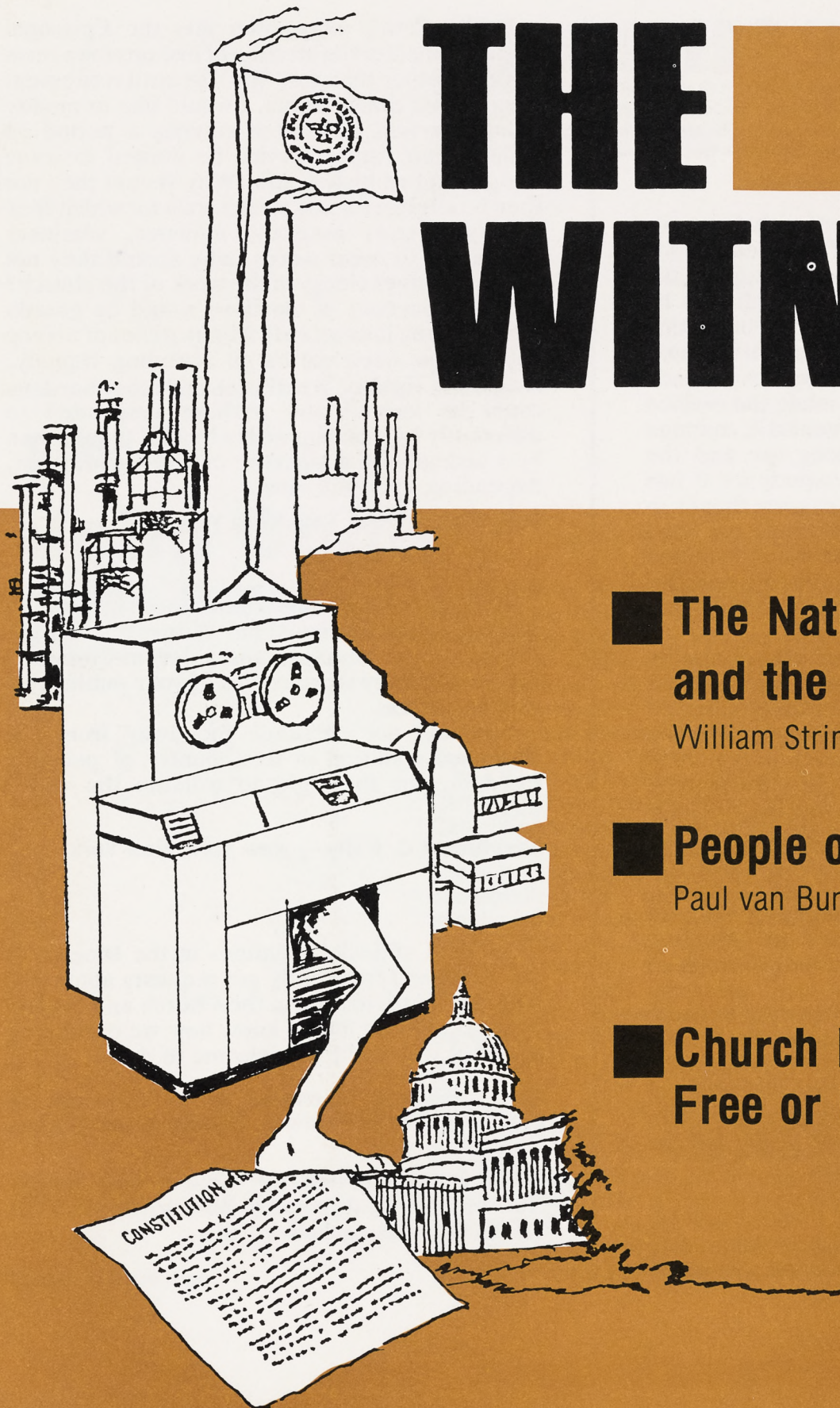


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THE WITNESS



■ The Nation's Destiny and the Problem of Hope

William Stringfellow

■ People of the Promise

Paul van Buren

■ Church Press — Free or Captive?

Letters to the Editor

The Witness reserves the right to condense all letters.

The Sisters of Saint Mary, St. Mary's Convent, Sewanee, Tennessee, wish to inform their friends in Christ that they unanimously support the proposed Revised Prayer Book, which will be presented for adoption to the General Convention of 1976. Since early 1976, we have participated daily in one or another of the revised eucharistic liturgies and, since 1973, have made the revised Daily Offices the core of our monastic common prayer. On the basis of this long use and the opportunity for reflection and experience it has afforded, we would like to express our thanks to the Standing Liturgical Committee and our hope that General Convention will adopt the results of its work, keeping in mind the continuing need for renewal and revision of the work of the people of God.

On a separate issue, but one which practicality and economy encourage us to mention here, we also wish to say that we unanimously stand in favor of the proposal to ordain women to the priesthood of the Episcopal Church in the USA, and hope, too, that General Convention will adopt this resolution in 1976. We hope that the irregular ordinations of a number of women to the priesthood during the past year and a half will quickly be regularized.

We have reached these decisions not because we are professional theologians or liturgists (perhaps we are amateurs in the radical sense of the word), but because we are primarily beginners and strugglers in prayer. And because prayer, among other things, teaches one to pay attention and to speak for one's self to God, and to all the centers of power — internal and external — that touch one's life, we need at this time to address ourselves to the Church at large, and our fellow Episcopalians in particular.

Faithfully in Christ,
The Sisters of Saint Mary
Sewanee, Tennessee

Phillip Cato's suggestion that the Episcopal Church consider the election of bishops for a term of years rather than for "life" or until retirement seems most timely to me. I would like to modify his suggestion that after serving a period as bishop their future service be limited to some assignment as bishop still. Why should they not then be eligible for any clerical role for which they qualify: rector, assistant minister, seminary professor? In other words, why should they not rejoin the other clergy in the work of the church?

