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Kim Schenk

Inside

Other Kim Schecks.....	2
Infant dies at home as elders pray.....	3
Religious exemption approved for midwives.....	3
AMA resolution on immunization exemptions.....	4
Church states position on contagion.....	5
CHILD member publishes on faith healing.....	5
Community Chapel officials convicted.....	6
Commune leader convicted of child abuse.....	7
Wesleyan Church abuse convictions upheld.....	7
Korean cult commits mass suicide.....	7
NCAHF statement on faith healing.....	8
Faith Assembly couple to be retried.....	8
Non-drug therapy for teenager upheld.....	9
Transfusions ordered for Florida babies.....	9
Roloff homes seek custody of children.....	10
Murder charged in foster child's death.....	11
Conference on mass child sexual abuse.....	11
HHS objects to Ohio religious exemptions.....	12
Ohio judge orders surgery for baby.....	13
Failure in Iowa again.....	13
CHILD's new board.....	13
Disturbed child beaten to death.....	14
Third-party payments for prayer.....	16

Untreated childhood infections take life of CHILD member

A long struggle came to an end August 27, 1987, for CHILD member Kimball Scheck of Chestertown, Maryland. She died at age 44 of congestive heart failure and cor pulmonale syndrome.

The many specialists who treated her through the years agreed that these conditions were brought on by severe, untreated respiratory infections in childhood.

Both of Kim's parents were Christian Scientists. As a child, she was frequently in great pain with illnesses that were never diagnosed. She had high fevers. She was often so weak she had to crawl up the stairs to bed.

Kim left Christian Science as a teenager. She got her bachelor of arts degree from Washington College. She married Ken Scheck and worked as a stock market researcher. She gave birth to two sons, Rodney and Bradley.

At age 26, however, she was suddenly stricken with illness again. Ken raced her to a hospital emergency room. They learned that one of her lungs had collapsed and that both lungs were a mass of scar tissue. Physicians predicted that fatal heart damage would follow.

She held on for many years, becoming a director of the Queen Anne's historical society and contributing to many other local organizations, but always with the grim reality of illness present. Her children never knew a carefree family life. They were robbed of that security.

Ken has asked that memorial donations be made to CHILD; more than forty have been received. CHILD intends to use these funds to support research and writing that will include adequate witness to the Scheck family's ordeal.

The Other Kim Schecks

After months of searching for something about Christian Science beyond church press releases, Ken Scheck found Leo Damore's book, The "Crime" of Dorothy Sheridan, last winter.

The book deals with the death of five-year-old Lisa Sheridan in 1967 after three weeks of Christian Science treatment. The cause of death was pneumonia; an autopsy found more than a quart of pus in one lung.

"The book was hard to read," Ken said, "because my wife was Lisa Sheridan, only she survived."

How many Kim Schecks have there been? The cavalier disregard for the human body in Christian Science theology virtually guarantees a great many. Those who survive into adulthood like Kim go unnoticed by the press, but one has only to read Christian Science literature to know they are there.

Here is a portion from a published testimony of Christian Science "healing":

"When our youngest son was eleven months old, he suddenly became very ill with high fever.... During the next four days the physical picture became very frightening. The fear that he might die was great....

"However, this mesmerism was effectively broken by the practitioner, who pointed out to us that in a very real way we had the support and prayers of all the members of The Mother Church.... That was the end of that fear and the turning point in the healing.

"The baby still could not keep down any food or any liquid. I knew that healing would come, but I had fallen into the trap of believing that somewhere in my consciousness I was harboring an erroneous or sinful thought that was causing this terrible experience....

"By accepting the sunlight of innocence and purity as my very being, I could see that whatever darkness or error might be lurking around would be completely eliminated....

"At this point the baby began to accept liquids, then solid food, and became happy and well. He had lost a great deal of weight, and had to learn all over again to crawl and then to walk, but he rapidly made up for the delay, and even shot ahead in development and coordination." by Maryl F. Walters, St. Louis MO, in The Christian Science Sentinel, June 12, 1978, pp. 948-9.

Another mother tells of her son contracting scarlet fever:

"The next day the child had become more feverous and had lapsed into unconsciousness. My fear became overwhelming, and I wanted desperately to call the doctor who had been our family physician before I began the study of Christian Science. Along with this desire came the realization that if I called the doctor, I would be putting myself back into a position I had very joyfully outgrown. I dropped to my knees by my dear child and literally cried out to God to let Himself be known. Then in a very quiet way I found myself at the telephone with a copy of the Journal in my hand. I opened it to the listing of practitioners and let my eyes be led to the one I should call. I called one, and in a comforting way she assured me that she would give the boy treatment and that all would be well.

"Several hours later when the condition appeared to be getting worse, and my fear had mounted, I was again torn with indecision. But again I called the practitioner and not the doctor. At this time she very emphatically told me that the child was healed, but that I was the one who needed to be healed of my fear in order that I might see God's handiwork....

"I was also told to sing with joy and gratitude for such a beautiful healing. To my surprise, when I left the telephone this time, I did feel very joyful. Within a short time, the child awakened and was his normal self, asking for something to eat. He was completely healed. There was not even a sign of the rash which had covered his entire body....

"Since that time I have not thought of turning to anything else but Christian Science for the solving of problems of every nature for myself and my family." by Betty Foster, Southfield MI in The Christian Science Journal, March, 1963, p. 166.

How many of these "healed" children have lungs as badly damaged as Kim's were?

The following observations are reported by Ken Scheck. Kim's mother remains a devout Christian Scientist. She was told years ago that specialists at several teaching hospitals had concluded that her daughter was dying because of untreated childhood infections. Her response was, "If that's what you want to believe, that's what you're going to experience." In her view, Kim's troubles began when she started going to doctors.

Infant dies at home as elders pray

While church elders prayed for a faith healing, a newborn baby died on August 20 at a home in rural Cory, Colorado.

Authorities are investigating the death of Lukas Long and considering charges against parents Daniel and Raya Long if tests show medical care could have saved the baby.

