



THE OTHER SIDE

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Many Christians, perhaps remembering the words of the Lord's Prayer, feel uncomfortable dealing with power, especially in groups larger than the family.

If we attend a church in which most of the power rests in the hands of a pastor or priest, we don't often go against that person's leadership. If our church makes decisions by vote of a board of elders or deacons, we try to pass most motions unanimously, keeping any debate to a minimum. Strong divisions of opinion, especially among Christians, seem un-Christlike.

Many of us even belong to churches in which decisions are made by consensus. Whenever a question or an issue comes up, we con-

"Thine is the power . . ."

ding power. Two deeply ingrained kinds of conditioning lead us to be uncomfortable. As Christians, we want outsiders to "recognize us by our love." And as women we feel ourselves to be the devoted custodians of interpersonal relationships. We don't like being a part of any decision or action that goes against the wishes of a minority. In fact, to use the words of a flyer for a recent conference on Christian women and power, we "suspect that using power is unfeminine, unchristian, or unkind."

Given this context, I'd like to examine two recent uses of power: one by evangelical Christian women, one by secular men. In comparing them, we may be better able to define what

HANDLING POWER

Unchristian, Unfeminine, Unkind?

tinue discussing it until everyone comes to an agreement. Acting on something when a portion of the group disagrees makes us deeply uncomfortable.

Handling power is especially difficult for women, particularly in organized groups. We don't like to disagree with others. And we don't like to make a decision for a group when we know a minority of the group is opposed to the decision.

This social conditioning is evident by our preadolescent years. In her book *In a Different Voice* (Harvard University Press), Carol Gilligan documents some of the effects of this conditioning: "The boys enjoyed the legal debates as much as they did the game itself. . . . In contrast, the eruption of disputes among girls tended to end the game."

When we Christian women gather in an organization, we have double trouble han-

dling power. Two deeply ingrained kinds of conditioning lead us to be uncomfortable. As Christians, we want outsiders to "recognize us by our love." And as women we feel ourselves to be the devoted custodians of interpersonal relationships. We don't like being a part of any decision or action that goes against the wishes of a minority. In fact, to use the words of a flyer for a recent conference on Christian women and power, we "suspect that using power is unfeminine, unchristian, or unkind."

Both uses of power in group decision-making occurred in California last July. The first took place on July 8 at the business meeting of Evangelical Women's Caucus International during a biennial conference in Fresno. The second occurred at the July 18 meeting of the regents of the University of California in Santa Cruz. EWCI decided to take positions against racism, against domestic violence, and in favor of civil rights for homosexual persons. The regents decided to begin divesting UC funds from firms that continue to do business in South Africa. The decisions were remarkably similar in some ways. Both groups took stands on moral issues completely unrelated to their own goals and tasks. Both decided that the proper use of their organizational power was

to take a stand in favor of the civil rights of a persecuted group.

In their decisions, both groups undertook substantial risks. For the regents, the risk was financial. For EWCI, the risk was in splitting the young organization and in losing credibility in conservative churches where the group is trying to promote equality between women and men.

The two examples are useful, not only because of their similarities but because of their differences. One was a group of women; the other was a group of men. One involved an explicitly Christian organization; the other, a secular institution. Looking at the two together is especially useful because after the EWCI decision, some members of that organization suggested that those behind the vote had used "male manipulative politics."

In both groups, the general decision-making process was similar. Each decision involved four steps: 1) a business meeting at which the proposed action was voted down; 2) a change of heart on the part of one or more persons; 3) back-room meetings to discuss the issue; 4) a subsequent business meeting at which the matters were reintroduced.

About a year prior to this July's meeting, the University of California regents had refused a five-year divestiture plan advocated by black legislators and activist Democrats. They had instead adopted the go-slow policy of minimal divestiture supported by Gov. George Deukmejian. But this last June, the governor, an Armenian, had a sudden change of heart. The South African government's increasing repression brought back the horror he had long felt over the genocide of his own people in the early part of this century. The governor met with three of his staff, quietly drawing up plans for full divestiture in four years. In these back-room meetings, they counted how many votes they could expect on July 18: six from those who had supported the earlier plan, maybe four from the governor's recent appointees, one from a student, and two from alumni representatives, and Deukmejian's own vote.

