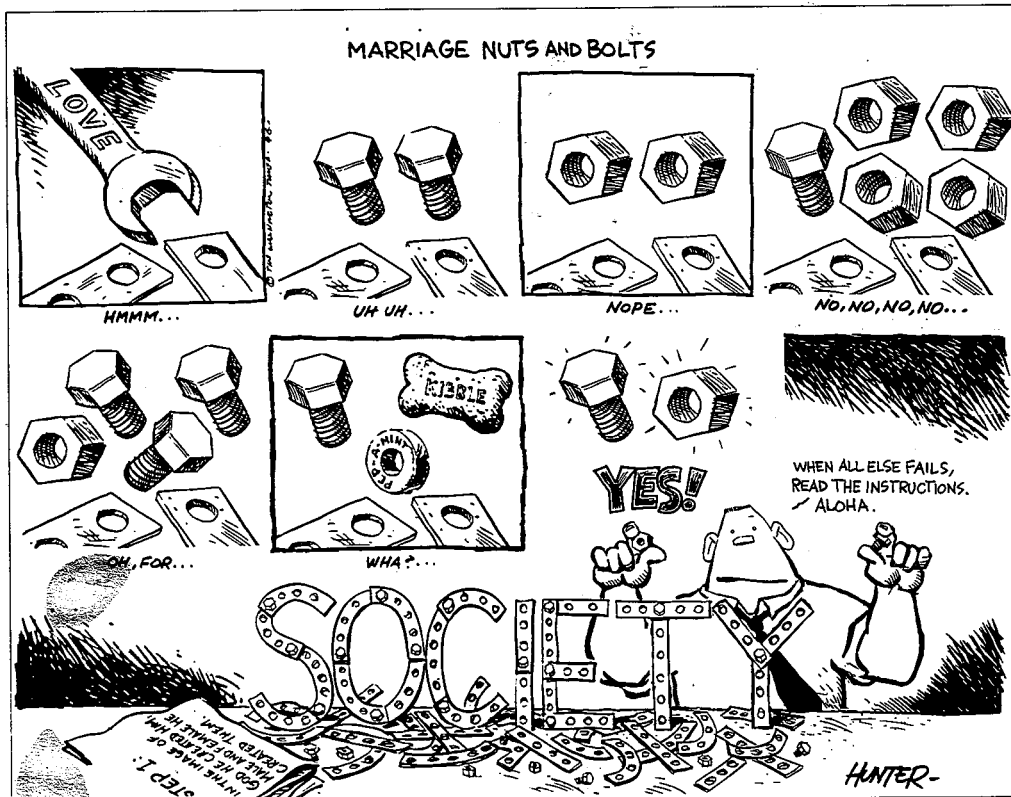


FAITH & FREEDOM

Reforming the Church's Social and Political Witness

Spring 1997

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'The Holy Estate of Matrimony': What's At Stake in the 'Gay Marriage' Debate

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(plus Resources, Church Briefs, International Briefs, Reforming the Church,
The Global Christian, IRD Diary, and From the President)

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The IRD is a non-profit organization committed to reforming the Church's social and political witness and to building and strengthening democracy and religious liberty, at home and abroad. IRD committees work for reform in the Episcopal Church, the United Methodist Church, and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The IRD also sponsors the Ecumenical Coalition on Women and Society.

Contributions to the work of the IRD are critically needed. Your gifts are tax deductible. Thank you for your support.

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In this issue

The issue of "gay marriage" comes down to the question: Are we to look at marriage as part of the natural order, created by God to bless humankind? Or shall we see marriage as merely an instrument of our own convenience? The cover cartoon by Alexander Hunter struck us as a perfect illustration of the question. It is reprinted by permission of the artist.

Photos are by David Sheaffer (p. 3), Alan Wisdom (p. 6), Parker Williamson (p. 7), Lambda Report on Homosexuality (p. 9), Mark Tooley (p. 12), Phillip Haug (p. 14), Diane Knippers (p. 15), and Harry Jenkins (p. 16).

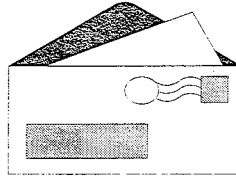
We apologize for skipping the Winter 1996-97 issue of Faith & Freedom. In compensation, subsequent issues this year will be longer.

► I've been a supporter of IRD for many years because of your courageous effort in combating the errant leadership of mainline Protestant denominations and the lunacy proclaimed by radical feminists and New Age nitwits.

As a Roman Catholic, I can attest that the elements contributing to the destruction of the faith you cherish are busily engaged in dismantling the Catholic faith as well. And, as in Protestantism, the culprits operate from within.... Sad to relate, a number of high-ranking prelates are among the supporters.

The Church is not without voices opposing the dissenters.... However, the bulk of Catholic laity and parish clergymen appear indifferent to this

LETTERS



assault on their faith. Needed is an organization with the tenacity and focus that IRD has exhibited over the years. Happy 15th Anniversary!

*Don E. Butler
Seattle, WA*

► Having been a member for over 60 years of the church where Ellen Cooke's [Episcopal Church treasurer convicted of embezzlement] husband was Rector, I'm pretty gunshy of the NCC.... Though I've changed to another Episcopal parish, the action of the NCC seems to seriously undermine any Episcopal or other priest who pleaded for the church fire money.

*William P. Kennard
West Caldwell, NJ*

► I am delighted to read ... of the ecumenical Association for Church Renewal. Nice going. I also appreci-

ate UMAction – We certainly need action in the UMC, nowhere more than in Oregon/Idaho. Now that we are getting grass-roots action, thanks in part to our "Conference leaders" going just one step too far, we are not only in need of a national reform movement but are able to profit from it.

For many years I've had determination, but now for the first time I dare hope for a true revival within Methodism and other "mainline" churches.

*Elizabeth Richman
Alsea, OR*

► We certainly appreciate all of the good work this organization is doing to keep us informed and trying to turn the decline of our Presbyterian Church. I believe most of the membership is very concerned.

*Marjorie Taylor
Gering, NE*

► Thank you for sending the "Breaking the Silence" video tape. It arrived in time to promote the International Day of Prayer at the law school and at the men's group at church. Many are sympathetic and offer their support.

*Mark Vatuone
Spokane, WA*

This fall, U.S. Christians will observe a season of prayer for the persecuted church, beginning on the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, Sept. 28, and culminating on November 16. Mark your church calendars now!

► I hope forging your efforts in the American Anglican Council will be effective. I gently try in my small (and troubled) parish in Maine. I think it will take a big news story to get the average Episcopalian to start being informed and to speak up. Somehow we've got to wake them up. Thank you for all your effort.

*Doris Hurdman
Kennebunk, ME*



FROM THE
PRESIDENT

No Time for Complacency

Whew! It's always a relief to get the national elections, the inauguration, and convening a new Congress all behind us. At last, a break from the buttons and bumper stickers and ball gowns. Of course this year, because President Clinton retained the White House and the Republicans held Congress, there wasn't quite so much upheaval.

In fact, the prevailing mood around Washington is a kind of complacency. Nothing big—or bad—is going to happen, many think. Our president hopes to win a place in history with small, moderate steps.

The once revolutionary Speaker of the House has had his political wings clipped.

Meanwhile, economists forecast rosy scenarios of continuous growth. Foreign policy experts discern no other power that threatens America.

Even the grim predictions of environmental catastrophes have receded a bit. So we appear to be set for a nice easy stroll across the "bridge to the 21st century." Or are we?

