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the female ovum lives only 24 hours, and that it is only during this time that fertilization can take place.

These assumptions may be faulty. While it has been recognized that viable sperm can exist in the uterus and fallopian tube for up to five days, it now appears that both sperm and ova may survive even longer. Moreover, writes Häring, a moral theologian at Rome's Academia Alfonsiana, studies now indicate that the marriage of "overripe" sperm and ova sharply increase the likelihood of spontaneous abortions or defective children.

When fertilization occurs through intercourse taking place three or more days after ovulation, he notes, the frequency of abortion is 24 percent compared with an average occurrence of 7.8 percent. The incidence of fetal abnormality is also greater. When sperm are deposited in the vagina more than four days before ovulation, and fertilization occurs, the frequency of spontaneous abortion increases in proportion to the time interval and increases enormously if the interval is more than eight days.

Häring stops just short of indicting the rhythm method as "birth control" in the most pejorative sense, namely, prevention of birth by means of spontaneous abortion. To Häring, it seems "shocking" that rhythm, recently endorsed again by the Church, should in application produce a vast number of zygotes (fertilized eggs not yet implanted in the wall of the womb) lacking the vitality for survival.

Interruption of the life process between fertilization and implantation, he says, lacks the "gravity or malice" that attends abortion of an individualized embryo. But Häring concludes that the new medical evidence (already forwarded to the Vatican) disqualifies the rhythm method—at least in its traditional, publicized form—"as a safe and morally indifferent method of birth control, for its openness to procreation is not openness to safe and healthy human life."

*Identifying with
The Oppressed*

"The U.S. Christian and the World Struggle" by Paul Abrecht, in *Christianity and Crisis* (Aug. 16, 1976), 537 West 121st St., New York, N.Y. 10027.

U.S. Christians are having trouble identifying themselves with the "cause of world justice," writes Abrecht, executive secretary of the Working Group on Church and Society of the World Council of Churches.

U.S. churches contributed through the missionary movement to the process of national liberation in Africa and Asia. But now, when the Third World's poor and oppressed are demanding social justice and human dignity, the United States finds itself labeled the enemy of political and economic change: "We appear more and more as the opponent of the revolutionary liberation process that we helped

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start." The theological conservative attributes this to the ingratitude of the poor. The ethical radical lays it to the loss of spiritual and moral dynamic that comes of corruption and too much wealth and power. Abrecht finds both reactions too simplistic.

There is a great need for a "kind of Christian comprehension that is able to hold together the tragic aspects of the U.S. future: that of a well-meaning nation that has discovered the dilemmas and contradictions of power and [is thereby] freed from anxieties that might lead it to hold on to its powers at all costs." The rich nations are not only threatened with the loss of their wealth, but by their very incapacity to join the struggle of the oppressed they also "show their loss of moral direction and the danger of their perishing in spiritual confusion."

Abrecht argues that without a new clarity of spiritual vision, practical action remains a mere escape. And we should not, as we emerge from innocence, be tempted to despair, self-pity, or fear for our future, because the result will be paralysis and even greater difficulty in finding creative approaches to social change.

OTHER NATIONS*Mao's Unity
Of Opposites*

"Mao Tse-Tung's Leadership Style" by Lucian W. Pye, in *Political Science Quarterly* (Summer 1976), Academy of Political Science, 2852 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025.

"By all standards, Mao Tse-tung belongs in the company of the few great political men of our century," writes Lucian Pye, a China scholar at MIT. In this psychological profile, Pye attributes Mao's greatness to "his extraordinary ability to understand, evoke, and direct human emotions. . . ." Mao appreciated the universal need to worship and be worshipped, and used it to achieve near absolute reverence from some 800 million Chinese. Mao himself recognized conflicts in his own character—in a letter to his wife he once described himself as being part "monkey" (impish, unpredictable) and part "tiger" (fierce and respected). Such psychological ambivalence may explain his political inconsistency, Pye says.

The author cites Mao's fascination with the Marxist concept of contradiction, whereby opposing forces interplay with each other and eventually transform one another. Belief in this "unity of opposites" allowed Mao to shift his political stance constantly. His mind preferred "the abstraction of policy over concrete details," yet he attacked formal schooling and "booklearning." While praising the wisdom of the masses, he lived isolated from them. Mao could both relish political