A few days before the meeting, feeling their motion had a fair chance of passing, the governor and his aides called the recent appointees to inform them of the plan. Frank Hope, Jr., one of the appointees, later told reporters that when the governor called, "I was somewhat negative. He said, 'Vote any way you want.'" The motion passed.

The process at EWCI was similar. Members attending a business meeting at the organization's 1984 conference in Wellesley, Massachusetts, heard resolutions presented by their executive council on the Equal Rights Amendment, peacemaking, and political involvement for justice. Resolutions were introduced from the floor on racism, pornography,

and homosexual oppression. The reaffirmation of support for the ERA passed. However, perhaps because of fear of the homosexual issue, a motion was passed to send all other resolutions into committees for two years.

Simultaneously, a decision was made to poll the entire membership (roughly seven hundred people) on whether EWCI should take further stands on political issues. (In 1975, the group had passed resolutions in favor of the ERA and in support of eleven Episcopal women priests whose ordination at that time was considered invalid.) The poll would guide the council in whether to plan any vote on such resolutions, either at future meetings or by mail.

The poll showed 48 percent in favor of resolutions, 46 percent against. Four percent didn't feel strongly either way. Two percent of the responses were unclear. Reviewing these results, EWCI's executive council decided that the resolution process resulted in "divisiveness, discord, and polarization" and was counterproductive for the organization. "Thus we will continue to explore these issues and others as they arise, although we will not formulate an 'official stance,'" wrote Nancy Hardesty (a member of the council) in an official report.

Meanwhile, important changes of heart were taking place among some EWCI members and leaders with regard to how homosexual persons ought to be treated in our society and in our churches. The initial raising of the issue at the conference in Wellesley resulted in people thinking, studying, and praying. Some came to the Fresno conference hoping this resolution and others would again be presented or that some kind of friendly gesture toward EWCI members who are lesbian would be made by the group as a whole. Others, of course, came fearing such a resolution.

Many of those opposed to a statement on homosexual persons were confident that the business meeting would not include any resolutions; after all, the executive council had decided against it. In fact, the council had met just prior to the conference and the question of whether resolutions would be permitted at the business meeting came up. It was discussed for an hour.

One of those present privately counted six council members who felt that resolutions should be permitted—and six who felt they should not. The council as a whole did not resolve the question. Nancy Hardesty, one of those who favored resolutions, volunteered to chair the "open-mike" portion of the conference business meeting. The council agreed that she would do it—but asked her to preface the open mike with a reading of the 1985 council statement against resolutions.

After the conference was underway, an

Anne
Eggebroten

Anne Eggebroten, a founding member of Evangelical Women's Caucus International, lives in Costa Mesa, California.

informal meeting of lesbians and friends was announced. (Similar groups had gathered at the last two EWCI conferences.) A small group gathered, both heterosexual and homosexual, and chatted in twos and threes for more than an hour. Finally someone new to the group asked whether the gathering was going to have any format other than personal conversations. Could we go around in a circle and share our personal stories? Could we discuss the business meeting scheduled for the next day?

Nancy Hardesty, who was present, said she had no agenda for the gathering. Continued personal conversation was fine with her. Someone expressed hope that a resolution would be passed or at least introduced. For some fifteen minutes, private conversations continued amid comments on resolutions directed toward the whole group.

I said I would like to see a resolution introduced, even if it failed. Somehow the group finally jelled, and the executive council's statement against resolutions was discussed. Did it apply only to the council and its power to send out mail ballots? Did it apply to the biennial business meeting? For how many years would it apply to the business meeting? Did the council have the power to muzzle the assembled membership?

The issue of how to handle power faced these assembled Christian women. Partly because of a sense of powerlessness—the feeling that we could make a gesture but would not succeed in passing anything—the group decided to go ahead and try introducing some resolutions.