This procedure of elections would be greatly freeing to the laity as well. Mis-matches of bishop and diocese need not be an unending tragedy. Overwork, rigidity, frustration and other burdens could be viewed and perhaps responded to differently by a bishop with a limited tenure than by a bishop with a sinecure or with no way out, depending upon the view.

Betty Gray — New York, New York

THE WITNESS has come to my desk. A reading raises the question: Witness for what?

I am a loyal American and a devout Christian. Do not send any more copies of your publication to this address.

You will not persuade me away from the cherished tradition in this country of personal freedom, nor the right to worship the way I please.

Rev. Robert C. Kelly — New York, New York

As head of Social Relations in the Diocese of Los Angeles I frequently get requests about Los Angeles' participation in the Church and Society Network. Please let me know how we could plug in and if we would be welcome to do so.

Rev. Charles E. Bennison, Jr. — Chairman of Program on Social Relations, Diocese of Los Angeles

(Inquiries concerning the Church and Society Network may be directed to Box 359, Ambler PA 19002. It is not exclusive. Ed.)

more letters on page 15

THE WITNESS

Robert L. DeWitt, Editor; E. Lawrence Carter, Robert Eckersley, Antoinette Swanger, Lisa K. Whelan, Hugh C. White, Jr. Editorial and Business Office: P.O. Box 359, Ambler, Pennsylvania 19002. Telephone (215) 643-7067. Subscription rates: \$9.00 per year; \$1.00 per copy. *The Witness* is published monthly by the Episcopal Church Publishing Company. Board of Directors: Bishops Morris Arnold, Robert DeWitt, Lloyd Gressle, John Hines, John Krumm, Brooke Mosley and Dr. Joseph Fletcher. Copyright 1975 by the Episcopal Church Publishing Company. Printed in U.S.A.

Editorial

John Cogley 1916-1976

Robert L. DeWitt

John Cogley, former religious news editor of the New York Times, died March 29th in Santa Barbara at the age of sixty. The Witness takes sad notice of his death. In his role as a journalist, John Cogley had taken his place resolutely at the intersection of the religious and the secular, the crossroads where church and society meet. It is not an easy assignment, as a reporter, to be called to observe and to comment upon the tragic unfolding of history during the past few decades, and upon the usually turgid efforts of the church to respond to that reality.

The New York Times mentioned that during the Depression he joined the Catholic Worker movement of Dorothy Day, an organized effort to apply Catholic principles to poverty and other social ills. He edited a newspaper and ran a hospitality house that offered a bowl of soup and a bunk bed to the down and out. "This day-to-day living with the very poor, at least in my case, had one lasting effect", he once recalled. "It made me permanently skeptical about romantic proletarianism, facile talk about loving your neighbor, merely verbal radicalism. Dorothy Day used to quote Dostoevski to us: 'Love in reality is a harsh and dreadful thing compared to love in dreams.' We learned how true that was".

And so John Cogley became a responsible journalist, a responsible human being. He was familiar with the foibles of both church and society, yet for him that familiarity did not lead to cynicism. It lead, rather, to a deep commitment. That commitment caused him, among many other involvements, to give generously of his time and wisdom to The Witness in the months leading to its re-publication. That same commitment led him, in the last year of his life, to seek ordination to the diaconate in the church of his late choosing, the Episcopal Church. Such commitment is a product of hope.

"Once the faintest stirring of hope became possible", wrote Camus, "the dominion of the plague was ended." Such words have an unmistakable reference for Christians. John Cogley stood tall in that high tradition. We are grateful to God for him.

The Nation's Destiny and the Problem of Hope

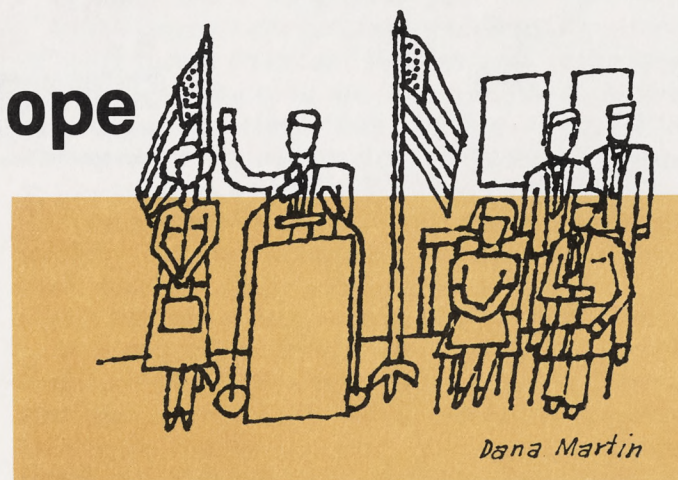
by William Stringfellow

Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

—I Corinthians 2. 6-8

The aftermath of the prolonged war in Southeast Asia, and of the coinciding political crisis which has come to be symbolized by the word "Watergate" furnished temptation for most Americans to misapprehend and oversimplify the present situation and prospects for their society.

There is the accrued fatigue resulting from these ordeals and scandals which yearns for respite. The pent up frustrations which find expression in cynicism and quietism. But, beside such sentiments, there is the easy tendency to exaggerate the villainy of presidents, or military and intelligence professionals, or other public officers, as if their stupidity or malice, their practical incompetence or moral turpitude, their criminality or vanity were enough to account for the plight of the nation. Thus people hallucinate: they suppose, for instance, that war is over, even though the war establishment is as deeply entrenched as ever, even though the war enterprise, since the formal conclusion in Vietnam, has become more heavily financed, even though the war policy of America is more reckless now because, as a war, Indochina means an American failure of disastrous magnitude. Or they imagine that the constitutional and political crisis was exposed and climaxed and resolved in the prosecution of a few Watergate personalities and in the resignation of Richard Nixon, even though the unlawful excesses of the Nixon presidency



and the criminal offenses of the Nixon cabal are known not to have been unique, and even though, in the case of Nixon himself, the constitutional process was aborted.

