn't have strong teachings?" pushed Los Angeles' bishop Frederick Borsch.

"We develop our rules based on doctrine," Rehill said.

"Can things of doctrine be open to interpretation?" New Hampshire's Douglas Theuner later asked.

"The Trinity is a doctrine but we all might have different visions of it," Rehill answered. "The Episcopal Church does not require absolute conformity of belief — even in the matter of doctrine."

In the hearing's morning session Hugo Blakingship, retired chancellor of the Diocese of Virginia, had sought to dispute such claims.

## Blakingship: authority and order

"This case is first and foremost about authority, it is about the authority of Holy Scripture and the role it will play in our church," Blakingship began. "This case is about order. This case is about doctrine, the doctrine of Christian marriage. And it is about family values. This case is about faithfulness to knowing and proclaiming who we are."

*"This case is about the doctrine of Christian marriage. And it is about family values. This case is about knowing and proclaiming who we are."*

— Hugo Blakingship

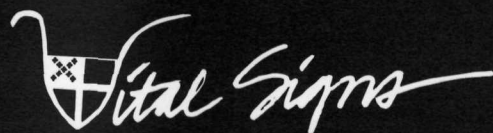
He then proceeded to offer a litany of General Convention resolutions, reports and prayerbook citations intended to uphold the accusers' view that "the church has a clear

doctrine on human sexuality" that holds that heterosexual marriage is the only acceptable context for sexual relations. But when asked by Borsch, "Would you argue that this is a core identity issue for the church?" Blakingship replied, "I would not want to be led down that path," quietly adding, "I'm just a lawyer stuck with this case."

Blakingship may also have unintentionally bolstered Rehill's argument in his response to a question from Delaware's Cabell Tennis that came late in the day.

In light of the accusers' argument that it is church doctrine that non-celibate homosexuals should never be ordained, Tennis asked whether that would "mean that all homosexual priests in this church who are living in committed relationships ought to be deposed."

"That's a very hard question," Blakingship responded. "I think you have to take each one of those situations and consider what the nature of the witness



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



was and make a judgment. And that essentially is a diocesan problem, and not a national canon."

### The spotlight shifts to discipline

Many observers left the hearing convinced that Righter's side had carried the day and that at least a majority of the court's judges would agree. Most were therefore surprised when on March 1 the court shifted its focus from doctrine to discipline, asking both sides to provide further argumentation in this area while summarily rejecting Rehill's motion to drop the charge that in ordaining Stopfel Righter had also violated his ordination vows. Two questions are to be addressed: "Do resolutions, statements and/or actions of the General Convention or House of Bishops constitute disciplinary authority, as distinct from doctrine, violation of which subjects a bishop, priest or deacon to Presentment under Title IV?" And, second, "With particular attention to the issue of discipline, does the ordination of a noncelibate homosexual person constitute a violation of the ordaining bishop's Oath of Conformity?" Each side will also have a chance to respond to the other's argument, a process which will not be completed until early this month.

If the court does rule that General Convention resolutions and statements have the force of discipline, it would be upholding an opinion issued by a committee of five bishops appointed in 1994 by the presiding bishop to review the claims of six priests and 29 lay persons in the Diocese of Michigan. They also had asserted that their bishop, Stewart Wood, had violated the 1979 General Convention resolution recommending that "it is not appropriate for this church to ordain a practicing homosexual" when he ordained a lesbian in a committed relationship to the priesthood. But a majority of the review committee concluded that the 1979 resolution's own wording did not clearly indicate an intention that the resolution be mandatory and the charges against Wood were dropped.

Throughout the Wilmington proceedings, however, Blakingship argued that the doctrine behind the 1979

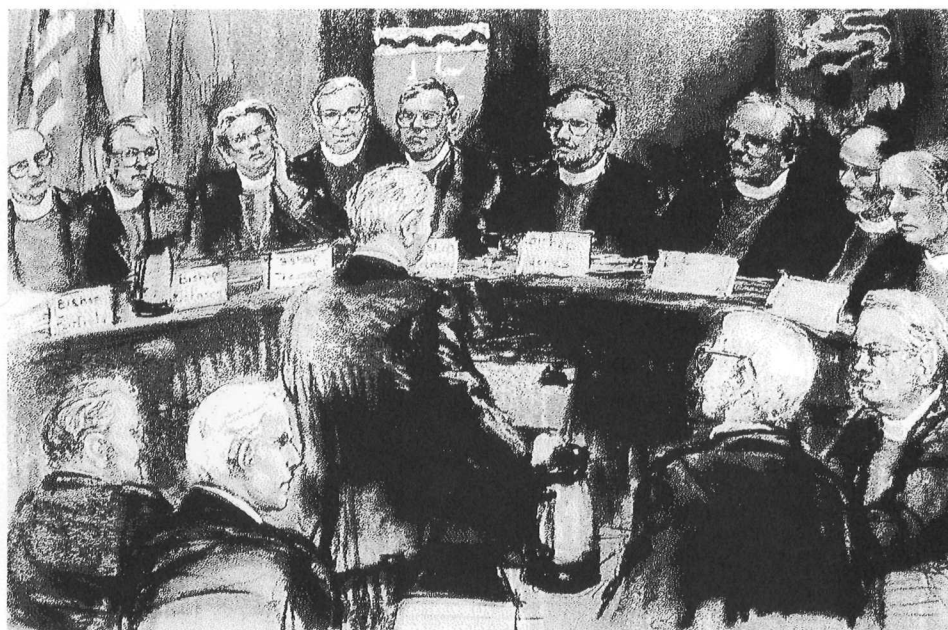
General Convention resolution and other church statements was unambiguous.