Beneath the relatively tranquil surface of U.S. political and economic life, there are crucial debates being conducted that could reshape our entire civilization. These are not the conventional debates about welfare



Diane Knippers

marriage? Will we abandon taboos against pedophilia and incest, too? Among heterosexuals, will we allow the continuing disintegration of the marriage bond? Who will care for all the fatherless children that result from our rampant illegitimacy and divorce? And again, who decides?

One might assume that in a constitutional democracy, it is the people who decide. But a massive value shift in our society, pushed forward by our judiciary, says it is not "the people," but "the individual" who decides.

Each person does what is right in his own eyes. And when individual moral autonomy is absolute, then religious and moral convictions are regarded as merely private prejudices. They have no place in the public square.

For Christians—who believe that human life has infinite value because it is created in God's image, and who believe that our lives are to be governed by moral laws given by that same Creator—these are challenging days.

There are many truths that must be retaught in this culture. For many of us, the source of deepest grief is that our apologetic task must be carried on within the Church as well as society. Too many of our own church leaders are on the wrong side of the great questions of our time. This scandal, too, is a cross we bear.

So this is no time for complacency about the state of our churches or our society. We remember with trembling the scriptural warnings about a day of judgment that comes when least expected:

Likewise, as it was in the days of Lot—they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built, but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom fire and brimstone rained from heaven and destroyed them all—so it will be when the Son of Man is revealed. (Luke 17:28-30)

There are so many matters before American Christians that call for our sober judgment today, and upon which God will surely judge us eventually. Yet we have the comfort of God's promise always to form a faithful people for himself—as in biblical times, so also in these days.

IRD

by Diane Knippers

There are so many matters before American Christians that call for our sober judgment today, and upon which God will surely judge us eventually.

reform and the balanced budget amendment, but deeper questions concerning human life and its most basic institutions.

The life question used to be simply the debate over abortion. Now we see that abortion is the tip of the iceberg. When does life begin and end? What about euthanasia? Cloning? What kinds of human life will society recognize and protect? Who decides?

Then there are the questions raised about the building block of human society, the institution of marriage. Will ours be the first society in human history to treat same-sex relationships as the moral and legal equivalent of



reforming
the church

Study Shows Church Goers More Conservative Politically

Despite the constant leftward political push by mainline Protestant bureaucrats, a recent study by the Pew Research Center shows that persons affiliated with mainline churches are somewhat more conservative and more Republican than the average American. This finding from a detailed poll of 9,000 Americans illuminates again the gap between church leaders and members that must be bridged.

According to the Pew study, 34 percent of mainline Protestants call themselves Republican, 26 percent call themselves Democrat, and 37 percent call themselves independent. The GOP held the edge in all mainline white denominations, ranging from 60 percent Republicans versus 16 percent Democrat among the Presbyterians to 26 percent Republican to 24 percent Democrat among Congregationalists. Mainline Protestants comprise one quarter of the electorate.

Evangelical Protestants were more strongly inclined towards Republicans. Catholics were slightly tilted towards Democrats. Black Christians, Jews and the non-religious heavily favored Democrats. By comparison, the nation at large divided between Republicans and Democrats by 30 percent to 31 percent.

Interestingly, almost half of mainliners said the church should "keep out of political matters." Catholics were equally divided on the question. White evangelicals, whose church leaders are more conservative, overwhelmingly favored their churches' involvement in political issues.

All three groups strongly agreed that the clergy should not preach political views from the pulpit. Most evidently drew a distinction between church groups discussing political concerns and church authorities making partisan endorsements.

The churches most prone to political activism are black congregations. Almost half of black Christians say their clergy preach about candidates and elections. One out of five white evangelicals report similar activity. Only 12 percent of mainliners reported partisan politicking from their pulpits. Most mainline pastors apparently respect the political sensitivities of their parishioners. By contrast, national mainline church officials can afford to be more

outspoken politically because they are not directly accountable to a local congregation.

Mainliners reported that the political issues they hear mentioned most frequently from the pulpit are hunger and poverty and world trouble spots. White evangelicals said they hear most about abortion, hunger and poverty, school prayer, and pornography. Catholics said they hear the most about abortion, hunger and poverty and world trouble spots. For black Christians, hunger and poverty and school prayer are the most common issues.

On homosexuality, 42 percent of mainliners think society should discourage it, while 52 percent prefer tolerance. Over 70 percent of white evangelicals want society to discourage homosexuality. Catholics favor tolerance by 52 percent. Black Christians are evenly divided. Overall, 65 percent of the respondents oppose homosexual marriage, while 27 percent favor it.

The poll accepted the self-

descriptions of the respondents. Consequently, not all who professed a religious affiliation were necessarily devout. Mainliners measured significantly lower than other groups on several measures of religious commitment.

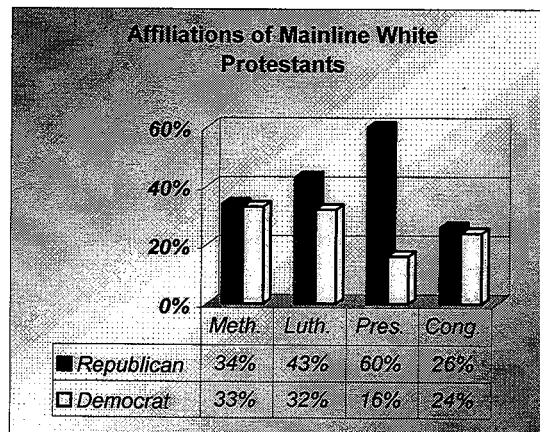
Only 64 percent of mainliners said they were certain about their belief in God, while 22 percent said they were fairly certain, and 10 percent said they were not certain. Ninety-four percent of white evangelicals and 71 percent of Catholics said they were certain about God.

Just over forty percent of mainliners attend church at least once a month, while 69 percent of white evangelicals and 60 percent of Catholics do. Only 40 percent of mainliners pray at least daily, while 76 percent of white evangelicals and 49 percent of Catholics do.

There was a trend that ran across all denominations: The more committed a person was to his or her religious faith, the more conservative he or she tended to be. It is therefore probably safe to assume that practicing mainline Protestants are even more conservative in their voting practices than the generically identified mainliners whom the poll queried.

IRD

by Mark Tooley



Racial Reconciliation

Racial reconciliation has become a hot topic, with everyone from President Clinton to the National Council of Churches urging Americans to take a renewed look at the state of race relations in the nation. U.S. Christians must answer this challenge to confront our society's racial fears and hatreds. But can they do so without falling into the pattern of political manipulation which has characterized many efforts such as the NCC Racial Justice Program?

We in the IRD believe the answer is yes. We have found materials that can help Christian groups have a healthy conversation about race. Amidst all the materials that try to use race to score political points, there are some good ones that summon forth the Church's own biblical and spiritual resources for cross-cultural reconciliation. What follows is not a list of endorsements, but rather a suggestion of some useful tools.

BOOKS

Perkins, John and Thomas A. Tarant. *He's My Brother*. Grand Rapids, MI.: Chosen Books, 1994. A former Ku Klux Klan zealot and a black civil rights activist describe how the Christian faith radically changed their lives and their racial agendas. Based on their experiences, they offer a practical "Christian strategy" for racial reconciliation.