Baby Lukas was born in breech position at home about 8:30 a.m. August 20 attended by unlicensed midwives. At 11:30 a.m. he began having breathing problems, and the Longs called in elders of the Church of the First Born to pray for healing. The baby died sometime between 4 and 6:30 p.m.

"We believe in divine healing and trust in God," explained Lucille Long, the baby's grandmother.

Confusion prevents intervention

A neighbor, Mrs. Soper, said the baby's grandfather came to her house in the afternoon looking for oxygen for the baby. Soper called a pharmacy about the baby's troubles and was told to call an ambulance attendant. The attendant called a doctor, who directed him to call the police. The police asked the sheriff to take charge, since the Longs lived in the county. The sheriff called a prosecutor and was told he needed to find out if the baby had died before going to the home.

While these calls were going around, Soper said she went with the grandfather back to the baby's home. A young man ran from the house saying, "There's been a miracle. The baby is breathing. Everything is OK. Let's pray."

At about 8:30 p.m. church elders called the sheriff and reported that the child had died and his body had been taken to a pathology laboratory at the coroner's direction.

The sheriff criticized the coroner for not notifying his office so that he could investigate and interview on the scene.

Delta County Coroner Art Wolverton responded, "Coroner's duties don't require an investigation when death occurs under this type of sect.... We use our discretion as to when we call in law enforcement. If there is no hint of suicide or some manner or mode of death that we are concerned about, we do not call them."

In recent years two other members of Church of the First Born have died without medical care in this section of Colorado. In 1982 14-year-old Travis Drake of Grand Junction died of a ruptured appendix without medical treatment. In 1986 a Colibran man died after he was injured in a natural gas explosion, refused skin grafts, and got non-medical care by church members instead.

Taken from the Grand Junction Daily Sentinel, August 25 and 26, 1987.

Religious exemption approved in licensing of midwives

Midwives are not required to have a state license if it is against their religion, a California appellate court has ruled.

The Court of Appeal, in an opinion released May 26, ordered the dismissal of felony charges against two members of the Church of the First Born in Modoc County, California. The pair, Geneva Northrup and Julia Young, attended delivery of a stillborn baby in 1984.

The Church of the First Born opposes the use of medical professionals both for treatment of illnesses and for childbirth.

The court noted that under the religious exemption of the Medical Practice Act, licensing requirements cannot "interfere in any way with the practice of religion."

The judges stressed that the religious exemption does not prevent prosecution under other statutes. "The only protection afforded by the religious exemption is from prosecution for failing to have a midwifery license," they said.

Taken from the San Francisco Chronicle, May 28, 1987.

AMA adopts resolution against religious exemptions from immunizations

At its June convention, the AMA adopted a resolution calling upon state medical societies to work for the repeal of religious exemptions from immunizations in the codes of 48 states.

"Persons who are unvaccinated because of religious exemptions comprise only a small proportion of the United States population," says the resolution, "But contribute to the initiation and propagation of vaccine-preventable disease in the following ways: 1) they lower the general immunization level of the community; 2) because they are not randomly distributed in the community, they may become foci for a communicable disease once it has been introduced into their group; 3) explosive transmission of infectious disease can occur within populations in their group, as in camps and schools; and 4) they can be a source for transmission of disease into the general community."

"In addition, certain groups, such as Christian Scientists, are less likely to note or report disease symptoms to public health officials, thus delaying possible intervention."

Polio

The resolution discusses two recent polio epidemics tied to religious exemptions. In 1972, 128 students at a Christian Science boarding school in Greenwich, Connecticut contracted polio caused by poliovirus type 1, and four students became paralyzed. [The church claims that fewer than four students became paralyzed and that all others of the 128 students were "quickly" healed by Christian Science.]

In 1979, a polio epidemic occurred among the Amish in Pennsylvania. It was traced to an Amish family that had contact with members of the Dutch Reform Congregation visiting from the Netherlands who, presumably, introduced wild-type poliovirus 1 into the area following an epidemic in the Netherlands. Fifteen cases of paralytic polio occurred in the Amish community.

Measles

The resolution goes on to discuss three measles epidemics in 1985. The first occurred at Principia College, a Christian

Science school in Illinois with 712 students. It had 128 cases of vaccine-preventable measles and three deaths of young people from respiratory complications of measles.

The second was at Adventure Unlimited, a Christian Science camp in Colorado. It involved 50 cases of measles spread to campers' families in 16 states.

The third was at the Blackfeet Indian reservation in Montana. A child with a religious exemption was the index patient for an outbreak that involved 137 persons. The outbreak persisted for twelve generations of spread. The first three generations occurred among persons with exemptions from vaccination. By the fourth generation, the disease was widely spread and the outbreak itself was not preventable.

"It has been estimated that worldwide eradication of smallpox was accomplished with vaccination of only 50% of the world population; this should be contrasted with the estimated need for a vaccination level approaching 100% to eliminate measles transmission," the resolution states.

Two million children die of measles every year, according to World Health Organization estimates.

"It may be that persons in groups with religious or philosophic exemptions to immunization take comfort in the degree of indirect protection they receive from other individuals in the community who are immune and, therefore, do not experience the same motivation concerning vaccination. If the perceived threat of disease is low, motivation for vaccination is low.... These individual versus public attitudes have been applied to an analysis of the situation regarding pertussis vaccination in England. The folly of such individual attitudes, especially for measles vaccination, has been amply demonstrated in this report."

The resolution also states, "Because of the successful measles vaccination program in this country, there is now a low background incidence of measles, and natural exposure to the virus in childhood is no longer likely. Unimmunized persons now have a high probability of remaining susceptible throughout early childhood and adolescence. Congregations of such persons have a very high potential for explosive outbreaks of this disease. In the past, natural exposure to the virus in childhood would have prevented high group susceptibility. Similar statements can be made for other vaccine-preventable diseases."

Religions opposed to vaccines

Finally, the resolution lists the following religious groups as opposing immunizations: Christian Science, Worldwide Church of God, Church of the First Born, Faith Assembly, Netherlands Reform Church, Amish, Hutterites, Mennonites, Kripala Yaga Ashram, Church of Human Life Sciences, Divine Science Federation International, Rosicrucian Fellowship, Church of Scientology, Hare Krishna, Disciples of Christ, Church of Christ in Christian Union, Church of God (several branches), and Church of the Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith.