"The church's position is understood and clear," he said. "[The bishops] are able to disagree and there can be honest disagreement, but until that is changed by the church — not by individual dioceses or by individual bishops — until it is changed by the church, it remains."

### Looking to Philadelphia

As the church awaits the court's decision on doctrine and discipline and whether

ordination. Following up on a "mind of the House" resolution passed by the church's bishops in 1995 declaring the 18-year-old canon permitting women access to the priesthood and episcopate mandatory and not permissive, the legislation will make explicit that a woman's "sex" alone cannot be the basis for denying her access to ordination or, once ordained, her ability to function as a priest. In addition, a resolution is included that would bar similar discrimination against persons who



Susan Schary, ENS

**Courtroom art depicts Church Advocate Hugo Blakingship addressing the nine bishops who make up the Court for the Trial of a Bishop meeting in Wilmington, Del., February 27.**

the Righter trial should go forward, most people on both sides of the case are mentally gearing up for the church's next General Convention — because if there is one thing both parties agree on it is that the General Convention is the authority of last resort on the question of who may lawfully be excluded from ordination in the Episcopal Church, whatever one's position on the nature of doctrine.

Already on the agenda for that massive church gathering — scheduled to be held in Philadelphia next year — is a package of legislation offered by the committee charged at the 1994 Indianapolis General Convention with finding a way to implement the canons on women's

oppose women's ordination, but which says they are obliged to obey the canons of the church.

For those who see a connection between sexism and heterosexism, it is not surprising that four of the 10 bishops charging Righter with violating church law and teaching are the final holdouts on complying with the canons authorizing the ordination of women.

But will the 1997 convention also put to rest the homosexual ordination question — and, if so, in what way?

The General Convention has consistently refused to prohibit gay ordinations, but it has always affirmed the church's "traditional teaching" about

sexual expression within heterosexual marriage — however extensively these affirmations have been qualified. Even the 1979 General Convention resolution that the accusers want “enforced” was dissented to by 20 bishops, a list which included the man the bishops elected their leader in 1985.

Borsch pointed this fact out during the Wilmington hearing.

“Did the bishops think [Presiding Bishop] Browning was a heretic [when they elected him]?” he asked Blakingship.

“Perhaps it was prophetic of the trouble we’re in now,” Blakingship replied. “Perhaps the bishops should have done something about the dissenting opinions.”

#### A ‘common confession’

As this exchange suggests, those who believe bishops like Walter Righter should be stopped from ordaining partnered gay men and lesbians want to interpret doctrine broadly so that clergy and others in the church can be restricted in their freedom

to act ahead of the rest of the church.

Two of Righter’s accusers — Florida’s Stephen Jecko and Dallas’ James Stanton — have helped start a new coalition of persons and groups called the American Anglican Congress that would seem to reflect the sort of institution they hope for. Identifying themselves with “historic biblical Anglicanism” and espousing “biblical orthodoxy,” the new group asks that people who would like to join up sign on to “a common confession of the Gospel” as a basis for “Godly fellowship.” They are also asked to affirm a set of statements on “contemporary issues,” that Patrick Buchanan would probably support.

#### Embracing search, not certainty

Those who approve of Righter’s ordination of Barry Stopfel have a different vision. By interpreting the essentials of doctrine narrowly, they intend to make room in the institution for the widest possible range of beliefs — and debate. Their vision is reflected in the purposes of another new

organization, the Center for Progressive Christianity (CPC) (see p. 27).

CPC’s purpose is “to offer the message of Christianity to those for whom organized religion has proved ineffectual, irrelevant or repressive; to uphold evangelism as an agent of justice and peace; to give a strong voice in the churches and the public arena to the advocates of progressive Christianity; and to support congregations embracing search, not certainty.”