Among us were a black woman and some women who had been victims of violent abuse as children or wives. We decided that the three issues closest to our hearts were racism, family violence, and civil rights for homosexual persons. We would try to introduce those subjects, in that order. If no resolutions were allowed, well, at least we had tried. If the first one passed, that would be a victory. If by some miracle all three passed, we would introduce one against nuclear armaments. Probably we would have to reintroduce the one on homosexual civil rights two years hence at the next EWCI conference—and at the one after that—but at least we would be raising the issue.

Four people volunteered to introduce the motions. The back-room meeting was over. Unlike the regents, we didn't count how many votes we could expect before deciding whether to proceed. Nor did we contact others and ask them to vote with us. With the business meeting ten hours away, we didn't even notify anyone of our plans. We just went to bed and prayed.

The next day, when the open mike began, Michelle Borba of Oakland came to the mike

and said, "I move that, recognizing the profound oneness of all women in Christ, we commit ourselves to work for justice and equality for all racial minorities."

Immediately, the issue of whether EWCI would permit any resolutions came up. Nancy Hardesty, chairing the meeting, expressed her opinion that the council's statement (which she had just read) was not binding on this meeting. She pointed out that the ballot had been 48 percent in favor of resolutions.

Cathy Kroeger of Minnesota moved to amend the motion to forbid any further resolutions. That amendment was not accepted by the motion's author. An attempt was made to table. People spoke on both sides. Then Joyce Williams of Kansas City, who had worked hard to get more black women to come to the Fresno conference, stood up and said words to the effect of, "If this organization can't even make a verbal stand against racism, I guess we might as well all pack up our Bibles and go home." The tabling was defeated; the motion passed.

Moments later, Cathy and Jeanne Baly of Chicago were vying for attention at different microphones. Nancy recognized Jeanne, who presented the second motion, which was against domestic violence. It passed with little debate.

I came to the microphone and presented the third motion: "I move that, whereas homosexual people are children of God, and because of the biblical mandate of Jesus Christ that we are all created equal in God's sight, and in recognition of the presence of the lesbian minority in Evangelical Women's Caucus International, EWCI takes a firm stand in favor of civil-rights protection for homosexual persons."

It was debated. A move was made to table it "indefinitely." The motion to table failed. Debate continued. A mother of a gay man spoke for it, as did the daughter of a lesbian mother. Others spoke against it. Several people pointed out that the resolution did not make any theological statement; it simply asked for housing, jobs, and other civil rights for gay people. When the vote came, the motion passed. Eighty were in favor; sixteen were opposed; twenty-five abstained.

The two votes—by the UC regents and by EWCI—were very difficult, even painful.

The regents' main job is to be financially responsible for the thousands of people whose education, jobs, and pension checks depend on the UC system. The trustees themselves could be personally liable if major losses reduce the \$9.6 billion investment portfolio.

The vote at the EWCI business meeting was also painful. Most of those present had not expected a vote. And debate over the motion exposed underlying divisions in the group, divisions that for many are painful to acknowledge. (Those divisions were made all the more

evident when people were asked to stand to be counted, a voice vote and even a hand count having proven confusing.)

In the aftermath of the regents' meeting, the governor said, "I've done what I think is right, and we'll see what happens. Some people may like it, and some may not."

His position is about the same as that taken by those in EWCI who planned and introduced the three motions. (The fourth never made it to the floor.) Among those who did not like EWCI's action were some in the Minneapolis chapter who had offered to host the next biennial conference. They withdrew their offer, saying that Bethel College of St. Paul would probably withdraw as a proposed site. Other chapters, such as the one in Boston, were considering whether to withdraw from the organization. Others people congratulated EWCI on its courage and pledged to join or give money.

Both for the regents and for EWCI, the future probably holds business as usual without any of the great disasters that are possible but not probable. The risk factor in both cases is maybe ten percent. But the risk has been taken; the boat has been rocked. In both cases, a persecuted group has been supported, and the regents and EWCI will probably continue to pursue their courses without too much damage.