CHILD is deeply grateful to the AMA for this excellent statement and to one of our members for his role in its formulation.

Church states position on preventing contagion

In August the Christian Science church released its own position, "Reversing the fear of contagion," in The Christian Science Journal, pp. 47-50.

According to the statement, Christian Scientists have a line in their "consciousness that divides reality from unreality" and "is a barrier against every suggestion of evil, since fear of evil can never trespass where God's allness is understood. And the demonstration of what we understand, expressed in morality and spiritual purification, reverses the threat that disease can exist at all, much less spread, with the truth that God, good, is already everywhere--a fact which precludes evil...."

"Yet today many believe that viruses can indiscriminately spread infection and not be affected by the healing protest of prayer. Christian Science, following the Master's example, challenges this line of reasoning...."

Contagion caused by immorality

"If we would contribute to stopping a threat of contagion, we must call a halt in our lives to giving sway to the whole idolatrous claim of mortal-mindedness. Praying to overcome belief in and fear of disease through understanding that God is the only intelligence, substance, or Life of anyone is basic to the worship of one God. The basis for dependence on prayer for healing and preventing disease is the God-revealed truth of being. And the truth is that God, good, never created anything evil, harmful, or destructive.

"Contagion claims power to mushroom through 'thought-germs' of fear or sin. But we can watch what we think, accepting as true only what we want to express or to see expressed...."

"Our textbook declares, 'Truth handles the most malignant contagion with perfect assurance.'

"Because the action of Truth is irreversible and inevitably blesses all, the fear of contagion and its effects can be reversed. The moral influence shed abroad through our sharing and proving of Christian Science is divinely empowered to impugn belief in and indulgence of evil and the so-called communicability of immorality...."

"As goodness is demonstrated in this way, we come to see that the only thing that could be transmitted to man is the good which God bestows. And this could never be a vehicle for alarm."

CHILD member publishes on faith healing

Dr. Loren Pankratz, consultant psychologist at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Portland, Oregon, has published an article entitled "Magician Accuses Faith Healers of Hoax," in Journal of Religion and Health, 26 (summer 1987), 115-24.

CHILD member Pankratz gives a historical overview of spiritualism and psychics. He also discusses the magician James Randi's exposure of parapsychology and faith healing.

Community Chapel officials convicted for failure to report child abuse

Two employees of the controversial Community Chapel and Bible Training Center in Burien, Washington, have been convicted for failing to report physical and sexual abuse of children, and a third is currently on trial.

In one case a girl and her mother told senior elder Edward Hartley, Jr. that the girl had been sexually molested by her stepfather. Hartley taped and transcribed their interview. He asked the girl and the stepfather to take lie detector tests. Hartley then required him to go through deliverance, a church ritual for exorcising demons. The following year the girl's mother reported the molestation to police, and the father was convicted of indecent liberties.

Hartley was also accused of failing to tell authorities when he learned of the physical abuse of another church member's son. The boy's father has been charged with assault.

At trial, Hartley claimed to be an ordained minister. Church witnesses referred to him as "Reverend," but admitted on cross-examination that they had not used that title for him before charges were filed.

Hartley argued at trial that ministers had no legal or moral obligation to report child abuse to the state. "God teaches you don't gossip or pass words along. Possible incest is a spiritual matter that can be handled by the word of God," he testified.

Hartley also complained of the girl's rebelliousness. "It's an ungodly aspect, against the word of God," he said. "You are not to rebel against family and authority."

King County Deputy Prosecutor Kate Flack said the church so orchestrates the lives of its members that the abused girl's mother called Hartley for permission to turn up the heat in her home when her husband refused to do so.

A jury found him guilty September 16.

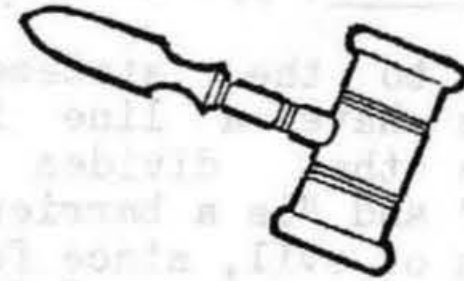
The other two defendants, David Motherwell and Lew Mesodinides, were social workers at a church counseling center when the charges were filed in May, but have subsequently become ministers.

On September 2, Mesodinides was convicted of failing to report the beating of two boys. Motherwell is charged with failing to notify authorities about the sexual abuse of an 8-year-old girl.

The defendants argued that clergy should be exempted from reporting obligations under the priest-penitent privilege.

Flack said, however, that the three learned of the abuses from third parties, not as confessions from the abusers, and while fulfilling social work functions, not while serving as ministers. (State law requires social workers to report suspected abuse and neglect.)

Child abuse is an extremely underreported offense, Flack told the court. She said children find it difficult to tell anyone they have been abused and reports to authorities are greatly needed. "Children are, in very many regards, powerless to walk out of a house and a situation," she said.



The Community Chapel and Bible Training Center has been blamed as a factor in two suicides and the murder of a child. In March, 1986, church member Janet Cole drowned her 5-year-old daughter Brittany in a motel bathtub, apparently because she believed the girl was possessed by demons. She was found guilty of murder except for insanity and was sent to a mental hospital in Maryland. Soon to be released, Cole intends to return to the Community Chapel.

The suicides have been blamed on the church practice of forming "spiritual connections" with people other than spouses. Calling it divine revelation, Pastor Donald Barnett advised members to express fervent love for another soulmate by dancing, hugging, and kissing, though he also condemned adultery.

Taken from the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, August 22, 1987, and from conversations with the prosecutor.

Commune leader captured, convicted of child abuse

Ariel Sherman, leader of the Good Shepherd Tabernacle commune, who fled Oregon in 1984, was captured in May, 1987, in Indiana. On September 3rd, Polk County Circuit Court in Dallas, Oregon, found him guilty of criminal mistreatment of children and of tampering with a witness at a Juvenile Court hearing.