Search versus certainty, in fact, very well defines what is at the heart of the outrage being expressed by people on both sides of the debate. In these millennial times people want their church, at least, to stand for “the right thing.”

What is the right thing? That, of course, is the question which put the Righter proceedings into motion in the first place. One can only hope that at the next General Convention the debate will no longer be the sole province of the middle-aged white men who have shaped it so far.

## The resolution at issue

*[Ed.note: The meaning and weight of the resolution on human sexuality passed by the General Convention in 1979 is at the center of the debate over whether Walter Righter violated church doctrine and discipline when he ordained Barry Stopfel in 1990. The full text of that resolution is provided here.]*

Whereas, we are conscious of the mystery of human sexuality and how deeply personal matters related to human sexuality are, making it most difficult to arrive at comprehensive and agreed-upon statements in these matters; and

Whereas, we are aware that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the Church must continue to study these matters in relationship to Holy Scripture, Christian faith and tradition, and growing insights; and

Whereas, the 65th General Convention recognized “... that homosexual persons are children of

God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the Church ...”; and

Whereas, all the clergy and laity of the Church are expected to render compassionate and understanding pastoral care to one another and to all persons; therefore be it

Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, That the 66th General Convention receive with gratitude and appreciation the Report and Recommendations of its Standing Commission on Human Affairs and Health with special reference to the requested study of the matter of ordination of homosexual persons; and be it further

Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, That this General Convention recommend to Bishops, Pastors, Vestries, Commissions on Ministry and Standing Committees, the following considerations

as they continue to exercise their proper canonical functions in the selection and approval of persons for ordination:

1. There are many human conditions, some of them in the area of sexuality, which bear upon a person’s suitability for ordination;

2. Every ordinand is expected to lead a life which is “a wholesome example to all people” (Book of Common Prayer, pp. 517, 532, 544). There should be no barrier to the ordination of qualified persons of either heterosexual or homosexual orientation whose behavior the Church considers wholesome;

3. We re-affirm the traditional teaching of the Church on marriage, marital fidelity and sexual chastity as the standard of Christian sexual morality. Candidates are expected to conform to this standard. Therefore, we believe it is not appropriate for this Church to ordain a practicing homosexual, or any person who is engaged in heterosexual relations outside of marriage.

## Ordain homosexuals, Tutu urges

Accepting gay/lesbian clergy is a matter of "justice, of compassion, of consistency," according to Desmond Tutu, Anglican archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa. Tutu made the declaration in a telephone interview with *BBC Radio* last February. He also called for recognition of faithful gay and lesbian couples.

"The church has not got there yet, but if we were to say that in relationships it is desirable that there is fidelity between a couple, why should we not extend the same conditions to same-sex relationships?" Tutu said. "This is my personal position."

Tutu's comments came on the heels of claims made by a British newspaper that he and 300 other church leaders, including the Episcopal Church's presiding bishop, Edmond L. Browning, had backed a call for homosexual priests. The leaders had added their names to an advertisement honoring the "valuable contribution made to the continuing debate on sexuality and Christianity" by the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement (LGCM) on the occasion of the its 20th anniversary. LGCM supports the ordination of homosexuals in the Church of England.

— based on *Anglican Communion News* and *Ecumenical News International*

## CIA use of clergy

In a letter to John Deutch, director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning has expressed dismay at reports that a loophole in CIA regulations apparently permits the recruitment of clergy or missionaries overseas.

According to an article in *The Washington Post* newspaper, February 22, the CIA in "extraordinarily rare" occasions secretly waived a 1977 regulation prohibiting the use of journalists in intelligence gathering, and could use the same loophole to sidestep a similar ban on employing church workers. Intelligence officials declined to say

whether clergy or missionaries actually had been used, the *Post* reported.

The Episcopal Church already has been concerned about a possible review of the "legal and policy restraints" on the CIA, recommended by the Council on Foreign Relations. "To read that a loophole has always existed is devastating," he said. "This loophole must be closed."

Churches played a prominent role in obtaining the 1977 ban, Browning noted, at a time when rumors of alleged C.I.A. involvement "touched many of our missionaries." The ban should not be opened to a new review, and the recommendation that "intelligence agents be allowed to pose as church workers should also be rejected," he said. "Our credibility is at stake."

—based on a *Episcopal News Service* report by James H. Thrall

## The Native Episcopal Church of North America

Native peoples from 17 U.S. dioceses meeting in central Oklahoma in January have created the Native Episcopal Church of North America. The group believes the new entity will help indigenous Episcopalians take their "rightful place within the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion," a purpose it articulated a year ago in a "Statement of Self-Determination."