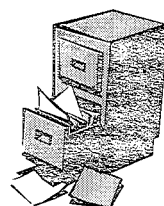
Perkins, John, with Jo Kadlecsek. *Resurrecting Hope: Powerful Stories of How God is Moving to Reach Our Cities*. Ventura, CA.: Regal Books, 1995.

Profiles of 12 urban evangelical churches around the country that have forged partnerships across racial and cultural lines to do ministry in their neighborhoods. The authors contend that cross-cultural reconciliation is a key component of community development, and they argue that the examples in this book show how the

Church, using biblical principles, can "make the current welfare system obsolete."

Washington, Raleigh and Glen Kehrein. *Breaking Down Walls: A Model for Reconciliation in an Age of Racial Strife*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1993.

The first half of the book contains the personal stories of two Christian men, one African-American and one



RESOURCES

white, who emerged from "racially stereotypical origins" to become friends and colleagues in the ministry of racial reconciliation. The second half puts forth eight biblical principles of reconciliation. Each of the latter chapters ends with suggestions on how churches and individuals can apply the principles.

MAGAZINE

The Reconciler, a quarterly magazine that focuses solely on issues of reconciliation from a Christian perspective. Produced by Urban Family Magazine, every issue of *The Reconciler* contains thought-provoking articles and profiles of individuals and organizations, as well as a regular listing of helpful resources on reconciliation. P.O. Box 32, Jackson, Miss 39205 (tel.) 601-354-1563; e-mail: <reconcile1@aol.com>.

INTERNET

"Race and Reconciliation Online," sponsored by Reconcilers Fellowship and *The Reconciler* maga-

zine, provides a weekly forum on current events, columns, an online bulletin board, and a resource center/clearinghouse for information on race and reconciliation from a Christian perspective. The site's links page has information on various other web sites addressing reconciliation issues: <www.netdoor.com/com/rroonline/>

PAMPHLETS

The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission offers several small, reasonably-priced tracts and pamphlets on the Bible and racial reconciliation. The materials have been specifically developed for the annual Southern Baptist "Race Relations Sunday," but they may be ordered year-round by anyone interested in the issue. Some of the titles include:

"**Racism and the Evangelical Church**," by Billy Graham; "**Issues and Answers: Race Relations**"; and "**The Bible Speaks on Race**." Contact the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission at 901 Commerce St., #550, Nashville, TN, 37203-3696, (tel.) 615-244-2495.

SEMINARS, TAPES AND WORKBOOKS

The Virginia-based organization "Critics' Choice" offers interactive seminars that reveal the spiritual roots of bigotry and division, while training participants to adopt biblical principles that lead to healing and reconciliation. Audio tapes and workbooks are also available. Contact Harriet R.T. Lewis at Critics' Choice, (tel/fax) 703-534-8069.

CONFERENCES

Promise Keepers, the evangelical men's movement, has made cross-cultural reconciliation a key part of its conferences and rallies designed to urge men to live a more godly life. For information, call 1-800-888-7595.



NCC Charts DC Lobbying for 1997

At the close of 1996, the National Council of Churches led oldline church officials in a session to plot political strategy for 1997 and beyond. "We do have a great deal of influence," NCC General Secretary Joan Brown Campbell told 60 church leaders meeting in Washington. Campbell said that she discerned "a real yearning for the NCC to get its act together."

Comparisons between liberal oldline institutions and the surging Religious Right abounded. "Too many people think the Christian Coalition is the Church," complained United Methodist Bishop William Grove. NCC legal counsel Oliver Thomas responded that the Christian Coalition has only 1.7 million supporters, while the NCC has 50 million people who belong to its member denominations.

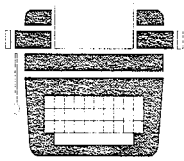
NCC officials vowed to follow the example of religious conservatives in "connecting more to the grassroots." Campbell recalled how the NCC had supported President Clinton in his first



NCC staffer Albert Pennybacker

veto of welfare reform legislation in 1995 – only to fail in persuading him to resist welfare reform in 1996. "He had no reason to believe that there was a large constituency that would support him in defending welfare," Campbell explained.

Albert Pennybacker, director of the NCC's Washington office, observed that "the nature of our religious commitment is that we care about everything." An NCC survey of denominational officials revealed a wide-ranging set of political priorities: countering the alleged injustices of welfare reform, seeking world peace through disarmament and fair trade, upholding racial justice (e.g., by defending affirmative action), expanding the federal role in health care, strengthening environmental regulations, promoting public educa-



CHURCH BRIEFS

tion, and defending church-state separation in the U.S.

United Methodist ecumenical officer Bruce Robbins asked why issues such as pornography, moral decay, gambling and "family values" were not included. Pennybacker admitted those topics "didn't come up in any predominant way."

Already in early 1997, the NCC and member denominations have entered several more debates. They have attacked the balanced budget amendment, advocated the release of international family planning funds to groups that perform abortions, supported the McCain-Feingold bill to restrict giving and spending in political campaigns, and warned against the consequences of clamping down on illegal immigration.

Welfare Reform Challenges the Church

The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) is challenging the

Christian community to respond to new welfare legislation by "increasing its financial giving and personal involvement with the poor." In a resolution adopted at its March Board of Directors meeting, the NAE encouraged every congregation to help "at least one family or individual struggling with long-term unemployment to obtain productive, stable work."

The NAE resolution noted that "the short-term impact of reductions in government programs of food, health care, and income assistance will likely be an increase in hunger and hopelessness in many of our communities." But it refused to condemn welfare reform categorically, as have leaders of oldline Protestant churches.

NAE leaders observed that the existing welfare system had not been working well to alleviate poverty, and that perhaps the reforms might prove better in the long run. "We have long maintained that many government programs, while meeting immediate needs, actually weaken families, destroy initiative and trap people in poverty," the resolution said.

New Directions for Presbyterians

There are several indications of a change of course for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). First is the passage of amendment to the denomination's constitution clarifying "fidelity within the covenant of marriage of a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness" as its standard for ordained officers of the church. Despite fierce resistance from most of the Presbyterian establishment, the amendment has now been ratified by a majority of the local jurisdictions called presbyteries.

A second sign comes from the statements of Dr. Youngil Cho, chair of the denomination's General Assembly Council (GAC). Cho, a Korean-American business professor, is unabashed in challenging denominational leaders to undergo spiritual renewal and undertake structural reform.

Summarizing the message of the 1996 Presbyterian General Assembly, Cho said: "They told the GAC to change. They told us we're not doing God's will. We have to hear that." Referring to the denominational leadership elite, Cho lamented: "They are depending on human ideas and plans.... They are confused, looking in



Presbyterian leader Youngil Cho

the wrong place, looking to society for answers.... That is why our denomination is dying."

The chairman urged the council to return "to dependence, rebirth, and response to the will of God as revealed to us in the Scripture." He has often cited his previous experience in revitalizing the Presbyterian Men, for which he adopted as a motto Deuteronomy 8:11: "Take care that you do not forget the Lord your God."

Cho also told the council frankly that it was over-staffed, that "we are spending too much money for just organizations." He challenged the council to be prepared to redirect 30 percent of its budget away from programs that were not essential to fulfilling Christ's commission to the Church.

Cho is serving a one-year term at the head of the General Assembly Council, which oversees the administration of Presbyterian mission agencies between the annual General Assemblies.

The Greening of the Churches

A new \$4 million effort to marry the churches to the environmental movement has been unveiled. The National Religious Partnership for the Environment is sending information kits to 100,000 congregations – or nearly one-third of all churches in America. It aims to establish a legislative "action network" of 25,000 clergy and lay church leaders.