The mistreatment conviction, a Class C felony, was for Sherman's part in having three commune children tied with ropes, put into sleeping bags, and suspended from the ceiling of a dark storage room for two days.

The children said these punishments could be imposed for taking candy without permission, picking berries, leaving the commune property, bedwetting, or laughing during chores. The parents justified their disciplinary methods with Biblical passages.

One parent was found guilty of child abuse, but placed on probation after she acknowledged her part in the punishments. Other parents agreed to work with the state in return for dismissal of charges.

Ariel Sherman organized his followers in Massachusetts in 1973 and moved them at least eight times through six states. He paid less than \$6.00 for his certificate of ordination issued by the Good Shepherd Ministerial Alliance in St. Louis. The Alliance also advertises "blessed bill-folds" and "faith oils" that will allegedly relieve spiritual, financial, and physical problems.

Taken in part from The Oregonian, September 4, 1987.

Court upholds Wesleyan Church child abuse convictions

On August 13, the Washington state Supreme Court unanimously affirmed an extension of the filing period for child sexual abuse charges, and in doing so upheld 24 rape convictions of three members of the Wesleyan Community Church on Vashon Island.

The convictions in 1984 followed allegations that the church practiced child beatings, child sexual molestation, nude fondling sessions, and adult breast-feeding, and imposed hard labor.

Defense lawyers claimed their clients were not responsible for their actions because the religious community, led by the Rev. Louis Hillendahl, was little more than a sexually-oriented "mind control cult."

The defendants appealed their convictions on the grounds that they were charged under a new law that extended the statute of limitation, but the court rejected their complaint.

When the statute of limitation was extended, legislators said that fear, lack of understanding, or manipulation of the victim by the offender sometimes prevented children from reporting the crimes within the shorter statute of limitations.

On August 28, a cult leader called Benevolent Mother and 31 disciples took drugs and strangled each other in a murder-suicide pact after South Korean police began probing charges that she had swindled \$11 million from her followers. A teenaged girl was among the dead.

The leader, Park Soon-ja, and her disciples had been hiding in the attic of her factory. Police came to the factory August 28 and removed about 49 people, mainly children, but did not find Park.

Police said the cult forced the children to work in the factory, which produced ornate items for sale to tourists.

Park was known as a leading businesswoman and philanthropist, police said. People, impressed by her charity system for orphans and the homeless, loaned her large sums of money, donated their belongings to her, and came to live in the factory and other communal centers. She also claimed to have been miraculously healed of cancer.

Park's sister said the cult practiced a frenzied form of Christianity, teaching that the world was corrupt and about to be destroyed and calling their enclosed community "paradise." Men and women had segregated dormitories; children were housed apart from parents.

Taken from the London Free Press, August 31, 1987.

NCAHF releases statement on faith healing

The National Council against Health Fraud, based in Loma Linda, California, has recently published the following statement on faith healing.

"Faith healing" refers to ostensibly beneficial outcomes following religious rituals on behalf of afflicted persons. Unless such outcomes are clearly miraculous (e.g., the restoration of an objectively demonstrable missing body part) they may simply be regarded as fortuitous and most probably involving psychological mechanisms. NCAHF acknowledges the potential value of faith healing rituals for alleviating or curing psychological conditions, but also points out that the failure of such emotionally meaningful rituals to achieve subjective benefits could be harmful to persons with psychologically-based health problems by inducing feelings of guilt or rejection. In order to maximize potential therapeutic benefits and minimize potential harmful effects, NCAHF believes that:

1. Patients should be evaluated for factors that make success more likely such as suggestibility, previous experiences with all types of healing (i.e., operant conditioning to healing activities), hysteria and so forth.

2. Patients should be carefully prepared to accept null effects to prevent them from interpreting a lack of improvement as a sign of divine rejection or punishment.

3. Faith healing rituals should never be done in public or in a manner that the afflicted is encouraged to demonstrate faith in the healing by discontinuing needed medications, removing supportive braces, or performing potentially traumatic acts. Any benefit to the afflicted can occur in private and most of the abuses of faith healing (e.g., caused by discontinuing needed health care, inducing trauma by unwise acts performed in a state of hysteria or dissociation, or financial exploitation of believers) are more easily avoided by private healing rituals monitored by socially responsible and accountable observers.

4. Faith healers should provide their "gift of healing" services without fee or acceptance of a donation. This would be consistent with the example of Christ in whose name Christian faith healers claim to act. Such a policy would effectively remove the motivation of faith healing for financial gain. NCAHF realizes that some dangerous practitioners are motivated by the power and control over people their influence as "faith healers" provides rather than simple monetary gain and recommends that responsible observers be alert to such abuses.

Retrial ordered for Faith Assembly couple

In October, 1986, an Indiana Court of Appeals overturned the felony child neglect conviction of Faith Assembly members David and Joy Winkelman and ordered a retrial, currently scheduled for October 20, 1987.

The conviction was overturned because the judge did not inform the parents of their right to call themselves as witnesses. Like most Faith Assembly defendants, the Winkelmans refused legal counsel on religious grounds. After the state rested its case, the judge gave the parents the opportunity to address the jury.

The father explained their doctrines. "We do believe in physicians. We believe the best physician is Jesus. We allow the Lord to have control over our lives," he said.

After he finished, the judge offered them the opportunity to present witnesses and evidence. They declined. Huntington County Prosecutor John Branham pointed out that they could present themselves as witnesses under oath. (The father's statement was not made under oath.) But the judge did not explicitly offer this option to them.

The Winkelmans were convicted of felony child neglect for letting their three-week-old son Joel die of pneumonia without medical treatment. When the judge offered them suspended sentences if they would seek medical care for illnesses of their surviving children, they refused to do that and then stated their decision to appeal.

They accepted court-appointed legal counsel for their appeal, but have stated that they will again refuse legal representation at their upcoming second trial.

Non-drug therapy upheld for teenager's cancer

Today, Hodgkins disease patients have better than an 80% chance for recovery with chemotherapy. But Sonja Boden, 17, of St. Clair, Michigan, underwent one chemotherapy treatment for the disease in March and found it unpleasant and terrifying.