"We do not leave our own dioceses or the Episcopal Church," said facilitator Martin Brokenleg, an Episcopal priest who is a Rosebud Sioux. "What we are doing is deliberately taking a bold step toward shouldering responsibilities for our own vision of ministry."

The dual affiliation will come easily, according to Frank Oberly, the Osage/Comanche chair of the Episcopal Council of Indian Ministries, which sponsored the meeting.

"We have been citizens of our own tribes as well as citizens of the U.S.," Oberly said. "We can handle dual affiliations in the church."

The group was assisted in its decision

to create the new church entity by five indigenous Canadian Anglicans, among them Gordon Beardy, suffragan bishop of Keewatin and the first Cree to become a bishop. The First Nations peoples of the Anglican Church of Canada have been successful in winning acceptance for self-determination in recent years. One of their goals is to create a special jurisdiction with its own bishop.

A 15-member task force will begin work on shaping the structure of the new Native Episcopal Church in May.

— based on an *Episcopal News Service* report by Owanah Anderson

## National Forum for progressives

Created to unite "people who are trying to provide a place for those who have felt rejected by the church," the fledgling Center for Progressive Christianity will hold its first forum, "Out of the Whirlwind: Claiming a Vision of Progressive Christianity," June 13-15 in Columbia, S.C.

The center is particularly concerned about the failure of churches "to offer an approach to religion that respects other religious traditions," and their emphasis on "exclusive dogmas that cause divisions in society."

The forum will feature panel discussions. Among the topics will be "Prophecy in the progressive church" and "Redefining virtue."

The center's board and advisory committee include: Anne G. Amy, A.N. Barnard, Hugh Dawes, Joanna Etka, Jane Soyster Gould, Janice Gregory, Jorge M. Gutierrez, Gayle E. Harris, Helen M. Havens, Susan Blackburn Heath, Thomas H. Naylor, William W. Rankin, Janice Robinson, William S. Sachs, Cynthia Shattuck, Peter Sherer, Fredrica H. Thompson, Robert W. Tobin, G. Richard Wheatcroft, Charles V. Willie and Ellen K. Wondra.

For more information contact: The Center for Progressive Christianity, 118 3rd St., SE, Washington, D.C., 20003; 202-543-8851; (fax) 202-546-3695.



# An apostle of urban mission

by Robert DeWitt, Coleman McGehee and John Hines

*[Ed. note: On April 26 The Witness will be joining others to celebrate the life and work of Episcopal Church social activist Hugh White. Ordained a priest in 1947, White first became involved in union organizing while on the staff at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Ypsilanti, Mich. His concern for the welfare of workers and workplace ethics led him to found the Detroit Industrial Mission (DIM), an ecumenical group of clergy devoted to ministering to workers and management alike in an effort to improve workplace conditions and communications on the model of similar work being done in England. He worked with the DIM from 1955 until 1967 and then became involved with the National Industrial Mission. Between 1974 and 1984 White worked for the Episcopal Church Publishing Company (owner of The Witness), among other things helping to organize the Urban Bishops Coalition and working on economic issues. At the request of Michigan bishop H. Coleman McGehee, he exercised critical leadership in organizing Michigan's economic justice proposal for the 1988 General Convention. White was a staunch advocate of women's ordination in the early 1970s and through the Detroit/Dearborn Alliance has endeavored to build positive inter-faith and inter-racial relations between and within those communities.]*

*Cards or queries about the April 26 event can be sent to John Hooper, Episcopal Diocese of Michigan, 4800 Woodward Ave., Detroit, Mich. 48201; 313-832-4400.]*

**Robert DeWitt**, retired bishop of Pennsylvania, lives in Maine. **Coleman McGehee**, retired bishop of Michigan, lives in Michigan. **John Hines**, retired presiding bishop, lives in Texas.

**H**ugh White was a man of early promise. A pacifist during WWII, he drove an ambulance in North Africa for the American Field Service. A religious awareness had been



**Hugh White**

growing in him for some years, and by the time the war ended, he was afire with the desire to be an ordained minister. As with many of his contemporaries, the war had interrupted his plans for college, so he studied first at the University of Virginia before going on to Virginia Theological Seminary. He became a force in the seminary community, and was asked to represent it at inter-seminary conferences.

He also became a man of sartorial and tonsorial sensitivity, perhaps the mark of a frustrated thespian. How he dresses and how he shaves is a matter of conscious decision. For some time he wore a black beret. Some thought this began with his very real interest in the French worker-priest movement of the post-war period. He has a perennial penchant for plaid wool jackets, suggestive of his Scotch ancestry. He has a continuing interest in beards, and shows skill in trimming them

to varying roles. One morning he was was approached by a youngster who called out with a smirk, "Hey! Are you Colonel Sanders?" (of Kentucky Fried Chicken). Hugh tossed his head with impatience at the impertinence, but he was obviously pleased that his make-up was getting across the footlights.