I do not diminish, by an iota, the necessity of accounting for the public villains; indeed, I complain that such was not accomplished as, with respect to war, the Calley case shows, and, as, with regard to Watergate, the Nixon pardon proves. Yet I do suggest that both the Indochina war and the Watergate uproar represent symptoms rather than causes, and that in the disposition of either or both of these the essential American crisis has not been confronted, much less settled. The grave present temptation is that Americans will become persuaded that in these events "the system has worked" or that it has been somehow incongruously vindicated, thereby overlooking the truth of how the system has radically, perhaps irrevocably, changed. To press the matter further: not only do Vietnam and Watergate represent symptoms merely, but the American crisis as a nation and society is such that had these not happened at all, Americans would anyway find themselves in much the same circumstances.

An American Counter-Revolution

Since the time of World War II, since technology superseded industrialization as the dominant institutional and ideological power in society, America has been suffering a counter-revolution of extraordinary scope and conse-

quence. Its conspicuous feature is the proliferation of extra-constitutional agencies and authorities which, taken in their complex social, economic and political impact, have become the effectual regime of the nation, displacing the rule of the inherited governmental institutions and usurping the rule of law.

This is a counter-revolution in a classical connotation of the term, that is, the effort involves the undoing of the political and social ethic of the American Revolution, or, at least, of that aspect of the societal ethic of the Revolution which embodied a policy that esteems human life. It cannot be said that the ethical origins of the nation are unambiguous, containing as they do so much that renders property assertedly more basic than the concern for human life in society. Analytically, it may be argued that technology and the technocracy it sponsors are an implementation, in extremely elaborate or sophisticated terms, of the primitive property ethic which was so prominent in the settling and founding of the nation. Whatever the truth about such a proposition, the reality in this past quarter century or so has been the emergence of such a militant technology that the historic tension between the property ethic and the priority of human life has been practically surpassed. The political development of technology has brought into being a form of government which virtually abolishes that familiar tension by its destruction of human rights. Technology has installed a counter-revolutionary regime — a technocratic totalitarianism — which has set aside, if not literally overturned, the inherited constitutional institutions, and has, thereby, largely vested ruling authority outside the law and beyond accountability to people.

Thus I quarrel with the analytical accuracy of those who have been saying, in the wake of war and Watergate, that the American political crisis is focused in the "imperial Presidency" and that a semblance of democracy might be restored by the resurrection of the Congress or the reduction of the excesses and expansions of presidential power. The embellishment of the Presidency has been largely theatrical and superficial, nourishing the impression that the President governs when, in reality, the discretion of the President in policy making — as is regularly documented in

how the budget is determined — has sharply diminished while the policy initiative of, say, the Pentagon bureaucracy or the so-called intelligence community or some of the great corporate powers has so fantastically increased. If Vietnam proved nothing else, it proved that the nation is not governed by the constitutional system and that public policy is not wrought in the White House, much less the Congress, and that the President, and the Presidency as an institution, are in the position of victim or captive of an ad hoc ruling technocracy.

An Inherent Lawlessness

Notice that the American technocratic totalitarianism is, from the point of view of a constitutional system, inherently lawless. The morality which dominates the functioning of this array of principalities conjoined in the military-industrial-scientific complex is the survival of the principalities. Everything else, everyone else are sacrificed to that overwhelming requirement. The principalities of technocracy are literally predatory. If there is some benefit for human beings in consequence of their political ascendancy it is either incidental or inadvertent. Commonly it will be found to be illusory as well, a means by which people are further enthralled and demeaned as human beings. One stereotyped appeal, for example — sponsored in one version by the military establishment, in another by the police power — is that human freedom cannot be politically honored because "security" would thereby be jeopardized. In context, "security" may refer to "the national security" — a conception which had some definition during World War II but, retained in currency by the military establishment, has deteriorated into the vagueness of a ritual term invoked to intimidate any opposed to adventurism, waste or aggrandizement of the Pentagon's political and economic power. Or, in relation to the escalation of the internal police power, "security" commonly means the protection of official or corporate premises or other property, or the convenience of technical procedure or routine, or the conditioning of people to exist in fear for their own safety whether or not an empirical basis for such fear exists. Amidst the multifarious variations of the excuse of "security" the central

consequence is the same: the exercise of human rights is removed as an impediment to the operation of lawless authority.

That the technological revolution, in the course of a quarter century, has enabled and entrenched lawless authority as the real polity of the nation, that society is effectually governed by the principalities, both public and private, of technocracy is now profusely verified — war and Watergate aside — in practically every realm of American life. Common knowledge, which must in the circumstances be counted as minimal and superficial, furnishes enough citations to boggle the imagination: the true magnitude of this new totalitarianism exceeds calculation.

- The media of technocracy, for instance, are heavily saturated with the image of a police power, engineered on a paramilitary model, reliant upon technological apparatus to investigate, surveil, or coerce persons, and generally featuring blunt ridicule of constitutional protection against unreasonable search and seizure, self-incrimination, detention without charge, false arrest, invasion of privacy and of the tradition of civilian control. The redundant themes are the glorification of official violence and the justification of police lawlessness for the sake of efficient order. These have been reiterated so often for so long that they have become normative in the social definition of the police power.

- Meanwhile, one of the great public utilities acknowledges its practice, made possible by advanced technology, of the illegal monitoring of the telephone conversations of at least 40 million persons.

- Despite bizarre and appalling disclosures of complicity in assassinations, subversion of other governments, ubiquitous oversight of citizens attempting to exercise basic political rights, usurpation of the policy-making functions of the Presidency and of the Congress, and compilation of masses of useless, erroneous or untrustworthy intelligence data, the C.I.A. and its counterparts in practically every federal department persevere unbecomingly to public control or discipline of law.