She and her parents turned to Dr. Jewel Pookrum, a general practitioner with the Perfect Health Institute in Detroit. Pookrum prescribed a macrobiotic diet, acupuncture, massages, and positive thinking.

The patient must be "directed to go into the mind to bring about harmony in that part of his being," Pookrum said. "As long as the mind is out of harmony, the body has no direction.... Disease, no matter how it's treated, is a representation of withholding of love from [one's] self. There are many self-esteem problems behind disease. Just by allowing a person to realize that it's OK to feel good about themselves turns the immune system around."

The Department of Social Services attempted to gain custody of Sonja and provide chemotherapy, but the court refused to grant the order for it. In July, the court allowed Sonja to continue with Pookrum's therapy, but with the state monitoring her progress and reserving the right to petition the court again to order chemotherapy if she deteriorates.

Courts elsewhere have also refused to order chemotherapy if the parents are following a course of treatment advised by a medical doctor.

Less than four weeks after the ruling, Sonja's parents took her to a local hospital because of extreme difficulty breathing. She was put on chemotherapy.

Taken in part from the Detroit Free Press, July 9, 1987.

Transfusions ordered for Florida babies

Police with a court order took a 10-month-old Miramar, Florida girl to a hospital for a blood transfusion August 18 after the child's parents refused treatment on religious grounds.

Police Sgt. William Mantesta said the child's parents locked the gate to an 8-foot spiked wrought-iron fence around their home and refused for more than 30 minutes to let police in. A Jehovah's Witness minister, waiting inside the home when police arrived, counseled the parents not to admit the officers, Mantesta said.

"The reverend was the one giving me the problem," Mantesta said. "He wanted to negotiate with me, but I wasn't going to go through a third party on this one. I was too concerned about the child's safety."

After initial friendliness failed, Mantesta warned the parents that the police would have to pull down the fence by force and also that they would be charged with manslaughter if the child died for lack of a transfusion.

The parents then opened the gate, and the child, Chantilly Tillackdharry, was taken to a hospital. However, she was released to her parents three hours later without treatment. A doctor who had been treating Chantilly for a blood clotting problem recommended the transfusion.

A week later a blood transfusion was ordered and given to a Fort Lauderdale baby. She was born a month premature with respiratory problems. Doctors said she needed additional blood to circulate the oxygen.

As Jehovah's Witnesses, the mother and grandfather refused consent for the transfusion. "If we go against Bible principles, we're going against everything we stand for," said the mother, Doreen Schoonmaker.

Taken from the Fort Lauderdale News of August 19, 20, and 25.

Roloff homes seek custody of children

The death of the flamboyant evangelist, Rev. Lester Roloff, in a plane crash in 1982 did not end the battle over licensing of his homes for delinquent children.

Early in 1986 the People's Baptist Church of Corpus Christi, Texas, moved Roloff's Rebekah Home for Girls and Anchor Home for Boys to Kansas City, where no licensing is required for religious institutions.

On July 18, 1987, The Kansas City Times reported allegations of whippings, medical neglect and abuse at the schools. A few days later, Anchor Home was disbanded, and several girls in the Rebekah Home reportedly were moved to Louisiana.

At Texas state legislative hearings in 1973, children from his Rebekah Home for Girls and Anchor Home for Boys testified to vindictive physical and verbal assaults. Some staff people sat on the children and beat them for being "witches, demons, whores, etc."

Roloff pointed out that the children were in his homes because their parents could not discipline them. He also justified his tactics on biblical grounds. "Better pink bottom than a black soul.... We whip 'em with love and we weep with 'em and they love us for it. We never leave a mark on them," he said.

Roloff also transferred the babies born to the unwed mothers in his homes to people who paid him between \$600. and \$900. State laws on proper adoption procedures were ignored. Mrs. Roloff herself flew a child to Kansas in a Roloff Enterprise plane.

On August 14, 1987, The Kansas City Star reported that the church has petitioned the state of Texas for guardianship of the children in its homes. Custody may exempt the church from licensing because it would be, in a sense, the parents of the children, said Texas state Senator Chet Brooks.

The Texas Attorney General will oppose Roloff's church, both on its claim that legal guardianship or "managing conservatorship" of the children would exempt its homes from licensing and in its efforts to obtain guardianship.

CHILD's position: you can help

We encourage CHILD friends to voice their opposition to the church's latest tactic to circumvent licensing. Letters can be sent to Judge Hume Cofer, Travis County Courthouse, Box 1748, Austin TX 78767.

Roloff took in thousands of dollars a day for those homes from his radio audiences. He had a 270-acre estate, a Cadillac, private planes, and a mink coat for his wife. The state should not be assigning guardianship of children to somebody who is soliciting donations for their maintenance and a handsome personal salary as well.

We are reminded of the Rev. Jim Jones who collected hundreds of children through foster care and guardianship arrangements. Mothers were persuaded to transfer custody of their children to others because "father figures" were needed. Other petitions claimed need for a rural setting and medical care at both ends of the state. In many cases the proposed guardians and attorneys did not even have to appear before the court that assigned guardianship rights. Although it was illegal for foster parents and guardians to take their wards out of the country, neither the state of California nor the federal government attempted to secure the return of the children from Guyana.

CHILD honorary member Kenneth Wooden has written two valuable books that discuss Roloff and Jones: Weeping in the Playtime of Others and The Children of Jonestown.

Convictions in exorcism death

Four people, including the mother of an 8-year-old retarded girl, have been charged in the girl's death. Authorities said Tokietha Phillips, a victim of Downs syndrome, was strangled at her Jeanerette, Louisiana, home January 7.

Gloria Evans, 30, allegedly persuaded church members that she had the power to heal through prayer and exorcism and could cure the child of her retardation by squeezing evil spirits out of her body.

Two defendants have pled guilty.

This case was brought to our attention by The Cult Observer, May-June, 1987.

Murder charged in foster child's death

North Carolina has filed charges of felony child abuse and first-degree murder against Sylvester and Ann Phillips in the death of their 11-year-old foster child, Tameka Lehmann, on June 15.

The Phillipses had been state-licensed foster parents in Illinois since 1975. This spring they moved to Bladen County, North Carolina, with two foster children, two adopted children, and a grandson.