In the early years of his ordained ministry he served in a parish. His interests and contacts were innumerable, resulting from his deep interest in and concern for people. He was casual about schedules, prodigal with his time given for friends and others in need. In those days, a close friend was complaining about an appointment Hugh had had with him, for which Hugh had failed to show. The friend continued, "On the other hand, if Hugh *does* keep an appointment, you have his complete and undivided attention—even at the sacrifice of an appointment with someone else, which he has forgotten."

His cavalier handling of time and schedule were to change radically. His years with the Parishfield Community in Michigan, a training center for working people, led him to a new focus for his ministry. He gained a new appreciation for the crucial importance, and the many contradictions, of the world of work. Out of this concern was born the Detroit Industrial Mission.

Business and industry were a new world for Hugh. He learned to be punctual, and to plan and schedule his work with care. His talent for friendship served him well, and he came to be appreciated alike by workers on the line, and in the executive offices. One day he called the president of Chrysler, as a part of his program of getting to know the personnel and the atmosphere of "Motown." He said he would like a couple of hours of his time for an interview. The response was a blast. "I wouldn't give the President of the United States that much time. I'll give you half an hour!" When Hugh arrived at

the Chrysler office, he told the executive he was trying to understand what people are coping with in their jobs, and said, "So I wish you would tell me about your job. What does a president of Chrysler do?" Two and a half hours later Hugh went on to his next appointment!

This immersion in the industrial world of his beloved Detroit was perhaps the most critical period in the shaping of Hugh's ministry. He had a way of getting inside the heads and hearts of people, and consequently gained a deep understanding of modern America, the tensions and trials of the times, and to know the forces, and the people, who were seeking change.

When the General Convention was held in Detroit in 1964, Hugh organized bus tours for the deputies. They visited assembly lines and ghettos, estates and slums, seeing first-hand the hallmarks of America's urban culture and industrialization. Many of the debates and decisions of the convention were influenced by that clinical experience.

Some few years later Bishop Hines was seeking to understand the meaning of Watts and the other explosions of America's racial tensions. Hugh invited him to visit Detroit, and arranged contacts for him. In cafes and on street corners, in kitchens and living rooms, Hines was able to talk one-on-one with African Americans who alone could interpret the signs of those chaotic times. The Special Convention on racism at South Bend, and the General Convention Special Program, were the direct results of that experience.

When *The Witness* magazine—a journal with a long tradition of bearing testimony to the social mission of the church—resumed publication, Hugh White's

help was solicited. With his broad background in industrial mission and experience with social analysis, he was invaluable in reviewing articles for publication.

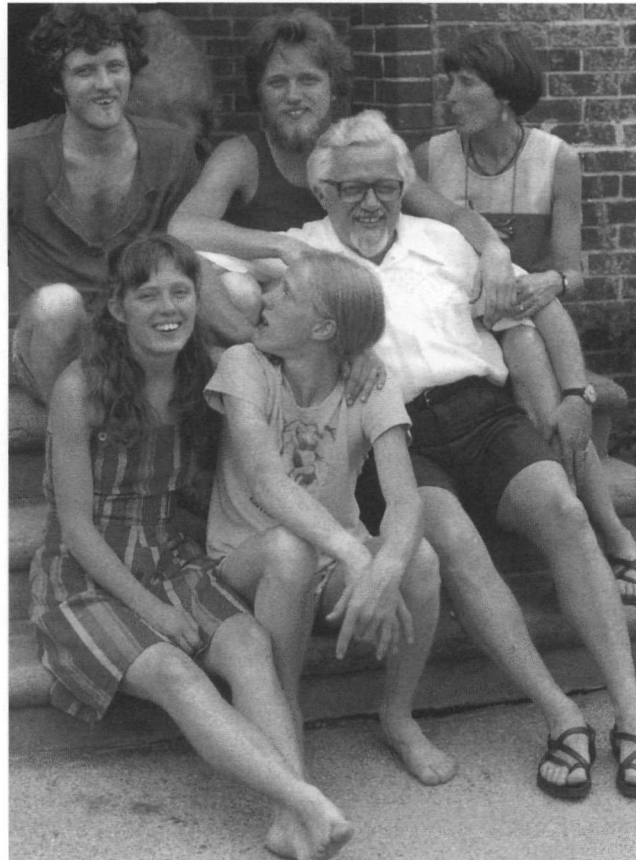
Likewise, when a group of bishops organized the Urban Bishop's Coalition,

Michigan, sought an advisor for public relations and social concerns, he turned to Hugh. For several years Hugh filled this staff position both for Coleman and then his successor, Stewart Wood. A native Detroit, Hugh was utterly familiar with Michigan, its problems and dynamics, and with a veritable multitude of its people. How many bishops might serve their sees more effectively were they to have such a consultant!