- Or the great banking institutions and finan-

cial powers, whose speculations have prospered the wanton proliferation of technical capacity and have converted this society to the consumption ethic, arrogantly move to abrogate representative government — or even the appearance of it — in New York City, in preface, one may predict, to similar seizures of the other cities.

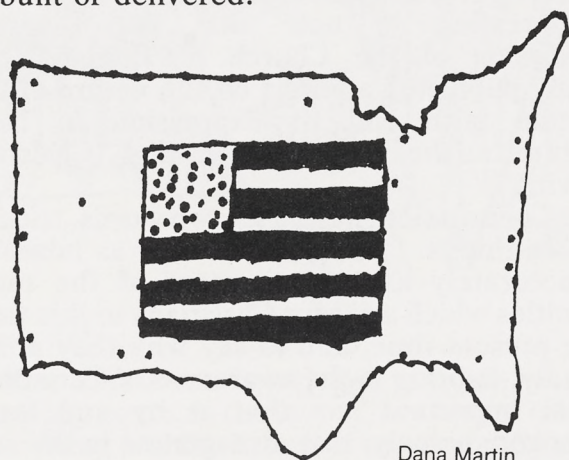
- Though the impotence of sophisticated weapons technology and the patent insanity of military overkill capability have been again and again historically demonstrated since World War II, the Pentagon remains the archetypal technocratic institution and the single most dominant ruling power, maintained as a law unto itself, recalcitrant to either presidential or congressional direction, and its essential lawlessness is sustained by the enormity of its procurement capacity and the consequent overdependence of the economy upon the Pentagon for employment. Thus the Pentagon technocracy has achieved a near-perfect dilemma, by which its political ascendancy, regardless of constitutional recitals, is secured: it poses for the nation the alternatives of insatiable waste and indefinite warfare or of so radical a dislocation of employment, and employability, as to be unthinkable.

The Preemption of Policy by Technical Capability

It is surely unnecessary to multiply this news. To comprehend the totalitarian implications of advanced technology, it is essential to understand that priority is assumed by technical capability over human discretion in the making of policy, in the rendering of budgets, in ruling society. The basic social premise, under the impact of technology and the momentum of technology, is the implementation of whatever becomes technologically feasible, the application of every technical capacity, without regard to human critique or control, and without regard to empirical benefit for human life or moral consequence for society.

The preemption of policy-making — of government itself — by technical capacity was exposed, symbolized grotesquely, and fore-

shadowed most ominously in Hiroshima. If theretofore scientists, as well as politicians, had often been negligent in considering the morality of their activity, by the time of Hiroshima the scope of technology had so vastly expanded, diversified and speeded that the problem was no longer quaint or theoretical, but quite literally implicated the destiny of human life. In any case, in Hiroshima technical capability became the overwhelming factor in the making of policy. There was conclusive fascination with building the bomb because it was so "technically sweet", as Robert Oppenheimer put it. The bomb was made primarily because the bomb could be made; the bomb was dropped because it could be dropped. The facility of technology became, then and there, the determinant of policy, overpowering everything else, including, especially, human discretion addressed to whether the bomb should be built or delivered.



Dana Martin

The implication politically is that policy making becomes incorporated into the technical process itself and the participation of human beings in the exercise of rational and conscientious thought or action is atrophied or otherwise obviated and humans become adjuncts to technology — robots or puppets deprived or inhibited in the use of the very faculties which distinguish them as human.

If the extraordinary political change in American society signaled by Hiroshima had, somehow, taken place abruptly, in the space of some days or weeks, it would more readily be recognized as the equivalent of a *coup d'etat*. As it has been, the change has spanned 30 years. During this time the gradual relentless effect of

technology upon people has attracted less alarm and has even been taken as normative. In the process, human beings have been repetitiously defeated, subdued and conformed, coerced and conditioned, but the resistance to such radical dehumanization has been sporadic. One major reason for the adaptation of citizens to their own subservience to technocracy is that the metamorphosis is accomplished without the ideological fanfare associated with other forms of totalitarianism. The technocratic state does not need ideology — in the classical sense of ideology, though there is room for the argument that technology is itself an ideology — or an elaborate apparatus of propaganda and indoctrination. In place of that, technology furnishes technocracy with an invention capable of immobilizing human comprehension and conscience. There is no necessity for brainwashing when a machine can paralyze the head. This is, manifestly, the distinguishing facility of television. That instrument — by its sheer redundancy, by direct relay of data and by subliminal manipulation — can hypnotize people, neutralize human response, transfix the mind. Not only does it indulge fantasy, and inculcate indolence, it places human beings in an habitual posture or practiced passivity which is essentially incongruous for human life. Thus citizens are readied for political acquiescence while rendered largely unaware of how their most elemental human faculties have been harmed or lost.

The Resistance Witness

I understand that my view of the American political crisis is likely to be read as a melancholy message, one that deprives Americans of hope in a social or political sense.

So be it. From a biblical point of view, the best that can be said of any such hope is that it is literally and incredibly naive. Such hope is certain to betray those deceived by it.

For what I have been telling here, in quite particular way, is the doctrine of the Fall. The Fall means the profound condition of chaos and disorientation, brokenness and violence, struggle and conflict within and amongst all creatures and all things in the present age. The Fall refers to the pervasiveness of the power of death

reigning throughout the whole of creation. That death, in many forms and ways, is incarnate and militant in an advanced technocratic society like America is, biblically speaking, no novelty introduced by technology, but has been characteristic of every other society in every other era.