Nevertheless, for EWCI members the question of how power was used still lies heavily on many hearts. Was "male manipulative politics" used? Was the process unchristian, unfeminine, and unkind?

The word *politics* comes from the Greek *politikos*, meaning "of a citizen." The word is rooted in the governing of a city by its citizens rather than by a dictator or a king. Thus it has come to refer to the process of decision-making by the members of a group through voting and accepting the decision of the majority or plurality. In a nutshell, *politics* means people jointly sharing power.

Manipulate is a verb that means handling. *Manipulative politics* is a pejorative way of referring to the handling of power in group decision-making processes. It is a way of saying that one group, possibly smaller, forced its will on another group.

Was the vote of the regents manipulative politics? A small group planned the motion that was introduced, but they did not force the outcome. Likewise, at EWCI, a small group planned the motions (albeit in a rather impromptu fashion). But the larger group *could* have voted differently. No one forced people to vote as they did, and all resolutions *could* have been tabled, as happened two years earlier. In neither case do I see any wrong handling of power. Resolutions were introduced in a spirit of trust, with full openness to whatever would result.

But when all three EWCI resolutions passed, those presenting them suddenly appeared to be very powerful people. To some who were there, we appeared to have abused that power, to have "railroaded" the decision, forcing the group to adopt our positions.

In hindsight, aside from months of planning to clarify the status of resolutions and to allow adequate time for debate, I can see three steps we could have taken on the morning of July 8 to share power. One, we could have reported our intended resolutions to the council. Two, we could have withdrawn Nancy Hardesty from chairing the mike. And, three, we could have begun with a motion to permit resolutions.

If we had foreseen success, we probably would have been much more careful about our use of power. Expecting only to raise issues—and to raise them again and again over the years before obtaining the ratification of the group—we took no precautions to limit our power. This was a mistake—though not an abuse of power.

A more fundamental question is whether this general method of handling group power—making motions, voting, using Roberts' Rules of Order, abiding by majority rule, and engaging in back-room planning—is *male*.

In one sense, of course, it *is*. For centuries, women—whether in Greece or Rome or the United States—did not have access to that kind of group decision-making. And it's a manner of operation that many of us still don't feel comfortable with. Little girls are trained to tend relationships and to care about the pain of others. As women, we are less comfortable than men with divisiveness. We want consensus, agreement, and everyone feeling happy (at least on the surface).

What our socialization and the Western world's social history would suggest, then, is that all politics is male. The handling of power in groups is something that men feel more comfortable about than women. (It's no coincidence that the UC regents are mostly male; with \$9.6 billion at stake, California has gone for the pros.)

We can concede that all politics is "male and manipulative." We can say that handling disagreements by vote is a male way of doing things. But that will leave us with traditionally female ways of handling power. We will have to come to consensus on every decision we make—or make *no* decisions.

The decision at the earlier Wellesley con-

Christian decision-making is shown by a group's willingness to admit divisions and submit to the views of the majority.

In a large organization, consensus too often leads to inaction. Jesus counsels us to action and risk-taking.

ference to send all resolutions to committees was a traditionally "female" way of handling power. We will make no one unhappy; we will think about it longer; we will avoid divisiveness. When the ballot on whether to have resolutions was 48 percent in favor to 46 percent opposed, the executive council sided with the 46 percent in a seemingly "female" attempt to erase clear divisions within the group. For the sake of organizational unity, no resolutions would be voted on.

I see a problem in this "female" approach to power. A tremendous amount of power was mustered to keep the resolution on homosexuality off the floor of any EWCI meeting. First at Wellesley, then in the executive council's statement contradicting the mail ballot, then in Fresno before and during the business meeting, power was used to keep any resolutions at all from being presented. (For example, only four minutes were left for the open mike before the announced lunch hour.) The power expended in trying to keep this issue from a vote was at least as great as the power expended in trying to bring it to the floor.