How to define the vocational life of one who is only identified, not at all adequately described, by the above few citations? He is not the stereotypical parish priest, though he was a faithful and effective one for some years. He has not the title of theologian, although his pioneering work with industrial mission was "doing" theology vividly, dramatically, importantly. He is not a professor, yet many have sat at his feet and learned things they might have sought far and wide and never found. He is not a bishop—indeed he has serious reservations about the episcopal institution, feeling that without major changes it is in danger of sharing the fate of British royalty, the fate of irrelevance.

Yet in the historic meaning of the episcopate, and in the linkage of that office with the apostles, there is an unmistakable episcopal aura in the life and work of Hugh White. An apostle is "one who is sent," and one who is sent is accountable to the sender. Somehow the term "apostle" has a peculiarly strong fit for Hugh.

In his case it seems clear that the thrust of God's purpose has bypassed ecclesiastical categories and placed a man where, in the higher calculus of the divine will, he was needed. **TW**



Hugh White with his family in the early 1970s in Detroit.

it was because they were concerned about the deterioration of America's urban centers, and wanted to inform both themselves and their people about the problems. They got in touch with Hugh for suggestions on how to go about the task. As a result of Hugh's initiatives, an ambitious series of open hearings was held in cities across the country, and beyond. People who were concerned, and those who were hurting found an arena where they could speak and be heard.

When Coleman McGehee, Bishop of

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# Clouding integrity

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

(**integrity**) by Stephen L. Carter, N.Y. Basic Books, 1996, 261 pages, \$22.

Anyone who contends that Coca-Cola's decision to keep producing the original (now classic) Coke is an example of integrity is difficult to take seriously.

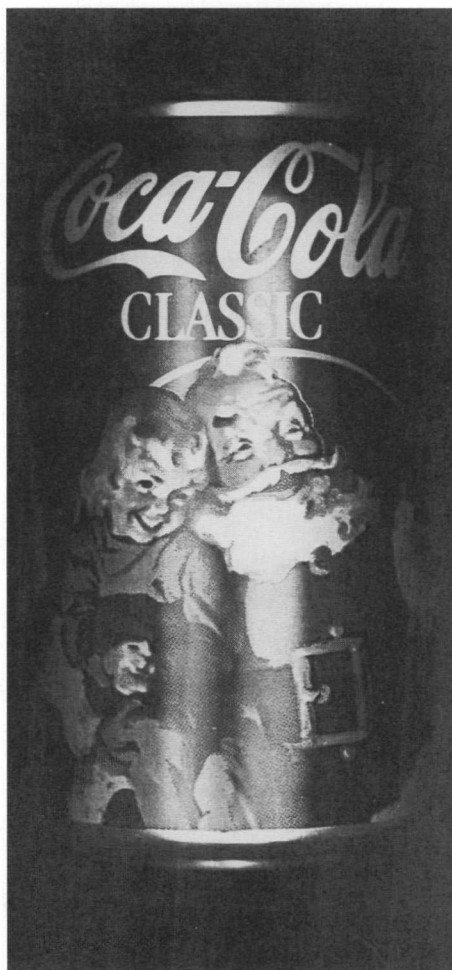
If one persists on through Stephen L. Carter's book, one can glean occasional insights into the ethical dilemmas inherent in marriage, in professional sports, in the media and in law, but the cost is high.

The reader must struggle with what Carter advertises as a three-part test for integrity: Does the person in question: 1. exercise moral discernment? 2. act on moral discernment, even at a personal cost? 3. be clear and public about the action and belief? (A variety of lesser screens are also applied — compassion, steadfastness, etc.)

Yet in applying the multifaceted test in a hodge-podge of examples, Carter consistently flunks people whose beliefs and actions he dislikes. Most often he concludes that they did not exercise step one, because had they exercised moral discernment they never could have reached the conclusion they did. (Not to beg the question.)

"The person of integrity ... cannot be a person who blows up buildings to make a point," Carter announces in the first chapter. As a reader committed to nonviolence, I wonder nonetheless, do all soldiers in wartime lack integrity if they bomb enemy buildings? Do groups that

have considered themselves at war, American revolutionaries, Palestinians, Puerto Rican nationalists, Black Liberation militants, right-wing militia members lack integrity because — after moral discernment — they conclude that violence is an appropriate tool in their struggle?