Participants in the partnership include the National Council of Churches, the U.S. Catholic Conference, and the unofficial Evangelical Environmental Network and Coalition on Environment and Jewish Life. The National Association of Evangelicals and the Southern Baptist Convention have declined to participate.

The largest part of the partnership mailing came from the NCC. It was recruiting 51,000 Protestant and Orthodox congregations to celebrate Earth Day on April 22. NCC study materials for the occasion were centered around the still-controversial theory of "global warming." To stem this alleged trend, the NCC suggested that congregants lobby President Clinton to raise automobile fuel economy standards. Church members were instructed to send the president pictures of children, accompanied by appeals to protect these children from all kinds of natural disasters caused by global warming.

The Religious Partnership's campaign was announced at a February press conference in Washington, following a meeting between religious leaders and Vice President Al Gore. Gore's own green theology has provided inspiration to the partnership.

The partnership's offices are located in the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York – also known as "the Green Cathedral." The celebration of an "earth

mass" at the cathedral has included the taped cry of a timber wolf and the aquatic grunts of a humpback whale, amid prayers to Ra (ancient Egypt's sun god) and other ecologically-friendly deities.

Tax Collectors at the Church Door?

An initiative that would have imposed property taxes on most churches was defeated by Colorado voters last November. The Colorado initiative, called Amendment 11, would have stripped all non-profits of their exemption from the property tax unless they served a "social duty" such as housing the homeless.

The measure was also commonly called "Murphy's Law" after its author, John Patrick Michael Murphy, a radio talk show host and a bitter ex-Catholic. Animosity toward the rising role of religious conservatives in Colorado politics was believed to be an important component in Murphy's campaign to tax churches.

Murphy argued that "since [religious non-profits] receive police and fire protection and other public services, they should pay their fair share." But Brent Walker of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs countered, "If you want to weigh out the tremendous benefits that churches and non-profits bring to the community against very incidental and sporadic police and fire protection, I think the community wins every time."

Despite the defeat of Colorado Amendment 11, there are indications of similar attempts to tap churches for taxes in a number of other states. "Religious non-profits will be very tempting targets for revenue-hungry states and municipalities," predicts Steven McFarland of the Center for Law and Religious Freedom of Annandale, VA.

IRD

What's at Stake for Church and Society in the 'Gay Marriage' Debate

'The Holy Estate of Matrimony'

Law must rest upon "the basis of the idea of the family, as consisting in and springing from the union for life of one man and one woman in the holy estate of matrimony; the sure foundation of all that is stable and noble in our civilization...."

The phrases above were quite unremarkable when first set down, in an 1885 Supreme Court decision (*Murphy v. Ramsey*). It was then taken for granted that the marriage-based family was the building block of civilization, and that society had a special interest in encouraging strong marriages. There were no differences on this point between Church and State, or between the various denominations of Christians.

Today, suddenly, phrases like these are controversial. They slam squarely against the "sexual revolution" that has been shaking our society for the past generation. Whether it has been a conscious campaign by leftist elites or a half-conscious trend spreading through society, the end has been the same: to remove marriage from its privileged position in our civilization.

One angle of attack has been the attempt to erase all distinctions between marriage and other kinds of sexual relationships. This is the strategy behind the demand for "same-sex marriage" as a "civil right," which burst upon our national consciousness last year with a court decision in Hawaii. State judge Kevin S.C. Chang ordered that the status of marriage must be opened to same-sex couples. Restricting marriage to one man-one woman relationships would be "sex discrimination," Chang ruled.

The judge's decision is being appealed, and it may be nullified through a proposed amendment to the Hawaii constitution. Moreover, the effects of the decision may be limited by bills passed in the U.S. Congress and 22 state legislatures clarifying that they would not recognize "gay marriages" performed in Hawaii or elsewhere. Nevertheless, the advocates of "same-sex marriage" are convinced that the political momentum favors their cause.

An Uncertain Response from the Churches

All major Christian denominations have long-established doctrines that marriage is the lifetime union of one man and one woman, and that all sexual intercourse outside marriage is sin. But recent years have brought signs of a weakening of the will to uphold the doctrines. Mainline church assemblies are barraged with proposals from the Left that evade or run contrary to biblical teaching on mar-

riage. Top church officials express doubts about the teaching and seem reluctant to enforce it.

The U.S. churches are far from being united in their response to the demands for "gay marriage." Some large Christian bodies—the U.S. Catholic bishops, the National Association of Evangelicals, the Southern Baptist Convention, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod—have made public statements decrying the attempt to redefine marriage. The IRD and several renewal groups in mainline Protestant denominations joined a friend-of-court brief asking that Judge Chang's decision be reversed.

But top officials of those same mainline denominations have said scarcely a word in support of the traditional definition of marriage. As far as the IRD knows, only one national mainline body has entered the Hawaii debate—and its intervention has been confusing. Acting at the invitation of the 1996 General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Stated Clerk Clifton Kirkpatrick sent an April 1 letter to Hawaii state legislators. Kirkpatrick made two inconsistent requests: that the legislators "recognize marriage as a civil contract between one man and one woman and, at the same time, extend rights and privileges equivalent to those granted to married couples, to those couples in relationships not eligible for marriage." The Presbyterian clerk seemed to be advocating "same-sex marriage"—in everything but name.

Arguments Easily Swallowed

The arguments for "gay marriage" appeal to many common assumptions of our contemporary culture:

- The exaltation of sexual intimacy as the ultimate happiness, a "right" that should not be denied to anyone.
- The view of sex and childbearing as two separate matters of "personal choice," in which the community has no role.
- The reduction of morality to a question of feelings, where "all you need is love."
- The tendency to see marriage as an artificial arrangement that may be altered to suit our convenience.
- The habit of always lowering our moral standards to accommodate actual behavior, rather than trying to raise the behavior to meet the standards.

In a "mainline" setting, it is hard to resist this line of thinking. Conservative mainliners may quote Bible verses condemning sodomy and fornication, and they may warn that "gay marriage" would split the Church. But these ar-

arguments frequently fail. The moderate majority has lost confidence in the authority of the Bible, and it is intimidated by the leftist activists who have no fear of division. The champions of "gay marriage" are ready to label their opponents as "bigots," "homophobes," and "narrow-minded Pharisees." It is little wonder that so few step up to defend traditional marriage.

Yet the debate must be engaged. The stakes are too high to ignore the questions that have been raised about one of society's fundamental institutions. One thing must be clear: The recognition of "gay marriage" would change the nature of marriage for all persons. In particular, it would cast doubt upon three qualities that have traditionally been essential to the marriage bond: its permanence (intended to be lifelong), its exclusivity (the prohibition of adultery), and its normativity (as the sole accepted channel for sexual activity).

'Beyond Inclusion': Weakening the Bonds of Marriage

Many advocates of "gay marriage" acknowledge that they are seeking more than just "inclusion" inside the institution of marriage; they are seeking to change the institution from within. This was the theme of an unofficial conference of prominent liberal Episcopalians, entitled "Beyond Inclusion." Speakers at the April gathering in Pasadena, CA, rejected traditional marriage as sexist, patriarchal, and violent. "I don't want the relationship I enter into with a partner to be the same as heterosexual marriage, thank you," said the Rev. John Oliver, canon missionary of the Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey.