For two years, Christian women in EWCI have been deeply embroiled in debates over how to handle power. Some, in pressing for a vote on resolutions important to them, have used tactics similar to those used by Governor Deukmejian and the UC regents. Others, in seeking to prevent such a vote, have used very similar tactics. In fact, the strategy through which all the resolutions at Wellesley were sent to committees was planned the night before and the morning of the June 22, 1984, business meeting in a secret gathering of a handful of women. Their purpose was to prevent the debate and voting that they felt would be detrimental to EWCI. This kind of attempt to bury disagreements could be called "female manipulative politics."

It is not tactics, then, but goals that distinguish the two styles of handling power. One group's goal is the avoidance of conflict and divisiveness. The other's goal is the peaceful arbitration of apparent divisions by an agreement to abide by the will of the majority. Neither goal, then, is inherently "male" or "female." I would hope mature persons of both sexes would choose the best ways of using power in given situations, even if it meant going against their gender-based training.

And that brings us back to our initial question: what is the best way for Christians

to handle power? Is the avoidance of conflict and the achievement of consensus the only truly Christian goal? Or can the peaceful arbitration of apparent divisions by debate and voting also serve Christian ends?

In choosing between consensus or majority vote, we need to pay more heed to Christian humility. It is often pride that impels us toward consensus. We don't want to admit our brokenness as a group; we want to reach for perfection, perfect wholeness and unity.

In a small group, consensus may be a realistic goal. But in a group as diverse as EWCI or the UC regents (whose decisions affect half the people in California), Christian decision-making is shown by a group's willingness to admit divisions and to submit to the views of the majority. I personally find God speaking to me and adjusting my daily agenda through the words and needs of others. Debating and voting together, if undertaken in the right spirit, can be a way of listening to others; whether or not we agree with the outcome, it can be a valuable way of uncovering more of God's will for our lives.

In choosing between consensus or majority vote, we must also heed the Parable of the Talents. In Jesus' story, the returning master punishes the servant who, out of fear, did nothing. He rewards those who took what they had and acted with it, even imperfectly.

When a large organization has the goal of consensus, it all too often leads to inaction. In his parable, Jesus counsels us to action and risk-taking, even when our efforts are flawed. Dietrich Bonhoeffer counseled us to "sin boldly." We should not fail to act just because our action *might* be imperfect. We must not waste our organization's power to do good because of a fear of handling power.

I applaud the UC regents and the members of EWCI for their courage in decision-making and risk-taking on behalf of others. The decision-making process in each group was Christ-like—governed by humility and a real concern for the oppressed.

Self-interest for the regents was to keep UC's blue-chip stocks; the action they took will cost the system millions of dollars. Self-interest for EWCI was to distance itself from the position of homosexual-acceptance taken by a few of its prominent members; the step EWCI took will limit its ability to reach women and men in conservative churches with the message of biblical feminism. It may enhance EWCI's ability to reach women in feminist circles with the gospel, but right now the organization is mostly feeling the loss.

Yet this kind of self-sacrifice is the core of Jesus' life and message: "You who save your life will lose it; and you who lose your life for my sake will save it" (Luke 9:24). Basilea Schlink, founder of a twentieth-century Prote-

stant order of nuns, has written, "Give away that which your heart clings to, and you will be granted the fullness of God's love and blessings." Abbe Huvelin, another monastic leader, put it more simply: "You will never do much for people except by suffering for them."

Those of us involved in the presentation of resolutions at the EWCI conference could have done a better job of handling the decision-making process. But given our discomfort as Christians and as women with handling power, we did pretty well. Certainly all of

us who were involved learned a great deal.

One other thing is evident: the Holy Spirit brooded over us—and over the UC regents. Nothing else I know of adequately explains the many individual contributions that caused the decisions to be made.

Both the UC regents and EWCI may temporarily suffer for their commitments to the cause of others. But if that be the case, both—whether women or men—can turn in confidence and hope to the One whose power, in its justice and grace, is the model for all that we seek, the model for all that we dream. 

Membership Information on Evangelical Women's Caucus is available from Dawn Swartz, EWC, 1357 Washington St., West Newton, Mass. 02165.