Likewise, when Carter tries to make a distinction between people practicing covert sabotage in Nazi Germany (whom he says pass the integrity test) from members of the militant right in the U.S. doing

the same, Carter concludes the "rest of us are under no obligation to agree with the moral judgment of the fanatic." (Name-calling as a tried and true way to encourage respectful dialogue?)

Carter considers the National Rifle Association to have "unintegrity" because it endorses guns yet calls federal officials "thugs" when they act against people with guns. I'm appalled that Carter can't imagine that one could advocate gun proliferation (which I oppose) and still have a valid complaint against the federal government's actions against gun advocates.

In a more mundane example, which Carter indicates prompted the book, a football player "hit the ground, rolled over, and then jumped up, celebrating as though he had caught the pass" (p. 4). Commentators considered it a "heads-up play!" Carter was appalled and further disturbed when colleagues defended the player, suggesting that posturing is now part of the game. Yet in chapter 4, Carter writes "bargaining would be impossible if integrity required telling everything we know." In his view, saying something one knows to be untrue in this context still has integrity because it is understood to be part of the exchange. (Yes in bargaining, no in sports?)

If Carter were setting out to demonstrate that integrity is a complicated topic, one that cannot be confined within a narrow rubric, these examples would surely demonstrate this. But since his goal is the opposite, readers must work hard to see why Carter is not undermining his own argument as he proceeds. **TV**

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

**“T**he righteous are not exempt from evil.”

These words are what Magda Trocmé remembered of the 1972 ceremony in Israel which posthumously awarded the Medal of Righteousness to André Trocmé, her husband.

“The righteous must often pay a price for their righteousness: their own ethical purity,” explains Philip Hallie, who chronicled the story of Le Chambon, the small, Protestant town in France which hid and protected thousands of Jews during the Nazi occupation, under the leadership of Trocmé, its pastor (*Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed*, Harper Colophon Books, 1979).

A pacifist with a fiery personality and an unswerving commitment to the teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, Trocmé was the founder of a secondary school which taught nonviolence and functioned independently of the state. When the Vichy government mandated a daily salute to the flag, his students did not take part; neither did the teachers sign a required loyalty oath. As the persecution of Jews intensified, and word spread that Le Chambon was a safe haven, refugees began to pour into the town. With little organization or planning, networks of hospitality spread out in the homes of villagers.

“The Trocmés and Le Chambon learned [that] they must *conceal* from the authorities and from unsympathetic citizens any help they were giving refugees,”

*The righteous must often pay a price for their righteousness: their own ethical purity.*

— Philip Hallie



André Trocmé and family

## A price for righteousness

by Marianne Arbogast

Hallie writes. “But in Le Chambon in the beginning of the 1940s, concealment meant lying — lying both by omission and by commission. It meant not conveying to the authorities any of the legally required information about new foreigners in Le Chambon, and it meant making false identity cards and ration cards for the refugees so that they could survive in Vichy France.”

This raised serious moral problems for Trocmé and others. “None of those leaders became reconciled to making counterfeit cards,” Hallie says, but continued to feel it as a necessary, if unavoidable, violation of their integrity.

“The spirit of Le Chambon in those times was a strange combination of can-

dor and concealment, of a yearning for truth and of a commitment to secrecy,” Hallie writes. “They were as open as love permits in a terrible time.”

Trocmé faced his own deepest crisis when he was arrested by the German police while running to catch a train. His

12-year-old son was waiting while he fetched their baggage. Though he was carrying a false identity card, and knew that his name was on a Gestapo death list, he could not bear the thought of a direct lie.

*“The spirit of Le Chambon in those times was a strange combination of candor and concealment, of a yearning for truth and of a commitment to secrecy.”*

— Philip Hallie

“Soon the German police would interrogate him and demand to see his papers,” Hallie writes. “His identity card gave his name as Beguet, and they would

*Witnesses,  
the quick and the dead*

Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of *The Witness*.

ask him if this was indeed true. Then he would have to lie to hide his identity. But he was not able to lie; lying, especially to save his own skin, was 'sliding toward those compromises that God had not called upon me to make,' he wrote in his autobiographical notes on this incident. Saving the lives of others — and even saving his own life — with false identity cards was one thing, but standing before another human being and speaking lies to him only for the sake of self-preservation was something different.

Telling the policeman a lie face-to-face would mean crossing a line that stands between the false identity card that saves a human life and the betrayal of one's fellowman and of one's God. Trocmé had allowed the false identity card to be made for him only to give sympathetic French police an excuse for not turning him over to the German police. And in Le Chambon the false identity cards for others were a weapon against the betrayal of those who were being persecuted. Trocmé had never lied to Vichy or to the Germans about there being refugees in Le Chambon. He had told them frankly that there were, and he had just as frankly refused to tell them

who and where they were. He had defended the defenseless, and he had not betrayed the people in his charge. Now he would be bearing false witness, lying simply to save himself.