After Tameka's death, authorities interviewed the other children and were told that the Phillipses forced the children to have sex with each other and then punished them for doing so. The punishment allegedly included chaining the children to their beds, hanging them by their arms and legs with chains, compelling the children to whip each other with a leather belt, and forcing them to eat red pepper.

Evidence of torture

Tameka had more than 50 cuts and bruises and an infected, ulcerated sore on her buttocks. She was left unconscious on the back porch, given a bath in scalding water and ammonia to revive her, and again put on the porch.

Investigators who entered the home on June 16 found a padlock and chain screwed into the wall above the older boy's bed, shackles and chains nailed on both sides of the master bedroom door, an empty shaker that had contained red-hot pepper flakes beside the bathtub, and a 3-foot oak paddle. The sheriff also said that "the place was as filthy as a hog," with floors appearing to have gone unwashed for months.

Tameka's brother reported that the abuse began in January when the children were placed with the Phillipses. Yet Bladen County Social Services workers who visited the Phillipses' home June 10 said, "Everything was in place. There was absolutely no reason to suspect anything was wrong."

Home owned by "Bishop"

The Phillips home is owned by televangelist "Bishop" J. H. Barbour. Barbour heads the Born Again Church of Jesus Christ Apostolic Inc. to which the Phillipses belong and also owns a commune-like farm adjoining their grounds. About 40 people live in trailers on the farm. The women wear long dresses and turbans, and the children are often seen working the fields.

Barbour's own home is protected by a high fence and Doberman pinschers. According to a local businessman who visited it, one room has a mirrored ceiling and the Bishop lounges in flowing robes lined with cash. He drives a burgundy stretch limosine and is always accompanied by bodyguards.

Despite the Phillipses close ties with the commune, a local reporter has said that no evidence links Barbour directly with the treatment of the children.

Taken from The Chicago Tribune, June 22 and 24.

National conference on mass child sexual abuse

On May 4th a national conference on ritualistic child sexual abuse was held at Manhattan Beach, California, site of the McMartin Preschool scandal.

Speakers included Dr. Roland Summit, a Los Angeles psychiatrist specializing in child abuse, and Jan Hollingsworth, author of Unspeakable Acts, the first book written about a mass child sex abuse case.

Symptoms exhibited by child victims of ritualistic sexual abuse were discussed. Below are some observations on the experiences of these victims:

"The people in power manipulate the situation so that the child carries out their will. They torture the child, then reward the child. No matter what inherent values the child may cling to, those values become secondary in the face of avoiding pain. The people in power instruct the child to carry out seemingly simple tasks, then reward the child's compliance by temporarily ceasing the child's torture....

"But the next task is less simple, and the next even less. The people in power create a scenario in which the child, not the perpetrator, must choose to escalate the level of violence in order to avoid punishment.

"[The children] find themselves in a situation where they're personally initiating the violence in order to avoid punishment. The child is led to conclude that they no longer own their own 'free will.' They begin to fearfully believe that their very thoughts and feelings are controlled by those in power."

The conference was sponsored by Affirming Children's Truth, Box 417, Redondo Beach CA 90277; Believe the Children, Box 429409, Cincinnati OH 45242; and Children's Civil Rights Fund, Box J, Suite 250, Manhattan Beach CA 90266.

HHS objects to Ohio religious exemptions

As reported in our spring newsletter, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released its final regulations on child abuse and neglect February 6, 1987. HHS had received twenty letters from Christian Scientists asking that their religious exemptions from child abuse and neglect charges not be compromised. The tone and thrust of the HHS response conveyed the strong impression that HHS would take no action against these religious exemptions.

Much to our surprise, though, HHS sent a letter on May 20, 1987, advising the Ohio Department of Human Services that the state's religious exemptions jeopardizes its eligibility for \$450,000 in federal funds.

In 1984 HHS ruled Ohio in compliance on this issue. After strenuous protests from CHILD's founder, HHS then required Ohio to drop ten words of one religious exemption in order to remain eligible for federal funds.

Still no reporting requirement

Now HHS says it has conducted another review and "discovered that the mere deletion of the language 'and no report shall be required as to such child' had not solved Ohio's compliance problem. The deletion only removed the express reporting exception for children under spiritual treatment in lieu of medical treatment. The remaining language of 2151.421 retains an implicit reporting (and investigation and protective treatment) exception for such children by providing that 'Nothing in this section shall be construed to define as an abused or neglected child any child who is under spiritual treatment through prayer ... in lieu of medical treatment.'"

The letter also states that "any religious exception which Ohio may choose to retain must be framed in such a way as to avoid limiting the reporting and investigation of suspected medical neglect or the State's ability to obtain necessary medical treatment for the child."

The letter points out that Ohio's noncompliance problem could be resolved by passing HB67, the bill to repeal religious exemptions from child abuse, neglect, and endangerment charges.

The letter also complains that Ohio's definition of child abuse and neglect covers only actual harm and not threatened harm, among other departures from federal standards.

HHS set a deadline of September 1, 1987, for the Ohio legislature to resolve these problems. Ohio has petitioned for an extension.

Will \$450,000 make a difference?

We regret to note that the Ohio legislature went home for the summer without acting on HB67, the bill to repeal religious exemptions. The sponsor, Rep. Paul Jones, D-Ravenna, chose not to bring it to the House floor for a vote because he did not have support from the majority of the representatives.

CHILD members and friends have made heroic efforts to reach the Ohio legislators with the case for the bill. There have been many disappointments. A prominent one was Rep. Corwin Nixon, the Republican floor leader, who promised me to my face that he would support the bill when I visited the legislature in January. But as soon as the Christian Scientists got in gear against the bill, he switched to their side and will not even explain why.

Bill Evans, an Ohio lobbyist for the Christian Science church, has told the press he can "guarantee" defeat of the bill if it is ever brought to the House floor for a vote.

Even \$450,000 in federal funds may not be enough to motivate Ohio legislators to go against the wishes of the Christian Science church.

Ohio judge orders surgery over religious objections

Susan Gray was born February 18 in Hamilton, Ohio, with a "choledochus cyst, manifested by jaundice and abdominal tumor." The cyst had been seen through ultrasound before her birth.