Handling Conflict: The Fallout from Fresno

The official logo of Evangelical Women's Caucus International shows the image of a dove encircled by the familiar women's symbol. The dove, of course, is the traditional biblical representation of the Holy Spirit—the source of inspiration, our Advocate and Empowerer, the One to reveal new things. It is also a traditional image of peace.

The events last July in Fresno, California, described in the preceding article by Anne Eggebroten, have left many EWCI members divided on the actions or absence of the Holy Spirit at their biennial conference. For some, the passage of resolutions against racism and domestic violence and for civil rights for homosexual persons was cause for celebration—a courageous moral and political stand emerging out of and integral to EWCI's biblical feminism. Other members were left reeling from the resolutions, which they felt were unexpected, undemocratically pushed through, and fiercely divisive.

The fallout from Fresno leaves many women groping for the meaning of the Spirit's peace and inspiration.

Did the events at the EWCI conference represent the Christian use of power that Anne Eggebroten suggests? Not all members agree. Alvera Mickelsen, who heads the Minnesota chapter of EWCI and was strongly opposed to the resolutions, argues that "true democracy never had a chance" because the majority of EWCI members were not given the opportunity to vote. Further, she claims, nobody was aware of the pending resolutions except their promoters. "The minority used their power skillfully to achieve their will over the majority."

Anne West Ramirez, an EWCI member who attended the conference, explains that for many women, the point of contention was the appropriateness of the resolutions and the nature of EWCI. "Many members personally favored

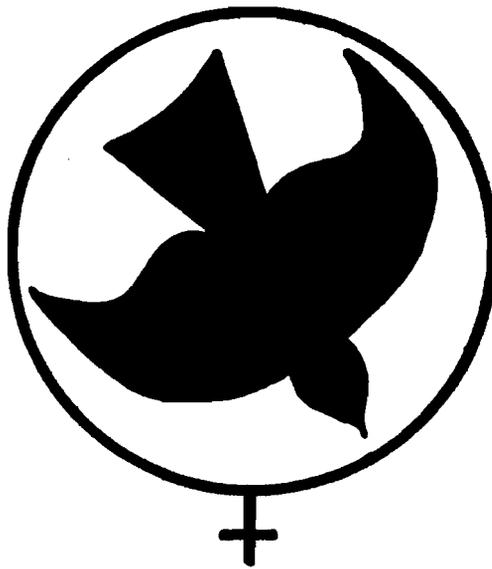
the substance of all three resolutions but did not believe EWCI as an organization should take any official stands on issues other than the equality of the sexes." Nancy Hardesty, an EWCI national council member and author of *All We're Meant to Be*, disagrees. With these resolutions, she feels the organization is being true to "the total vision of feminism. These resolutions affirm the full equality of all men and women, not just some."

Undeniably—and unavoidably—the issue of homosexuality was at the heart of much of the "power struggle." Advocates of that specific resolution were careful to formulate it in terms of civil rights—thus providing a shared concern which could accommodate differing biblical perspectives on homosexuality. Not careful enough, said some members. Explains Alvera Mickelsen, "EWCI members, even those who voted against the resolution, are in favor of civil rights for *everyone*—even criminals. The issue was *not* in the 'civil rights' phrase but rather in the clause: '*in recognition of lesbians in EWCI.*'" That wording, she and others contend, implied an acceptance of homosexuality as a biblically sanctioned life style—a stance unacceptable to them.

Nancy Hardesty feels that is a misconstruing of the meaning of the resolution—a reflection of "a lot of homophobia in our society." Britt Vanden Eykel, EWCI's national coordinator, also believes "that is not what the resolution said, and it is not what was approved by a majority of those attending the business meeting. The people who stood up to be counted in favor of this amendment looked to Christ's example when he went in and broke bread with the outcasts of society and was severely criticized by the religious leaders for it."