This means, for human beings, that the only way to cope with the predatory quality of the technocratic regime is by confronting, comprehending, resisting and transcending the reality of death at work in this world. It is that which is the whole concern of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In that concern the issue is not how death can be defeated, but how the power of death is broken and confounded in the life of the Word of God in this world, and, thus, how human life is emancipated from servitude and idolatry of death in the American technocracy or in any other society whatsoever.

That means that the biblical lifestyle is always, in some sense, a witness of resistance to the *status quo* of politics and of economics and of everything in society. It is a witness to resurrection from death. Paradoxically, those who embark on the biblical witness constantly risk death empirically—execution or exile, imprisonment or persecution, defamation or harassment—at the behest of the rulers of this age. Yet those who do not resist the rulers of the present darkness are consigned to moral death—to the death of their humanness. That, of all the modes of death, is the most ignominious.

William Stringfellow: author, social critic, attorney and theologian.

A Matter of Heresy?

On March 6 of this year the Diocese of Newark, New Jersey, duly elected the Rev. John S. Spong, bishop coadjutor, pending the necessary consents from the Diocesan bishops and standing committees of the church. The Rev. Mr. Spong has served with distinction as rector of St. Paul's Church, Richmond, Virginia. He is also the author of several books on contemporary

theology. It is the latter and his preaching which has once again raised the ugly matter of heresy, which the church thought had been buried with Bishop Pike.

Following the election a group of Episcopalians circulated a letter to the diocesan bishops and to the presidents of the various standing committees of the church questioning the election of Spong on the basis of his orthodoxy. A press release accompanying the letter said,

"The letter expresses a concern felt by the signers as to the Rev. Mr. Spong's theological soundness in the light of a public statement he made in 1974 which appeared to deny the church's teaching that Christ is divine. The letter also cites a number of quotations from a book by the Rev. Mr. Spong which are, on their face, unorthodox."

In the light of this new "defense" of the faith it is interesting to note that the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England has recently published a report on the nature of the Christian faith and its expression in Holy Scripture and the creeds. It is entitled "Christian Believing".

The Commission, has, in its own words, tried to do three things. "First, to describe as honestly and accurately as we can some of the main difficulties which arise for Christians in this field at the present time, and to say why they arise. Secondly, to bring to the awareness of Christians a most important fact that is by and large overlooked: namely, that divergences in the way belief is expressed conceptually are to be expected from the very nature of Christian truth itself, and have in fact characterized the Church from New Testament times onwards. Thirdly, to show that underlying even very widely differing presentations of Christian faith there is in fact a common pattern or method of thinking, varying certainly in emphasis from one case to another but concerned in the last analysis with the same ingredients; and to suggest that the vital requirement for Christians today is not to force themselves to superficially agreed conclusions but to operate within the pattern—that is, to use, in whatever way or proportion integrity allows, the resources which the Christian community makes available."

The Leadership Role

New York, NY — The Rt. Rev. John M. Allin, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, has reaffirmed his leadership role of not taking a position on one side or the other with regard to the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate.

Diocesan Press Service Release
Executive Council, The Episcopal Church
New York, N.Y.

“People of the Promise”

by Paul van Buren



Dear John:

You asked me how I got started back into theology again, in the face of the current religious stumbling and hesitancy. It was certainly not the theologians who helped me to find my bearings, but, rather, a concrete administrative task: the reading and interviewing required for rebuilding the Jewish wing of our religion department faculty at Temple University. Confronted in this process by the reality and undeniable validity of Judaism, I was forced to reflect on what St. Paul called the irrevocability of God's promises to his people, and this has jolted me into a new vision of where we are and the task that lies ahead. Theological reconstruction is beginning to seem to me not only essential, but also possible. Let me sketch in for you some possibilities as well as I can at this early stage.

How odd of God to choose the Jews. But did he really? Was there something of the heart of God

himself involved in those odd tales about Abraham, Moses and David? If not, then the very foundations of our Christian faith turns (has turned?) to dust. If the Jews are not the people of God, then either they never were (because there is no God, or because he doesn't mess around in this world, which undermines Christianity as well), or else they were once but are no longer (a position that would force us to part company with Jesus and St. Paul). Yet within 150 years of Easter, leading Christians were saying just that: that the Jews were no longer God's people, having been displaced by the Christians. And with rare exceptions, the Church has been saying that ever since. The historian Arnold Toynbee spoke for most of our tradition in calling Judaism the fossil remnant of a dead civilization.

History, however, has refuted the historian. History (not surprisingly for any of us who still have faith) has confirmed Jesus and St. Paul. God has been able to raise up stones as children unto Abraham (you and me?), but younger brothers by adoption do not displace natural sons and elder brothers, in spite of sibling rivalry. Jesus did help the Syrophenician women, but his bread was still for the children (Mk. 7:24). Paul was surely a means by which Gentiles were grafted into the true tree of Israel, yet Paul's vision of the end included the natural branches being grafted back into their own tree, without first having to be converted to wild branches (Rom. 11:24)! Christianity certainly marks a new stage in God's dealings with this world, but if it denies the special relationship of God with the Jews, then it denies its own roots and calls into question the faithfulness of God.

These reflections have led me to ask about the consequences for us of God's new covenant with the Gentiles, if we were to acknowledge the continuing faithfulness of God to his Sinai covenant with his people. Once I take that initial step, which face to face with faithful Jews I have found to be unavoidable, I find that I must do a lot of rethinking about matters which I have long taken to have been settled. Let me list four areas that strike me as particularly in need of reconstruction, and share with you my preliminary thoughts about where we might go with them. The areas are that of our understanding of the New Testament, our understanding of God,

our traditional interpretation of Easter, and finally the way in which we have claimed Jesus to be the Messiah.