"He decided that when the German police questioned him, he would say, 'I am not Monsieur Beguet. I am Pastor André Trocmé.' Having made this decision, he became calm; his conscience was quiet."

By chance or by grace, another option presented itself. Standing in a line at the station, Trocmé and his son were able to slip behind a pillar, merge into a crowd of arriving passengers, and escape.

While the community worried about the effect of their daily deceptions on their children, Trocmé's daughter told Hallie that "the children, as far as Nelly could see, never had the problem of unlearning lying. She remembers the children, among them herself, seeing the situation with the clear eyes of youth. She remembers their seeing that people were being helped in a desperate situation by these lies. And the children were convinced that what was happening in the homes of Le Chambon was right, simply right."

TV

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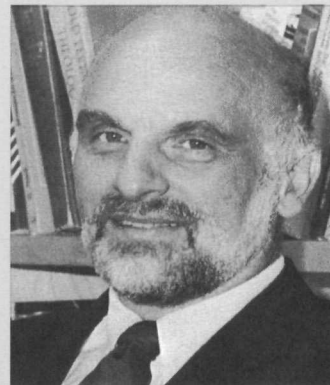
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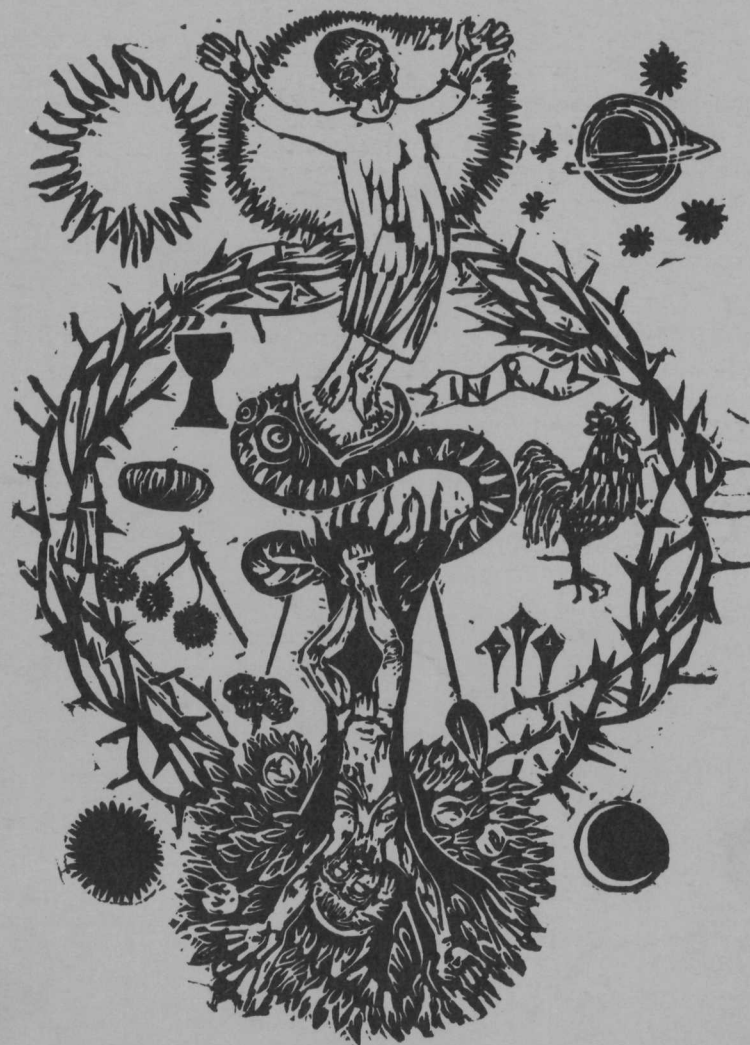


*It is clear that in the church things are going to become more conflicted and more demanding before they get better.*

*Meanwhile continued prayer and conversation become urgent as our best way ahead. The Witness matters mightily to that conversation wherein none of us can see ahead clearly. And some of us will admit that The Witness moves into our prayer life as well as our conversation.*

— Walter Brueggemann  
Columbia Theological Seminary,  
Decatur, Georgia





*Magic has a prophetic significance, since it proclaims by its very absurdity that for human wholeness and social regeneration to take place, the existing conditions of power which make this impossible must be abolished. But magic does not have power to fulfill the truth of its insight and intention. Behind it we find a powerless person. The truth of magic will become reality only when one's impotence turns to power.*

— Rubem A. Alves,

Tomorrow's Child: Imagination, Creativity and  
the Rebirth of Culture (Harper, 1972).

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