Oliver distributed a sample of how the Episcopal wedding liturgy might be rewritten to accommodate same-sex couples. The differences were quite striking: (1) The sample omitted the promise to stay together "until we are parted by death." (2) It dropped the vow to "forsaking all others, be faithful" to the spouse. (3) It cut out all references to "the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord." (4) It had no place for parents to "give away" their children in marriage, thus eliminating the sense that the ceremony joins two families as well as two individuals.

Oliver defended the absence of any pledge of

monogamy: "It is more important to praise God for Sally and Sue, even in the face of infidelity, than to praise God for their 42 years of a genitally exclusive monogamous relationship, during which they have hated each other. Faithfulness is not about plumbing."

The Rev. Jennifer Phillips of University City, MO, spoke of "deconstructing" the boundaries of marriage as "part of Gospel work." "What's next?" Phillips asked. "Maybe we bless non-celibate single people. What a thought!" The audience laughed.

Shall We Destroy All Taboos?

The Rev. Marilyn McCord Adams of Yale Divinity School repeatedly urged her fellow Episcopalians to "remove the blinders of taboo." She referred to the Trinity as "the Gay Men's Chorus," and cited it as an example suggesting that

the church might bless relationships involving three or more persons—rather than just couples. Indeed, it is undeniable that every argument used to justify "gay marriage" could also be used on behalf of polygamy or incest between adults.

Our churches and our society must face squarely the question: Is this the road down which we wish to travel? Do we wish to reduce the strong bonds of marriage down to some vaguely-stated "commitment" between any two (or more?) sexual partners? And do we wish to destroy all the taboos that channel sexual activity toward the warmth and security of the marriage bed?



A mass homosexual "wedding." Is this really the same thing as marriage?

Lifting Up a Good Gift of God

Moderates and conservatives in all U.S. denominations must be prepared to raise these questions with vigor—and with compassion for all who are paying the price of the sexual disorders of our time. This debate will not be won by stern moralists trying to lay down the law and make the sexual misfits keep quiet. It can be won by humble Christians seeking to lift up "the holy estate of matrimony" as the good gift that God meant it to be. **IRD**

The next issue of Faith & Freedom will summarize arguments for maintaining the traditional definition of marriage in civil society.

by Alan F.H. Wisdom

Interfaith Alliance Dispenses Political Blessings (for the Left) and Curses (for the Right)

A PAC in 'Mainline' Robes

With support from mainline church leaders, the Democratic Party, trade unions, and Walter Cronkite, a two-year-old left-wing lobby for "people of faith" has created a national media splash.

The Interfaith Alliance was founded in 1994 to combat the perceived excesses of the Religious Right. Offering itself as the "mainstream" alternative to the Christian Coalition, the Alliance operates as the political action arm of the mainline Protestant establishment.

In a March 1997 fundraising letter that grabbed national attention, Walter Cronkite contrasted the "radical" Christian Coalition with the Alliance's own "distinguished religious leaders," whom the former CBS news anchor called "as diverse as America." But the Alliance is hardly diverse or mainstream. Its directors, despite their mainline church affiliation, are mainly outspoken fixtures of the Religious Left. They include stalwarts such as National Council of Churches (NCC) General Secretary Joan Brown Campbell, Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning, and former Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Moderator Herbert Valentine.

Stigmatizing Fellow Christians for the Sake of 'Tolerance'

While clamoring for "civility" and "tolerance" in America's public life, Alliance leaders try to stigmatize conservatives as dangerous, undemocratic, un-American "extremists." They impugn the motives of Christian traditionalists, implying that their Christian faith is merely a facade covering a dishonest grab for political power.

"Those *extreme* [conservative Christian] organizations claim to be the sole religious voice in American life," warned Alliance Chairman Herbert Valentine upon the Alliance's founding. "Will we turn to policies based on *hate* and intolerance, or will we seek answers in our diversity?" asked Catholic Bishop Francis Murphy, another Alliance board member.

"We are faced with a powerful organization — an *extreme* political organization — that relies upon deceitful campaign tactics," warned Alliance official Ken Brooker Langston about the Christian Coalition in 1995. "We must not allow one of our nation's two great political parties to be hijacked by religious political *extremists*," insisted Alliance President Albert Pennybacker last year.

The Alliance claims 109 chapters in 36 states, with a total of 30,000 to 40,000 supporters. It has a staff of eight. The Alliance's main activities so far have been producing leftward-tilted voter guides, of which it distributed five

million during the 1996 campaign, and supplying the mass media with a steady stream of quotes blasting the Religious Right.

Media coverage of these quotes frequently takes at face value the Interfaith Alliance's self-description: that it is an equivalent moderate counterpart to conservative groups such as the Christian Coalition, Focus on the Family, and Concerned Women for America. But in fact these organizations play in a completely different political league. Their memberships are in the hundreds of thousands. They have chapters in every state, often down to the precinct level. Their staffs number in the hundreds. In the last election, the Christian Coalition distributed 70 million voter guides.

The bottom line is that the religious conservative organizations have mass support, and they can sway elections. The Interfaith Alliance does not. Its strongest suit is the names on its stationery, which lend the false impression that it speaks for the tens of millions of Christians in our historic mainline churches.

After the recent campaign, media coverage often transmitted the Alliance's exaggerated claims that it had rallied mainline Christians and thrashed the Religious Right. "The Alliance succeeded in revealing the Christian Coalition's partisan core, lifting their veil of religious authenticity and finally removing its aura of political invincibility," gloated Alliance Vice President J. Philip Wogaman, who pastors the United Methodist church in Washington that President Clinton attends with the First Lady. Claims of electoral victory by the Alliance were based on the defeat of a half-dozen conservative Republican congressmen who had been Christian Coalition favorites.

A Double Standard of Partisanship

Wogaman, in criticizing the Christian Coalition's partisanship, did not mention that the Alliance was started in 1994 with a \$25,000 grant from the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. Nor did he mention the "soft" campaign cash that the Alliance received last year from *Project 96*, a \$4 million effort tied to labor unions and the Democratic Party. *Project 96* paid for the distribution of Alliance voter guides in eight key districts where the Democrats were aiming to unseat House Republicans.

The Democratic-oriented voters' guides distributed by the Alliance (*see box on p. 10*) focused on issues such as raising the minimum wage and restricting assault weapons and tobacco advertising. On the other hand, they ignored Republican themes such as tax cuts, school vouchers, and

opposition to partial-birth abortion. The Alliance guides stated the issues in terms that cast Republicans in a poor light. Republican-backed changes in environmental laws were described thus: "Weaken clean water and clean air protections." Even the photos contributed powerfully to the slanting effect.

"Decrease projected Medicare spending" was illustrated by a frail white-haired woman with an intravenous tube in her arm. Anyone who would vote for a Republican after reading such material would appear to be quite hard-hearted.

"This election made our plan for the next two years clear," said then Alliance executive director Jill Hanauer last November. She pledged creation of many more "grassroots clergy-led structures of dedicated activists."

The Alliance bemoans the politicization of religion. According to Pennybacker, "religion should never be used as a weapon to promote a political agenda or to wage a culture war." But Pennybacker is also director of the Washington lobby office for the NCC, which is not commonly known for its reluctance to enter the political fray. NCC chief Campbell boasted last fall of the council's crucial role in establishing the Alliance.