1. If Judaism and Christianity are God's witnesses to his continuing work in the world and together worship the God of history who lives yet and whose work is not finished, then the apostolic writings which come out of one piece of that history must indeed be taken seriously, but only because they are witnesses to certain important events within that larger framework. The New Testament reflects one way of interpreting - or reinterpreting - the Sinai Covenant of God with his people. The apostolic writings, the New Testament, were written largely by or based on oral traditions of Jews. Recent studies of Judaism in the First Century reveal that the conflict of the Jew from Nazareth and his followers with some of the Temple establishment falls well within the range of differences among Jews about the meaning of the Law and Israel's mission in and to the world. What is to be regretted and abandoned is the view that Jesus was in conflict with "the Jews", rather than engaged in an intra-familial argument, a view that developed when the Jerusalem community was dispersed and the oral tradition was left increasingly in the hands of Gentile converts. The hostility between some Jews (Jesus and his followers) and other Jews (some among the Temple establishment) is regrettable, but it is hardly a hostility that warrants continuing. An attempt to make a turn here, however, will involve us in learning to read the apostolic writings in the context of other Jewish writings of the time, and all of them as part of Israel's continuing attempt to understand and be faithful to the God whose covenant is witnessed to in the Scriptures. If that God is still God, then we must set the witness of the apostles within and as a part of all the continuing wrestling, both Christian and Jewish, with that same God and his purpose for his creation, down to and including our own day.

2. If God is first of all the one who made covenant with his people and who is faithful in his love, then God must be understood first of all as one who has made a commitment, and so has qualified his own freedom. To say that God can do anything simply ignores the fact that God has to some degree tied his own hands by committing

himself to his people. Indeed, if we do not draw back from the consequences, we will also have to say that as God committed himself in creating Israel as a people, so he committed himself in creating the world. If God is really Creator of heaven and earth, then the universe and the world are real and able to stand on their own feet, so to speak, not piteously dependent upon him for their mere existence. Creation's God-given independence conditions God's freedom, by God's own will.

Further, the God of the covenant of Sinai who is also the God of another covenant with the Gentiles inaugurated in Jesus, also made a covenant with Noah, and a promise that sounds very like a covenant with Hagar and Esau. Could it be that the One Covenant Maker is able to make many covenants with many peoples as his way of realizing his purposes in striking his one Great Covenant, that of Creation? If so, then our traditional view that the covenant in Jesus is the one and only covenant, which has been the foundation of Christian imperialism on the religious plane, and of Western imperialism on the secular plane, must be revised. What we have to say about God has political implications!

3. The third area calling for fresh reflection is our interpretation of Easter. By no means do I want to water down and spiritualize the event of that day, but I do want to set it in the context of that which Jesus himself had promised and hoped for: the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy—sight for the blind, food for the hungry, release for the prisoners, the beginning of the time of God's re-creation of this world. Whatever happened to Jesus himself, there was no beginning of the messianic age for the rest of the world. And Easter was for Jesus himself a victory over death only in a strange way. He could not or would not return to the land of the living, but could only appear again and again, always to disappear. The days for which he had taught his disciples to pray, when God's will would be done on earth, had not and still has not arrived. If we spiritualize Easter into an event in some other realm than this one, then it will be safe from these remarks, but it would seem to me a more responsible move for us to stop talking of Easter as a great victory, as a triumph over all evil, and to begin to speak of it rather as a tantalizing

glimpse of what is to be, an anticipation of the triumph for which we must still pray and work.

Once more, if we were to begin to realize that the victory has not yet come, then we might, along with the Jews, start working to make ready for the Day of the Lord. Then what we do now, as political, economic, and also private and personal beings, would begin to take on new importance. This great delay of nineteen and a half centuries between the hint of Easter and the promised new age just could be a word to us that God will not complete his work until we have done all that we can to prepare for the day of renewal.

4. My last point has to do with our conviction that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. The Jews, whose term this is, have had many different ideas about the Messiah. Perhaps no generalization will cover so complex an area, but I will risk one: much of Jewish thought about the Messiah centers in the idea that when the Messiah comes, that will mark the beginning of the renewal of the earth, with nations beating their swords into plowshares and giving up war, and justice reigning on earth. Since a glance at the morning's headlines should convince anyone that the time of the Messiah has not yet arrived, it is simply incorrect to call Jesus the Messiah in this basic sense of the term, and we would do well to heed his order not to say so to anyone. (Mk. 8:30)

The language used to speak of the restoration of all things, of which talk of the Messiah is a part, is only our feeble attempt to see into a future that is not yet here. What is certain is that by way of Jesus, a new opening to the Gentiles took place. As a result of the work and preaching of Jesus, and of the event of Good Friday and Easter, and then as a result of the preaching of Paul and the early Christians, millions of Gentiles have come to worship the God of Abraham. Surely, then, Jesus was more than a prophet. He was, I would dare to say, the one anointed by God for this new opening, and so we can dare to hope that when the Messiah comes to bring in God's restoration of this world, we will be able to recognize him by the marks on his hands and feet and recognize that new age as the kingdom of love and justice among men and women which he himself had proclaimed.

Well, that is only a sketch, but I hope it will be enough to stimulate you to new thoughts of your

own. Once we open our eyes to the historical reality and conventional validity of Judaism, the task of theology for our own time suddenly becomes, so I am finding, exciting and urgent.

Best regards,
Paul

Paul M. van Buren: author; associate professor, Department of Religion, Temple University.

A Reply to Van Buren by Michael Fishbane

Van Buren's bold and innovative essay evokes my respect for its attempt to grapple with issues suggesting a crisis for many contemporary Christian theologians. His recurrence to what must be seen as a strong Judaizing tendency, which strips back the apostolic tradition of hate, looks to Jewish historical existence as a key to a refurbished theology. But—and this would appear to be the hidden agenda—it is not simply a refurbished Christian theology which is at issue but a refurbished Christian morality, as well.