Her parents accepted prenatal care and medical testing of the baby. But when told that the cyst must be removed by surgery, the parents refused, stating that surgery violated their religious beliefs.

An attending physician brought the case to the attention of Butler County Department of Human Services. The department complained to juvenile court that the child exhibited poor weight gain and appeared hypothermic.

At a court hearing in May, medical testimony indicated that Susan also suffered some liver damage because of the cyst, that it threatened her life, and had grown to the size of an orange.

The parents indicated that they would comply with a court order, but found it difficult to make a decision because of their religious beliefs. Mr. Gray was reported to be a minister of unknown denomination.

Butler County Juvenile Court Judge David Niehaus said he would have preferred the family make their own decision for surgery, but issued an order for it.

Taken from The Cincinnati Enquirer.

Failure in Iowa again

The year 1987 marked another failure in our efforts to repeal Iowa's religious exemptions from child abuse, neglect, and endangerment charges. On March 9, our bill, sponsored by Rep. Don Shoning, R-Sioux City, was unanimously passed by the subcommittee appointed to study it. On March 11, I flew down to Des Moines and met individually with nearly every member of the House Judiciary Committee to plead the case for the bill. The next day the Judiciary Committee passed the bill by a vote of 21-1 with two abstentions.

A few weeks later, though, Shoning and our own representative informed us that the majority floor leader, Robert Arnould, D-Davenport, would not allow the bill to come to the floor for a vote. We wrote Arnould and asked for an explanation, but he did not reply.

CHILD's new board

CHILD has elected two new board members, Adrienne Southgate of Warren, Rhode Island, and Ford Cauffiel of Toledo, Ohio. Adrienne is an attorney who worked extensively on the appellate briefs for our civil suit against the Christian Science church and two of its practitioners. She has recently become assistant director of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management.

Ford Cauffiel is president of Cauffiel Machinery. He has been an honorary member of CHILD since its foundation and has worked extremely hard for reform of Ohio's religious exemptions from child abuse and child endangerment charges. He and his wife Phyllis hosted CHILD's first meeting last summer.

Incumbent members of the board are Shirley Landa of Seattle, Washington; Rev. Ralph Brown of Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan; and Drs. Doug and Rita Swan of Sioux City, Iowa.

Clash between Fundamentalist beliefs and disturbed child ends in tragedy

On September 1, Michael Diehl of Virginia Beach, Virginia, was sentenced to 41 years in prison for the death of his 13-year-old adopted son Andrew. On September 15, Karen Diehl was sentenced to 31 years. The Diehls were charged with murder, neglect, abduction, and malicious wounding.

The couple had four biological children and had adopted thirteen others from various ethnic groups and with various handicaps. The entire family lived in a 35-foot converted 1956 school bus. In 1984 they left Idaho for a two-year cross country trip, arriving in Virginia Beach in March, 1986.

Andrew was the only one who was abusive, destructive, and mentally disturbed, defense attorneys said. The child of a Chicago prostitute, the boy feared rejection, but also seemed determined to prove that he would be rejected again, Mrs. Diehl said. Andrew stole from the Diehl family and repeatedly urinated and defecated on their belongings.

For this he was shackled naked to the floor of the bus for as long as a week, forced to eat his own feces, and beaten with a 2-foot-long wooden club that the parents called a "switch."

Punishment equated to love

Diehl said he and his wife administered the punishment "because we would go to any extreme to show we loved him." Members of the Open Door Chapel, the Diehls' fundamentalist faith equated strict punishment with love.

Karen Diehl said various offenses carried punishments of a certain number of "whacks" with the club. Punishment was often delayed until it could be given at a convenient time. Michael Diehl testified that they had given him a "couple of hundred" whacks on more than one occasion during the last weeks of his life.

Andrew would remind them of transgressions they might have forgotten and demand the proper number of whacks, the Diehls said.

The couple said they were determined to prove to Andrew they would keep him no matter how hard he tried to alienate them.

Death of Andrew

On October 24, 1986, the boy collapsed and lay unconscious in the bus. The Diehls felt that Andrew was possibly "willing himself to die." The father testified that he and his wife prayed and repeated, "Andrew, we love you.... We have never done anything to indicate to you that we would ever quit loving you."

The boy never regained consciousness and died five days later of hemorrhaging caused by blows to the head.

The Diehls are the first parents in Virginia to be convicted of abducting their own child. Prosecutors argued that tying the child for long periods of time constituted kidnapping. They presented medical evidence to show that Andrew had chipped his teeth and bruised his ankles in attempting to free himself from the handcuffs, pipe clamp, and rope.

A death that occurs during an abduction is defined by Virginia law as first-degree murder, regardless of the abductor's intentions.

At the sentencing the prosecutor cited a Social Services Department report that some of the other Diehl children were being neglected. Two had been denied needed surgery and physical therapy. One severely scarred child had not had her trachea tube, which was dirty and clogged, surgically changed in six years.

The Diehls were not employed and received an annual \$24,800 welfare agency stipend for the children's medical needs, but used the money to meet other living expenses instead, the prosecutor charged.

At his sentencing, Mr. Diehl expressed remorse and conceded they should have gotten professional help in dealing with Andrew.

Taken from The Virginian-Pilot, July 9, 10, 14, 15 and September 2 and The Times-Herald, July 11.

How important are kids?

Dear Friends of CHILD:

On April 1 of this year, Senator Christopher Dodd, D-Connecticut, opened hearings of the Subcommittee on Children, Families, Drugs and Alcoholism with this statement: "By conservative estimates, reports of child deaths from abuse or neglect jumped 29% nationwide between 1985-86. The victims are more often than not our youngest citizens, with many failing to reach their first birthdays. Some die as a result of serious physical abuse. Others die from injuries sustained while home alone without any adult supervision. Yet others die because their families fail to secure timely and adequate medical care. Whatever the cause, their deaths diminish our families, our communities, and our country.

"Perhaps even more tragically, these deaths do not stand alone. Infant deaths associated with poor maternal and child health care in parts of our cities are as high as those in some of the poorest developing nations, ranking us at the bottom of 20 industrialized nations with respect to infant mortality....

