



# Planned Parenthood's Partnership With the Churches

by F.R. Duplantier

Remember when we were safe in church? In the media, in the marketplace, and in the schools, we expected to be bombarded by the propaganda of the population controllers. Church was different: it was the one place we could escape the din of disinformation.

Those days may soon be gone. According to a manual called *Partners in Diversity*, published by Planned Parenthood of Southwest Virginia in 1988, the church is under siege. Subtitled *Planned Parenthood at Work With Religious Congregations*, the manual is an 80-page guide for insinuating the anti-life message into the last of the pro-life citadels. The manual was prepared as a gift for

Planned Parenthood affiliates across the country, so that they might emulate the success of their soulmates in southwest Virginia. "Knowing we are located in one of the national focus areas of religious conservatism," observed the three "educators" who authored the manual, "we knew if we could implement this project, any area could" (p. 1).

According to the manual's positive-thinking trio of authors—Patty Bundy, Susan McDonald and Janet McDowell—Planned Parenthood affiliates will enjoy at least four benefits by working with religious congregations. First, people spend a lot of time in church over the course of their lives. The church thus has "sig-

nificant impact upon the entire lifetime of an individual," and that gives the successful infiltrator "the potential to reach a person many times over several years." Second, people generally go to church with their families, making the church the perfect place to influence "the family as a whole" (p. 3). Third, the pre-existing "set of values" that churchgoers share can, with a little tinkering, "form the basis for productive programs." Fourth, religious congregations exert "substantial community influence," and that means that Planned Parenthood programs "may have a stronger impact" when they appear to be church programs (p. 4).

The manual enumerates four



additional "practical advantages" of working with religious congregations, among them "the benefits of an established group" and "the benefits of trained staff." The "cohesiveness" and "compatibility" of fellow worshipers makes them easier to undermine, using the congregation's own "established meeting times, comfortable facilities, and pre-arranged means of publicizing programs." There's no need to waste time in "assessment of environment," thanks to the comfort of partnership with "staff members who already know individual needs and congregational direction." All the things we thought were obstacles to subversion can be turned against us—even the fact that collaboration with religious congregations "will always be by invitation only." An invitation, once obtained, "is a substantial benefit."

"It's so nice to go where you are needed and wanted!" the authors exult. "The value of being invited is in creating a positive atmosphere for change and growth." The fourth "practical advantage" is that religious leaders, once compromised, may feel obliged to justify their ill-advised liaison. "Clergy who have grown comfortable with Planned Parenthood through partnership efforts can be important allies for the affiliate" (p. 5).

The authors claim that "partnership with Planned Parenthood should appeal to religious congregations because it can help them promulgate their values about sexuality more clearly, consistently, and effectively" (p. 7). They stress, however, that Planned Parenthood staff are not "to assume the directorship of a project for a congregation," but instead should limit themselves to serving as "the resource coordinator," being careful to select "appropriate (and noncontroversial) materials to present as examples from your wealth of resources" (p. 8). Insisting that they will offer only "supplemental leadership," the infiltrators are to convince their prey that "the congregation retains 'ownership' and responsibility for the program(s)." This arrangement works out better for Planned

Parenthood in the long run anyway, for "it puts leaders in place for the future development of appropriate programming" and "enhances the comfort level of the congregation" (p. 9).

The authors devote 20 pages of their manual to emphasizing the importance of understanding the diverse theological perspectives of various congregations. "You should consider acquainting yourself with basic theological concepts and language for the same kinds of reasons you would want to have at least a smattering of French in your vocabulary before setting out to live [in France], even temporarily," the authors explain (p. 10). They offer a little remedial course on the roles of the Bible, tradition and denominational stance—all of which have "predictive power" for the Planned Parenthood evangelist.

The big question regarding the Bible is: Where did it come from? The answer—that is, the particular congregation's answer—has special significance, as the educators explain:

The main reason for uncovering a congregation's or an individual's interpretation of Biblical origins is the question of authority. For those with the conservative, inerrant stance, the Bible is an unquestionable, infallible guide to all problems; to dispute a Biblical passage as dated or substantially marked by its author's biases or the limits of his historical period is unthinkable. The will of God is tightly identified with the written verses of the Bible. Candidly, such congregations will almost never seek the input of Planned Parenthood. . . .

Their view of the Bible will help predict "how comfortable a congregation will be with contextualizing, that is, putting a Biblical verse in its historical setting and trying to uncover the significance of the event or statement for those to whom it was originally addressed." There are narrow contextualists and broad con-

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textualists. "Some will contextualize only to the extent that it illuminates the verse's meaning for today." These are the narrow contextualists. "Others contextualize . . . then will dismiss or at least downplay particular verses" (p. 15).

Likewise, the role of tradition "will often be a valuable predictor of a congregation's openness to change and its willingness to examine critically the resources of its faith" (p. 16). "Those with a more open or critical sense of their tradition will have less hesitation about altering their views." How much heed a congregation pays to the national or international leadership of its denomination is a third barometer of susceptibility to seduction. Disaffection from that leadership sometimes makes a congregation more difficult to seduce. "Many mainline Protestant laypeople have in recent decades displayed substantial disaffection over the liberal positions on social issues adopted by their national leaderships," the astute observers noted; "paradoxically, American Roman Catholicism is marked by dissent from official church policy in many areas. . . ." (p. 17).

Regardless of the motive, estrangement from the leadership offers an opportunity for subversion. The infiltrators need only master the jargon, using the manual's glossary of terms that "will probably come up again and again in working with religious congregations," and beware of nuances, for words like "sin," "grace" and "sacrament" are "loaded with meaning" (p. 26). The motive for learning the lingo is strictly a utilitarian one. "Your persistence in dipping into the language and ideas of theology will pay off as you seek



and expand partnerships with religious congregations,” the authors assert (p. 30), without a trace of fear that such close association might result in the conversion of their missionaries to the other side.