What would emerge from van Buren's 'demolition and reconstruction' is a thoroughly transformed Christianity. Any theological movement which downplays Jesus as messiah, and argues that Christians must stand four-square before the crisis of a 1900-year wait, not only must downplay immoderate 'triumphalism' but necessarily consider the specter that Jesus was a false messiah. Van Buren is, in fact, alive to this implication, as he suggests that it will be only by deeds that a Christian can "justify" the claim that his hope and faith are not in vain. This is surely an about-face—not only because it reveals the uncompromising courage of van Buren's theological questions, but also insofar as the notion of "works" is inserted into the theological agenda. The human and religious task in history prior to the messianic fulfillment becomes, at once, more Jewish and more paradoxical. One is reminded of Kafka's remark that Messiah will come only when he is no longer needed, and perhaps only on the day after; i.e. only after we have conditioned a messianic age by our acts of love shall we realize that we have already received it by the grace of God. A whole new rethinking of the relationship of hope, faith and works is thus in order for the Christian who would take van Buren seriously. In a world of both banal and outrageous evil it is surely a forthright moral and theological move to argue that Christian hope will be justified through works of love. Necessarily, the theological context of Jew and Christian will remain distinct—for the Jew yet trusts that his acts of love and celebration, within the framework of Torah and Tradition, are good in the eyes of the Lord. But it is just here, in shared acts of love, that Jew and Christian can join hands in a world not-yet fully redeemed.

Michael Fishbane is Associate Professor of Biblical Studies at Brandeis University

Church Press - Free or

April 6, 1976

Mr. Henry L. McCorkle
Editor-in-Chief
The Episcopalian, Inc.
1930 Chestnut Street
Phila., PA 19103

Dear Henry:

I feel, after some reflection, that I must write you and express my shock and disappointment over your 11th hour decision not to run the Women's Ordination ad.

As you know, I had been in touch with your advertising manager, Kip Lee Bevier, for several weeks prior to your abrupt decision. There was, I agree with you, one error in fact - a typography error in the first line which was corrected, as you will see in the ad running in the National Catholic Reporter. No other arguments by you can be classified as other than your editorial opinion imposed upon paid advertisements - a direct violation of the freedom of our press.

What was particularly sad to me were my clear and vivid memories of two General Conventions - Houston, and Louisville - where the deputies from this Diocese fought for funds for your newspaper, partly on the basis that The Episcopalian should always remain free.

You said to me that there were "errors in fact"; that "legally there are not 15 women priests"; that they are "not celebrating the Eucharist". You said your action was "more for our protection because, according to the law of our church, the statements are legally inaccurate". You said you are "an agency of General Convention".

But I say to you, Henry, that you and/or your Board were castigated unfairly for the "Integrity" ad (relating to the Gay Community) and your reaction to that ad. I am angry because when your freedom is caged, we are all wounded. You hurt many of us with your decision and you made your denomination that much less free. I cannot believe you wanted to do that and I cannot believe that your Church rules with such a heavy hand that you felt this action prudent.

Sincerely,

Donald W. Belcher

cc: Bishop Robert L. DeWitt, The Witness
Mary Moriarty, National Catholic Reporter
Bishop Lyman Ogilby, Diocese of Pennsylvania

r Captive?

The letter on the opposite page is self-explanatory. We print it, and the proposed advertisement to which it refers, for two reasons. First, we attach considerable importance to the substance of the ad, and feel it needs to be seen by a wide readership. Second, we feel the policy expressed by the rejection of the ad is of sufficient importance to have attention drawn to it. (Ed.)



There are women priests in the Episcopal Church now.

By the year 1975, fifteen women were validly ordained to the Episcopal Church. That their ordinations were canonically irregular is not disputed. However a notable array of seminary professors, theologians and bishops are agreed that these women are valid priests in every sense of the word.

They are working as priests — preaching the Word of God, celebrating the Eucharist, Baptizing, giving absolution to the sinner and being pastors to those to whom they minister. Many churches have received them gladly and happily as these new stars in the ecclesiastical galaxy have brought them closer to Christ.

Some say that the Church should wait for the General Convention to act. But the only authority needed to regularize these priests is their being licensed by the Diocesan bishop. The Church canons do not forbid women to be priested.

Right now over 250 women are enrolled in the seminaries of our Church. When they graduate, they will be ordered deacons in accordance with the ruling of the Houston General Convention. Nothing should stand in the way of their being priested canonically. The Church needs them for the enrichment of the ministry and to once and for all affirm their full humanity.

Until our Bishops fulfill their duty, we need your financial help to spread the word that women *are* priests in this branch of the Holy Catholic Church. The message has to be told to those who stand irresolute on the issue. Your dollars can help bring this about. **Please help.**

Contributions should be sent to:

Church and Society, Inc. Box 359 Ambler, Pa. 19002
With a notation that gift is for the Women's Ordination Fund

A Peculiar Anglican Social Strategy

by Benjamin P. Campbell

Top leaders of international Anglicanism met in Trinidad this Spring and decided not to say anything public on any major social economic, social, or political issue.

"Church and Society" was one of the four major topics on the ten-day agenda when the 54 assorted archbishops, primates, presiding bishops, clergy and lay persons who make up Anglicanism's only continuing international gathering met as the "Anglican Consultative Council" seven miles outside of Port-of-Spain.

They claim, with either great gall or great grace, that their non-statement of social goals is part of a major emerging strategy which commits the Anglican Communion as it has never before been committed to a radical place in the Gospel's interaction with society.

Only time, the next Anglican generation, and the Holy Spirit will be able to tell if this is the truth or mere pious twaddle.

Why the Silence?

1. Each nation has its own issues. One nation is totally bored by the social issues of another nation. Social pronouncements which are true for one situation miss the point of the next one. The Christians on the spot will in fact pay the cost and sense the alternatives they face, and will in fact make the hard judgements about such issue as violence and non-violence in social revolution.

2. Unlike other international churches, national and international Anglican leaders operate by consensus. There is no consensus on

social issues among Anglicans, except maybe that they are important.