Not a 'Mainstream' Board

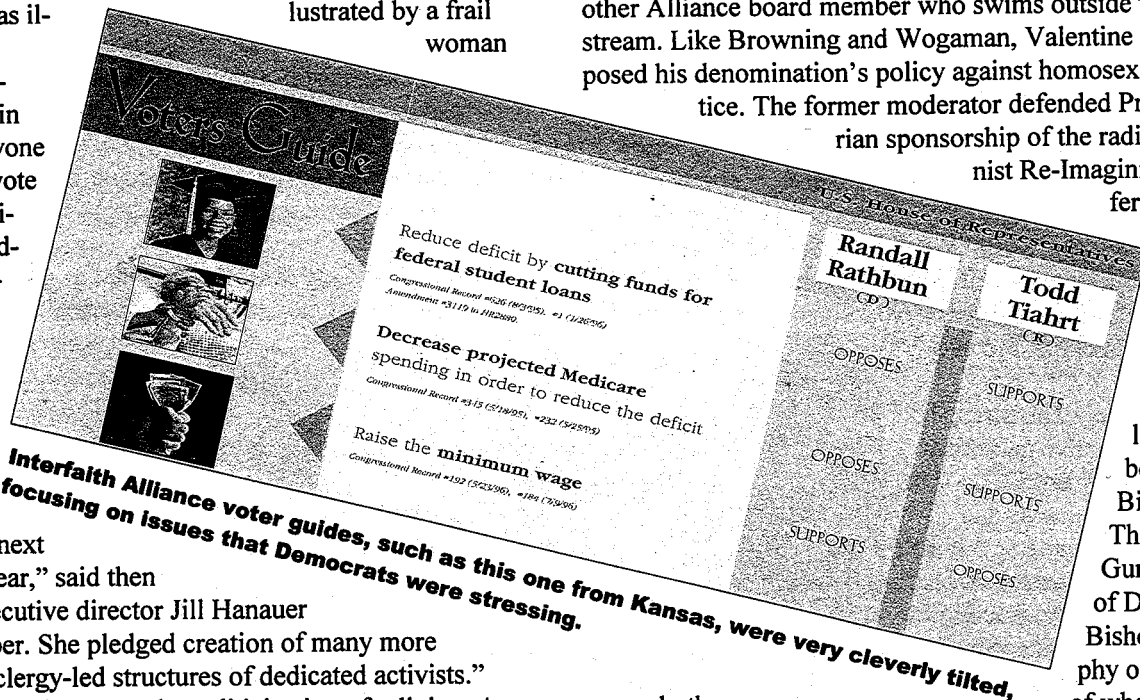
The Alliance's self-portrait as "mainstream" is best judged by the membership of its own board. NCC officials Pennybacker and Campbell, of course, have long histories of liberal political activism. Both visited with President Clinton in November 1995 to offer him the NCC's solidarity in his budget struggle with the Republican Congress.

Episcopal Bishop Browning has urged Congress to recognize homosexuals as a class specially protected under civil rights laws. In April 1996 Browning joined Alliance board members the Rev. Wogaman and Professor John Swomley of United Methodist St. Paul's School of Theology to oppose legislation that would have outlawed partial-birth abortions. Wogaman declared that such a ban would be "unfeeling." In the past, Wogaman called himself a "democratic socialist."

Wogaman's United Methodist colleague on the Alliance board, Dr. Swomley, is notorious for his far-left enthusiasms. In 1994 he visited communist North Korea, after which he wrote a glowing report for a United Methodist magazine in praise of the Stalinist dictatorship.

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) leader Valentine is another Alliance board member who swims outside the mainstream. Like Browning and Wogaman, Valentine has opposed his denomination's policy against homosexual practice. The former moderator defended Presbyterian sponsorship of the radical feminist Re-Imagining Conference in 1993.

Catholic leaders on the Alliance's board are Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit and Bishop Murphy of Baltimore of whom sit on Catholic bish-radical Call to



more, both the left fringe of the U.S. ops. Gumbleton is active in the Action, a dissident Catholic group.

Little Room for Orthodox Christians

Other Alliance board members include Unitarian Universalist Moderator Denise Davidoff, former American Jewish Congress President Arthur Hertzberg, Bishop Frederick James of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and Foy Valentine, a former dissident Southern Baptist official.

The Alliance advocates "tolerance" and "diversity." But its leadership has little room for one large segment of American society: Christians who hold to the traditional beliefs and morals of their churches. Although it calls for a renewal of "civility" and "community," the Alliance invests its greatest passion in demonizing these opponents as bigots.

For the Christian Right, the Alliance is hardly a threat. But for mainline Christians who cherish hopes for their churches' ultimate renewal, the Alliance is a disturbing reminder of the stubborn obstacles that lie before them.

IRD

by Mark Tooley



Who Is the Patriot?

Patriot: *one who loves his country and supports its authority and interests.* (Webster's)

During the long Cold War, large segments of the U.S. church leadership developed a curious double standard regarding patriotism. If it was U.S. patriotism—an American flag in the sanctuary, a prayer of thanksgiving that we live in a free country—this was outrageous idolatry. But if it was radical Third World patriotism—students waving red flags, shouting “Death to America!”—then this was a wondrous upsurge of pride amongst an oppressed people.

Fortunately, this strange form of selective patriotism never spread very far beyond the seminaries and church headquarters. But in those narrow quarters, the old attitudes still surface. Consider a recent example.

On December 21 an advertisement appeared in the *Washington Post*, sponsored by the United Church of Christ Board for Homeland Ministries. The ad appealed to President Clinton to “grant amnesty for the fifteen Puerto Rican men and women incarcerated in the United States because of their actions on behalf of the cause of Puerto Rican independence.” Signers of the ad included top officials of the National Council of Churches, United Methodist Church, Episcopal Church, and several other denominations.

These endorsers indicated that “we are not united” about “the means employed” by the 15 to advance their cause. But their ad never stated what those means had been. In fact, most of the 15 were members of the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN), a group seeking a “free and socialist” Puerto Rico through “armed struggle.” The FALN was responsible for 100 bombings in five cities during the late 1970s and early 1980s. These blasts caused five deaths, 80 injuries, and more than \$3.5 million in property damage.

The prisoners were convicted on charges including conspiracy to kidnap and to bomb, auto theft, illegal use of weapons, robbery and attempted armed robbery. They

have never expressed any public regrets for this crime spree on behalf of a cause that has been repeatedly rejected by over 95 percent of the Puerto Rican voters.

Yet last November the NCC Executive Board acclaimed these “political prisoners” for their “profound spiritual depth, strength and gentleness.” A year earlier the United Methodist Board of Church and Society had compared the 15 to the imprisoned apostles Peter and Paul, and to “American patriots” in the Revolutionary War.

During the Cold War, the IRD had an answer for this perverse view of patriotism. We affirmed that patriotism,

among Americans or any other people, was indeed a virtue. The prophet Jeremiah instructed the exiled Hebrews in Babylon to “seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jer. 29:7).

But this proper love of country has its limits. Christians must always remember that we are “strangers and exiles on the earth” who “desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one” (Heb.

11:13,16). We cannot identify the kingdom of God with any earthly system—neither capitalism nor socialism.

The true Christian patriot does not exalt his own country in a way that implies contempt or hostility toward another people. The true Christian patriot may take up arms to defend his nation; however, even then he considers himself bound by moral strictures regarding the conduct of a “just war.” He does not stoop to terrorism against innocent civilians.

Because he loves his nation, the true Christian patriot holds it to high standards of righteousness. If conscience compels him to disobey a law, he does so openly and respectfully. He always honors the authorities, especially when those have been established by democratic decision of the people. The true Christian patriot is always prepared to repent of his personal and political shortcomings.