In retrospect, Vanden Eykel is convinced that the gay-rights resolution has had a positive effect. "The anger

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Handling Conflict: The Fallout from Fresno
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and judgment that have surfaced have convinced me that it is good that we are discussing this issue. The strength of these negative sentiments has made me wonder if some of the reaction is not based more on personal prejudice than on fear of thwarting the will of God."

Anne Eggebroten, who cosponsored the resolution, echoes those sentiments: "The anger and emotion raised both within EWCI and in the larger evangelical world reveal how deeply important it is to us to believe that homosexuals are *not* children of God, are *not* equal, and do not deserve any protection, even in the areas of civil rights." "Perhaps," Vanden Eykel reflects, "our resolution serves an important purpose in calling many of us in the Christian community to face our own personal need to control and judge the behavior of others in the guise of theological interpretation."

A more severe knot of contention for other members is the impact of that controversial resolution on the unity and witness of EWCI. Catherine Kroeger, a scholar of New Testament, argues that EWCI women who work and serve in conservative circles are in effect disbarred from the organization because they could not continue in it without damaging the rest of their ministry. She points out that some American and third-world women, because of their culture and conservative Christian heritage, would be—and in some cases have been—compromised by EWCI's stance on homosexuality.

This amounts, she argues, to a betrayal of those members as well as a weakening of their capacity to witness to biblical feminism. "The caucus forgot its original mission statement and its commitment to women around the world. How tragic that the women who need the message most are the least articulate, the least able to confront controversy." Anne West Ramirez acknowledges the same bind for some members: "Should the women [in conservative churches] leave EWC or sacrifice their own ministry and perhaps that of their relatives as well?"

Hardesty responds that dozens of gay persons and other minorities in our society have lost their jobs. Stressing the civil-rights aspect, she argues, "If an organization fires someone who stands up for civil rights, I would have to question how Christian that organization is." Eggebroten acknowledges the "anguish" of many EWCI members, but she believes "the larger purpose of justice for an extremely persecuted group is worth all the suffering."

EWCI member Dawn Schwartz and Britt Vanden Eykel

both wonder if proponents of the resolutions adequately considered the scriptural exhortation to unity (Eph. 4:2, Phil 1:27, 1 Cor. 1:10). "Unity is not necessarily equated with perfect wholeness," Vanden Eykel says. "But we are instructed by Scripture to do all things in an orderly manner and to be considerate of the feelings of those we think are not quite as mature, progressive, or astute as ourselves. Any action that is taken with such force that it breaks the body of believers apart should be suspect."

"There is a tension," Hardesty responds, "between trying to maintain unity by settling for the lowest common denominator and trying to be prophetic." EWCI, she contends, has always opted for the prophetic.

For now, the division is painful and confusing. For some, the actions of last July's conference represent a new opening of hope; for others, a sense of betrayal, the feeling of being somehow "battered and bruised." For all members, there are wounds from a difficult process of discernment.

Perhaps, though, this very painful juncture strikes at a deeply biblical vein: our Lord brought a mysterious, powerful redemption through batterings and bruises, through contention and misunderstanding. Christ's followers are called to that same way of the cross—which often means standing with the world's casualties, those battered and bruised by violence and discrimination, even—we humbly acknowledge—by the tyranny of all forms of religious righteousness.

The question lingers: what is the future of EWCI and of all women committed to biblical feminism? Where, sisters, does the Spirit lead you? To new things revealed? To the peace of biblical unity? To the rocky path of prophetic challenge?

Perhaps the Spirit is already communicating. Anne West Ramirez, for instance, is concerned that the controversy about the Fresno resolutions diverts attention from "many splendid aspects of the conference." Workshops on racial justice, domestic violence, sexuality, peace, abortion, and other issues, she feels, may accomplish more than simple resolutions.

The task of witnessing to biblical feminism goes on—with the Spirit's empowerment. Members of EWCI—both those who supported and those who opposed the resolutions—can probably concur with Nancy Hardesty, who subtly echoes Gamaliel (Acts 5:38-39): "The future of any organization is in God's hands. If it is blessed by God, it will go forward." —William O'Brien