"This country already has the dubious distinction of being the only industrialized nation in which children constitute the poorest age group. We also have the highest teenage pregnancy and infant mortality rates in the western industrialized world. To add high rates of child and youth deaths across the board to this profile of American childhood would be untenable....

"What little we do know about child deaths should give us greater cause for alarm. We do know that in as many as 25% to 50% of all child abuse fatalities last year, the families involved were already known to local child protective service agencies and workers. In at least one state, every child death involved a child previously identified as having been abused or neglected."

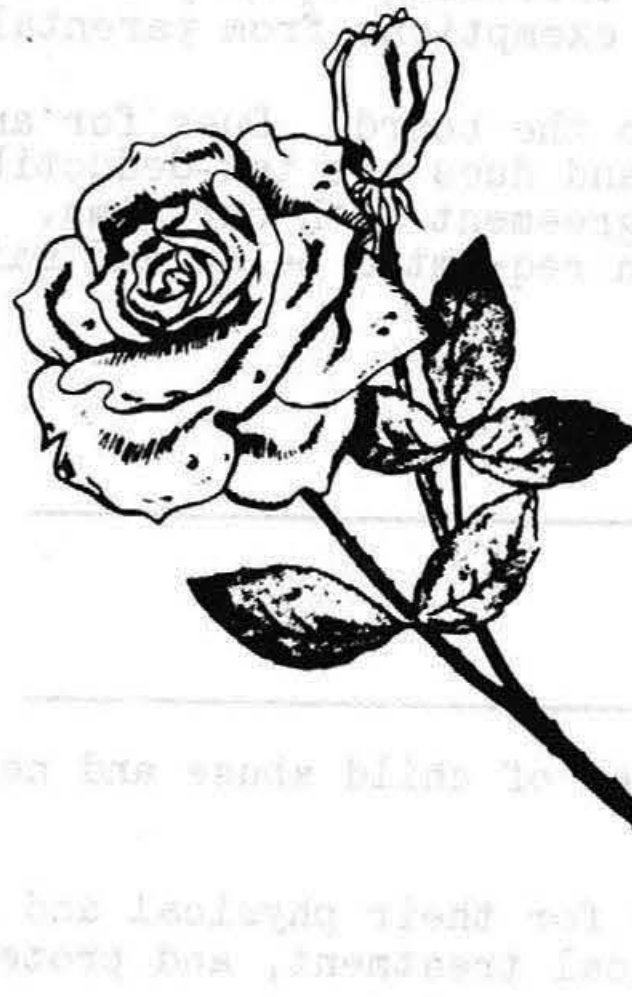
America shortchanges children in many ways. The bureaucracy often fails to protect children even when the children's needs are known to it. Yet this country has enacted a large body of religious immunity laws on the rationale that the bureaucracy can protect children who are not even reported to it.

Religiously-based medical neglect is a form of child neglect endorsed by state laws. Agencies and lawmakers have exempted parents of certain faiths from a duty to provide medical care and thus have stripped one group of children of their inherent rights to medical care. This group has no rights until and unless the state learns of their needs. CHILD opposes the second-class citizenship mandated by religious immunity laws.

On the next page is an application for membership in CHILD. If you would like to join our fight against child abuse and neglect done on religious grounds, please fill out the application and return it. We need your help.

With best wishes,

Rita Swan



Court case deals with third-party payments for prayer

We have just learned of an October, 1986, Michigan district court ruling that a claim against State Farm Automobile Insurance Company for Christian Science practitioner bills must go to trial.

The plaintiffs, Ira and Jacqueline Stephenson of Birmingham, were in a jeep accident on January 28, 1984. Mr. Stephenson was admitted to a hospital in an obtunded state with bleeding from the head and a tension pneumothorax. A tracheostomy and other procedures were done; antibiotics were given. He was discharged in good health on February 17, 1984.

State Farm paid the medical bills, but denied reimbursement when the Stephensons submitted in addition a bill of \$1,775. for prayer treatments by a Christian Science practitioner in absentia.

The Stephensons brought suit against State Farm. The company asked the court to dismiss the suit, citing state no-fault law that "allowable expenses" consisted of "reasonable charges incurred for reasonably necessary" products and services for "an injured person's care, recovery or rehabilitation." State Farm argued that the medical care was all that was "reasonably necessary" to bring about Mr. Stephenson's recovery.

Who decides the "reasonably necessary"?

Judge Edward Sosnick of the 48th District Court, refused to dismiss the case, however, and ruled that a jury must determine whether the Christian Science practitioner's prayer treatments were reasonably necessary and the charges reasonable. The judge cited laws in other states that compel insurance companies to pay for Christian Science prayer treatments. (Such states include Colorado, Florida, Georgia, and Arkansas.)

State Farm chose to pay the bill for the prayer treatments rather than allowing the case to go to trial. State Farm's attorney remarked that the company did not want Christian Science practitioners all over the state learning about the case.

The judge's ruling indicates that the prayer treatments were given during the twenty days of Stephenson's hospitalization. If so, the practitioner was charging more than \$88. a day for prayer.

If insurance companies have to pay more charges for prayer on that scale, in addition to medical bills for the same illness, maybe they will choose to write policies that exclude coverage for Christian Science treatment. And maybe state legislatures will pass laws prohibiting reimbursements to unlicensed health care providers with our insurance premiums.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

CHILD, Inc. distributes information about child abuse and neglect on religious grounds and about medical quackery practiced on children. CHILD believes children have a legal right to equal protection, including equal protection from disease and abuse. CHILD opposes all religious exemptions from parental duties of care.

Membership in CHILD is by application to the board. Dues for an individual or a family are \$15. a year. All donations and dues are tax-deductible. The only requirement for membership is general agreement with our aims. If you would like to join, please fill out the information requested below and mail to CHILD, Box 2604, Sioux City IA 51106.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone number _____

Education _____

Vocation or activities related to problem of child abuse and neglect _____

I believe children are entitled to care for their physical and emotional health, including food, clothing, shelter, medical treatment, and protection from abuse.

Signature _____