So who is the patriot? Perhaps some church leaders need to rethink.

IRD

by Alan F.H. Wisdom



Protesters, sponsored by the United Church of Christ and other religious bodies, held a vigil outside the White House last December 20.

Churches Key in Guatemala Peace

Several church bodies, from the Vatican to Church World Service, could take some credit for mediating the Guatemalan civil war that ended with peace accords last December 29. An important early role in bringing together the Guatemalan government and the Marxist guerrillas of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) was played by the Rev. Paul Wee, a U.S. Lutheran pastor and former official of the Lutheran World Federation.

In a recent interview with Religion News Service, Wee showed that he had not approached the conflict with an even hand. The former Lutheran official used the strongest language to describe Guatemalan government actions during the civil war: "massacre," "genocide," "a situation of pure terror."

But "the guerrillas are for the most part a mild-mannered group of people," according to Wee. "They're not wild-eyed Marxists but they were patriots, people committed to bringing justice to their country." He compared the URNG insurgency to the American Revolution and suggested that its vision of a socialist revolution was inspired by Christian teachings.

Confrontation over Jerusalem

The issue of Jerusalem provoked a blow-up between the U.S. National Council of Churches and leading U.S. Jewish groups. The Jewish groups objected to an advertisement headlined "Christians Call for a Shared Jerusalem," published in the December 21 *New York Times*. The ad was placed by Churches for Middle East Peace, a joint lobbying effort by 15 church-related agencies – including most prominently the NCC and its leading member denominations.

The ad implied that Palestinian Muslims and Christians had a claim on

Jerusalem equal to Israel's. Its fuzzy language about "sharing" ran counter to Israel's insistence that Jerusalem must remain, undivided, as the Israeli capital. Rabbi A. James Rudin of the American Jewish Committee charged that Churches for Middle East Peace "has exhibited a consistent hostility toward Israel and its legitimate needs."

At a January 17 meeting with Jewish leaders, NCC General Secretary Joan Brown Campbell promised to review the council's 17-year-old policy statement on the Middle East. But she made no promises that the pro-Palestinian tilt of NCC policy would be altered.

Pakistani Riot Against Christians

Mob violence against Christians erupted in February in the Punjab



INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS

region of Pakistan. A crowd of 30,000 to 60,000 Muslims stormed into the town of Shantinagar, inflamed by rumors that Christians there had burned pages from the Koran. As the violence spread, Christian villages were looted and torched. One eyewitness estimated that 1,800 homes and 13 churches were destroyed. The death toll was low: one policeman and one Muslim rioter.

Cry for Renewal in Hungary

"We hoped for high moral standards from the West," said the head of the Hungarian Reformed Church, "but

instead got libertinism and nihilism which produced a second form of atheism to add to the still-widespread influence of Marxism-Leninism."

Bishop Lorant Hegedus was commenting after the release of a set of disturbing statistics about Hungarian society: Births are declining and mortality remains high, with a life expectancy of just 64.8 years. Abortions are rising, and illegitimate births have more than doubled in the past decade. Unemployment stands at ten percent.

"All religious communities – Calvinists, Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Jews – must proclaim the need for real answers, for finding God again in today's new, troubled environment," Hegedus told Ecumenical News International.

Beijing-Rome Conflict Sharpens

The Vatican has become more vocal in seeking religious freedom for Catholics in China. Pope John Paul II, in a December radio message, commended the 6 to 10 million underground Chinese Catholics for "not giving in to a church that corresponds neither to the will of Christ nor to the Catholic faith." This phrase was a reference to the "Catholic Patriotic Association," whose loyalties go to the communist authorities in Beijing rather than to Rome. The pope appealed to Chinese authorities to legalize the Roman Church.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry official replied brusquely, warning the Pope to "stop interfering in China's internal affairs." And government security forces responded with further repression. Days before Easter, Chinese police ransacked the residences of two underground Catholic bishops in Shanghai.

At almost the same time, security agents in Henan province arrested eight of the most important leaders of the underground Protestant movement.

IRD



RELIGIOUS
FREEDOM

Christians in Sudan

Faithful Witnesses of God's Grace

Almost casually, we call them "brothers and sisters in Christ." But for the most part, these fellow Christians in Sudan who suffer such great persecution remain unknown to us. Sometimes they wonder whether we Western Christians have forgotten them.

We may indeed know something of **what** these spiritual kin of ours are undergoing, but we don't really know **who** they are. By their lives (and deaths) Christians in Sudan show that they find their identity in Jesus Christ and in doing the will of God, in spite of tremendous hardship. In one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a Christian, the Church continues to grow. Because of the faithful witness of Sudanese Christians, revival has come to the Church in Sudan.

The revival cannot be contained within church walls, as most of the churches have been burned or torn down by government troops. But with or without a building, Christians still worship together. The revival cannot be contained within a denomination. Conversions and baptisms are multiplying in all denominations.

This revival cannot even be contained by the government of Sudan's campaign of forced Islamization, slavery, and genocide. Twenty years ago, Christians made up five percent of the nation's population. Today over 20 percent of the Sudanese people, and 80 percent in the South, are Christians, according to Christian Solidarity International.

Wherever Sudanese Christians have been forced to flee, they have spread the Gospel. "As fighting broke out in different towns, people fled to rural areas," reports missionary Peter Hammond, director of Frontline Fellowship. "Wherever Christians fled, they started worship services and the congregations mushroomed. In some areas whole Nuer and Dinka villages forsook their traditional animist beliefs and turned to the Lord."

Courageous pastors and church leaders usually follow their congregations. "We tell them to stay **with** the people, bring Christ to them," says Anglican Bishop Nathaniel Garang. "But the pastors say: 'It's hard to tell

the people of God. They tell us of what God is doing before we can say anything.'" Suddenly our brothers and sisters in Sudan can be identified as loving pastors and faithful parishioners.

Bishop Garang's Diocese of Bor grew from 10 congregations in 1984, to 150 by 1990. In the summer of 1992 when Sudanese government troops captured Bor, the structures of the diocese were destroyed. Bishop Garang told *The Lutheran* magazine that government troops killed cattle and destroyed food and houses. The people fled, and faced starvation. Soldiers entreated people to come back into town, then they built a fence

around the town and starved them, including Bishop Garang's brother and four of his children. "Small children who were dying were put in sacks and thrown into the [Nile] river," the bishop added.

Upon hearing Bishop Garang's story, suddenly our brothers and sisters in Sudan include a grieving brother and uncle, a shepherd whose flock is scattered, a man who continues to love and serve God when many would blame Him for their tragedy. *The Lutheran* article muses: "That's the way the church is in Southern Sudan. When

you expect them to cry, they sing... The wasted bodies of the starving are ever-present... But all this death also reveals the power of God's grace in their lives."

Through decades of silence from the West, Sudanese Christians have often felt isolated in their suffering. At last they have reason to hope for some Christian solidarity. Recently there has been an unprecedented movement in Western churches and political circles to pay more attention to persecuted Christians – of whom the Sudanese are among the most sorely beset. Both compassion and justice demand that we intercede with prayers and public advocacy on their behalf. But our intervention is for more than an abstract cause, "the suffering Church in Sudan." Now we may remember grace-filled, faithful witnesses like Nathaniel Garang and his flock.

IRD

by Faith J.H. McDonnell



Bishop Nathaniel Garang (left front). To his right are Sudanese Anglican evangelist Bartholomayo Bol-Mawut Deng and U.S. Episcopal missionary Marc Nikkel.