3. Nearly all the Anglican leaders seem afraid of the press and of public statements. Some fear what their governments will do to them or to their churches if they say critical things outside their country. Some feel the people at the top should hold the church together by leaving prophecy to others in the church. Everyone is aware that no international Anglican staff can do the research to give an intelligent basis for social pronouncements.

4. The international Anglican leadership feels that the church has in recent years been "dictated to," not only by the interests of "the rich and powerful," but also by "the poor and oppressed."

In the face of this negativity, it seems strange that there could be any concern at all about church and society on the part of the Anglican prelates and leaders. Yet, strangely, there seems an intense commitment by many of these same persons to do battle with the world's inhuman social, economic, and political powers.

An Anglican Social Vision

Anglicanism's greatest impact on international society, they said, can come as it becomes a better international church.

1. Anglican churches should intensify their international contacts. Westerners are still going to the newer nations from the English and English-settler churches, but now it is time for everybody to go everywhere. Other nations' Christians can testify to the problems which Western societies make for them, and they also can testify to a vitality which tired Western Christians have lost. Third World missionary preachers of all descriptions may be common in all Western churches in the next decade.

2. The peculiar Anglican social concoction of order, unity, and diversity may become an international witness to a world which somehow hasn't learned how to put all that together. Violently different social, theological, and economic positions can and will be taken in the Anglican churches throughout the world, giving witness to a style of unity almost totally without

uniformity—a unity which Anglican leaders remind us is simply impossible for human beings without the Holy Spirit and reconciliation in Christ. No other international communion has so high a tolerance for diversity.

3. The Anglican policy may be a testing ground for the world's political systems.

4. Militant non-violence, the Council said, probably should become the most characteristic Christian strategy for social change.

5. Anglican churches and the international communion should see themselves as a "prototype community", or an "alternative society".

6. Without the spiritual base of Christianity, the perspective of the eternal promise of Christ, the awareness of its own sinfulness, and the dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church has no social witness to give.

That kind of talk can very easily be twaddle. It certainly isn't going to shock any indifferent Christians into social concern tomorrow. It lacks the pained urgency which you find in the streets and countrysides where Anglicans and non-Anglicans live. It shows great disregard for anyone else's need to know what Anglicans think or what they stand for. It pays too much attention to our inability to agree on anything. And it assumes that all the important issues will come up around the family table.

But that kind of talk is also realistic for the Anglican Communion. This Communion never will "take positions" on anything. Sometimes that's a comforting fact and sometimes it's positively satanic, but it is virtually indisputable.

If this communion will ever have a serious corporate social witness, for better or worse, it's going to have to be a peculiarly Anglican witness. That witness may just be that it holds together as a communion over the next two decades. The kind of life that will be necessary for that kind of holding together would change many people. Plenty of prophecy, hard work, and Holy Spirit in very diverse collections of Anglicans would be necessary to make that life happen.

The Rev. Benjamin P. Campbell is editor of *The Virginia Churchman*. He attended the public portion of the meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, March 31-April 2.

Letters - continued from page 2

We have received the fifty copies of the special World Council of Churches issue of *THE WITNESS* and have distributed them to our students and faculty. Thank you very much for making these available to us. They will be a good record of key portions of the Nairobi meeting.

Edwin G. Wappler — Dean, Bloy School of Theology, Claremont, California



Dana Martin

The free bonus issue has arrived as a report on the Fifth Assembly and I want to thank you for a great job. Including Larson's reprint was excellent taste.

I am particularly pleased with "Sadness". There certainly was a "cloud formation" about Nairobi. But even with that cloud it seemed to me that a great deal came to pass . . . not necessarily was accomplished. I have been disturbed by many statements on Nairobi because again, it seems to me, people are expecting the human side of the Church to accomplish the miracle that only God will accomplish in his own good time. And I am not an apocalypticist in the usual sense of the word, I hope. How true it is as you say, "... our chronic error is too easily to equate His Church which He founded, with our churches which we manage." This certainly does not permit us to "give up our responsibilities to him" but keeps us honest as to where we are.

I really felt that much can come as the result of Nairobi if we are willing to follow the leading of that meeting. Much has been made of the fact that the "big voices" were not predominant as has been true in past Assemblies. I really believe that we with the "small voices" are as much the Church as they, and that out of the "small voices" there will come motivation to action in behalf of real ecumenicity that would not come because "big voices" called for it. I truly value as great, Nairobi.

Rev. Robert H. Taylor — Warren, Ohio

Proud to Know You

From the time it was just a possibility under consideration, until the present day, (new) WITNESS has been deeply indebted to Roy Larson, Chicago Sun-Times religion writer and columnist. His counsel and advice were crucial in early consultations about the proposed republishing of the magazine, and his continuing editorial wisdom has been regularly drawn upon.

For this reason, THE WITNESS takes pride in reporting that Roy Larson has won the 42nd Annual National Headliner Award in the special feature column category for "At This Moment", a column which appears in Midwest magazine, a Sunday supplement of the Sun-Times.

In announcing the unanimous decision, the selection committee cited Larson for a "particularly outstanding job of reporting and covering religion", and called his work "consistently impressive". Well qualified as it is to comment on that judgement, THE WITNESS says: "Exactly right!"

Managing Editor

On June 1 THE WITNESS welcomes Mary Lou Suhor to its staff as managing editor.

Since 1972, Ms. Suhor has been Coordinator of the Cuba Resource Center in New York City. C.R.C. is an ecumenically-funded group organized in 1970 to circulate information about life in Cuba and its churches. She also edited C.R.C.'s quarterly journal, the *Cuba Review*.

Ms. Suhor was graduated cum laude with a degree in journalism from Loyola University in New Orleans.

Robert L. DeWitt will continue to serve as editor of THE WITNESS.

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