The Planned Parenthood strategists next advise how to go about effecting change in a congregation, noting with pride that the role of “change agent” is a well-established one for Planned Parenthood. “Anyone introducing new behaviors, feelings or attitudes to the group functions as a change agent,” they explain. “The most successful change occurs when the change agent joins with the system and functions from within, helping the system ‘own’ the change” (p. 34).

Agents of change are advised to start sizing up the system right away by taking note of such things as the style of dress, the seating arrangements, and who does the talking. “From the beginning of your contact with a system (group) you can gather valuable information” (p. 37). There are “open” and “closed” systems. The former are “the educator’s dream!” (p. 38). The latter are “an educator’s nightmare!” (p. 40). Open systems are flexible, tolerant, willing to compromise, “democratic,” and easy to join. Closed systems are just the opposite, and may as well be written off. “It is highly unlikely that your affiliate will be given the opportunity to consult with a truly ‘closed’ system,” the pragmatic proselytizers confess (p. 41). “It is crucial that your attitudes convey acceptance of what is with no evident hurry to begin to ‘fix things,’” the authors admonish. “If you can comfortably use some of the dress and language of the group, do so. Keep in mind, however, that groups quickly spot phony attempts to ‘be one of them’” (p. 46).

The authors offer advice on how to recognize and overcome resistance, and how to know when to cut losses (p. 51). Sabotage from leaders, chronic conflict, behind-the-scenes negotiations, and non-productive meetings are all signs that it’s time to move on to an easier target. Even when success is achieved, however,

the intrepid subverter ought not to expect hosannas from the victims. “Your highest compliment comes when the change is in place, the means for perpetuating the change are well established, and the system thinks that the change was all its own idea!” Success is success, no matter how trivial. “Even slight change in a system as vast and complex as the religious community can be celebrated” (p. 52).

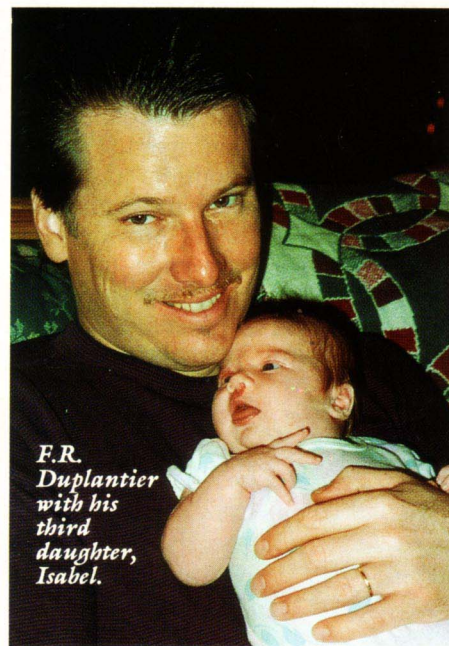
The most important thing to know about clergy is that they are “very busy people” (p. 53), and very hungry people too. “Meal times are a wonderful opportunity to meet with clergy. Breakfast and lunch meetings are well received by the religious community” (p. 54). There are numerous ways to infiltrate the churches; “Take advantage of every opportunity.”

First impressions are all-important. “Encourage topics that you can present without having to argue” (p. 55). Steer clear of the hard nuts, and try to be realistic in evaluating which groups would be likely to be responsive (worth your while) and which ones would never be ‘won over.’ Some congregations could drain your energy rather than motivate it.” Keeping the campaign under wraps is all-important, too: “Too much publicity could discourage some congregations from maintaining dialogue with you”—“Clergy like the low-profile role usually” (p. 56). Philosophical disagreements with congregations should also be avoided: “Look hard for the things you *can* agree on,” and “Choose not to allow Planned Parenthood to be put in adversarial positions with religious communities” (p. 57).

Get started with a survey, the manual advises. “That’s a very appropriate and nonthreatening introduction to Planned Parenthood” (p. 63).

Congregations will like the idea of internal leadership too. To ensure that the chosen leaders are sufficiently subservient, however, they “need to be trained and should not be merely people with good intentions” (p. 71). Always let the group and its leaders think they’re having their way. “As Planned Parenthood educators it may surprise you that some groups will not want to discuss certain topics. As shocked as you may be, it is worth keeping your composure during the discussion” (p. 72). Make the victims think it’s all their own idea, the authors iterate. “Think in terms of securing support from the leadership first. Strive for each level of the hierarchy to take more and more ownership of the project as it is presented. The goal is for this to be a congregational program, not a Planned Parenthood project!” Then the churches will be doing Planned Parenthood’s work for them.

*F.R. Duplantier lives in New Orleans and is the former editor of The New American and a frequent contributor to Phyllis Schlafly's Education Reporter.*



*F.R. Duplantier with his third daughter, Isabel.*

Resource:	Author:	Order #:	Price:
<i>Aborting Planned Parenthood</i>	Robert Ruff	PP10	\$ 5.95
<i>A Critical Look at Planned Parenthood's Failure to Deal With AIDS</i>	Thomas Reynolds	PP6	\$ 1.00
<i>History of Planned Parenthood</i>	Mike Perry	PP1	\$ .50
<i>Margaret Sanger: Father of Modern Society</i>	Elasah Drogin	PP4	\$ 5.00
<i>Planned Parenthood Must Be Stopped</i>		PP2	\$ .15
<i>Who Was Margaret Sanger?</i>		PP4a	\$ .30