FROM THE
FEWS

No 'Safe Space' at Re-Imagining

I arrived at the fourth Re-Imagining conference last November in Minneapolis with questions in mind: Why are so many within the Church turning up this avenue? And how should the institutional Church respond?

The two-day conference was titled "Naming, Claiming and Re-Imagining Power." Participants gathered under the themes of "Embodied Spirituality" (celebrating the power of women's sexuality), "Welcomed Differences" (developing relationships across racial and class lines) and "Ecclesial Subversion" (brainstorming ways to overturn a "patriarchal" Church). This re-imagining was realized through "holy play" exercises, round-table discussions, music and ritual.

I took my place at one of the nearly 70 round tables. The "talking circle" around each table was supposed to provide a "safe space," where all had equal voice and any question could be asked. It was surprising then to discover that two-thirds of the conference had elapsed before the "talking circles" were actually allowed to talk. At the first opening, I identified myself as an evangelical woman who had come in an attempt to understand the Re-Imagining Community. I said that I would probably be writing about my experience.

A woman, seated to my left, leapt up from the table and alerted the leadership to my presence. Two conference coordinators came to the table and asked the women what they wanted to do with me. Three said that, after the "hate mail" they had received over the first Re-Imagining conference (1993), they didn't want to take a chance with me. Others argued for my staying, but were overruled for the sake of maintaining "safe space." Ironically, this all occurred during the segment on "Welcomed Differences." I pointed out to these women that they were doing to me what they claim the Church has been doing to women for 2000 years: shutting me out.

Before my removal to the press section, I opened a conversation with my tablemates. I learned that most of them had turned to Re-Imagining for the sake of sisterly

solidarity. Several spoke of having been hurt within institutions that had denied their calls to ministry. Now they were seeking a "safe space" within which they might explore what it means to be a Christian.

Having experienced Re-Imagining, however, I would challenge community members to examine how much of what they are about is truly "Christian." There are some things in the movement that the Church could affirm: the desire to reclaim the arts as a means of worship, the desire for a "safe space" in which to ask spiritual questions, and the desire to affirm that both men and women are made in the image of God. Indeed, the Church must confess its failures to respond to these legitimate desires, and it must rededicate itself to building up the "priesthood of all believers."

But the institutional Church must also, in faithfulness to God, challenge Re-Imaginators when they violate the absolute truth expressed in Scripture. Thus, the Church could not accept the "Goddess Wall," at which nearly 40 goddesses were depicted with details on how each has been worshipped. The Church could not affirm the reinterpretation of the Fall which celebrates the "freedom and wisdom" that, Re-

Imaginators claim, Eve gained as she bit the apple.

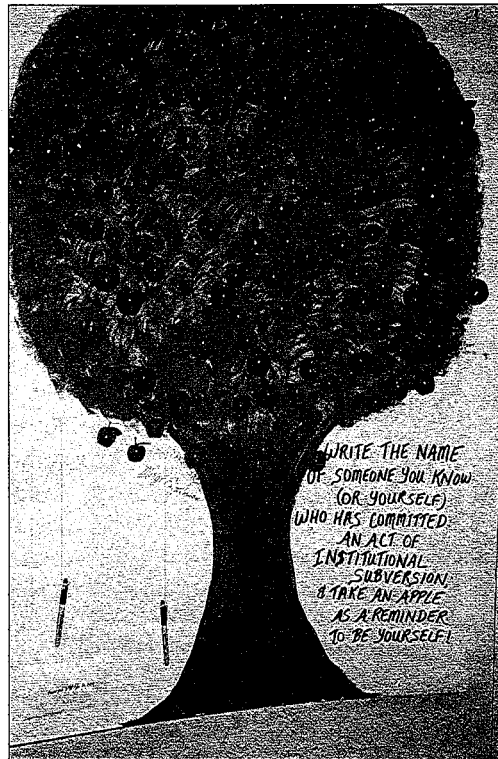
The Church could not affirm the use of the biblical term "Sophia" (Wisdom) as a non-"gender-specific" substitute for Jesus. The Church could not accept a "paneroticism" that directly violates the Scripture's prescription for sex only within faithful, heterosexual marriage. And the Church could not affirm the community's exaltation of self over Christ.

By rejecting the name of Jesus and the truth of Scripture, Re-Imaginators are rejecting the only truly "safe space": the foot of the Cross, kneeling before the Lord Jesus Christ.

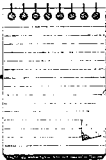
The Rev. Donna F.G. Hailson is a writer and speaker on cultural apologetics and evangelism. Co-author of the award-winning The Goddess Revival, she is a pastor in the American Baptist Churches.

IRD

by Donna Hailson



The Re-Imagining conference portrayed Eve's tasting of the forbidden fruit as a glorious act of creative subversion. Here a poster invites women to honor those who have followed Eve's example.



IRI Diary

Increased, and Not Diminished, in the Episcopal Church

Sorry, we're no longer Episcopalians." So say numerous responses to IRD's recent *EpiscopalAction* questionnaire. In some cases these former Episcopalians still completed the questionnaire, prioritizing issues upon which the church's social witness should be based. The problem is that their voices no longer carry any influence within the church.

I have been impressed by the testimonies of Christians who remain in their denominations despite church leaders who embrace heresy and tolerate immorality. In the Spring 1996 issue of *Faith and Freedom*, Dr. Herbert Schlossberg reminded us that although some of the churches in Revelation were exhorted to repent for tolerating false teaching, idolatry, lukewarmness, and other abuses, in none of these cases was "pulling out of the church" given as a remedy for the problem. Dr. Schlossberg's plea was echoed in the Summer *Faith and Freedom* by David and Jean Leu Stanley. The Stanleys affirmed their respect for fellow United Methodists who had left the denomination, but noted sadly that "each who leaves will reduce by one person the strength of the UM reform movement."

Many of my fellow Episcopalians face the same struggle. I believe we need to stay—and not cocooned within our renewal groups, but venturing within the church—infiltrating the programs and ministries of the wider Episcopal Church.

The prophet Jeremiah gave a word from the Lord to his people who were captive in Babylon. This word contains the familiar promise of comfort: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you. . . thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to me and I will listen to you." But we're not quite as familiar with the **context** of that promise. It is a uncomfortable command: "Build houses [in Babylon] and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit, take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters—that you may be increased there, and not diminished."



Faith and Fiona McDonnell

If ever a church were being held captive in Babylon, the Episcopal Church is that church. Some of our so-called shepherds bow to post-modernist thought with more awe and submission than ancient man bowed to pagan idols. Some promote immorality as the Christianity of the third millennium, and some tolerate immoral acts that stagger even the likes of *Penthouse*. And others give an ecclesiastical blessing even to the gruesome practice of partial-birth abortion. Build houses **here** and dwell in them? Plant gardens and eat

their fruit? Raise my own little daughter Fiona in the Episcopal Church?

Yes, I will. But for me it's not enough to stay and do nothing. It's not enough to stay in my beloved reform "ghetto," bunkered against the rest of the church. I think we must be a powerful, life-giving, and transforming movement throughout the denomination.

I am looking for creative, courageous ways to show the holiness and the love of Jesus to our beleaguered and perplexed brothers and sisters in the Episcopal Church. By the grace of God we will see the fruit of renewal, one heart at a time.

IRD

by Faith J.H. McDonnell



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