

Last Sunday (12June77), in teaching at church, I flubbed the two words into the garbling that forms the first word of this thinksheet, then wished I'd coined the word not by slip of tongue. Only faith can do anything about the fact that human life is terminal, but we all can do something about the fact that it's fragile: we can use compassion and intelligence to guard, in the instant-individual and in the long-corporate, the space needed for identity and the closeness needed for intimacy. These assignments are roughly to the citizen-in-state and the member-in-church, but the family is the matrix of both.

The family's right over against the state and within the church was the issue at the root of the federal case I mentioned in this letter to the editor of the NYT, published 28May77. [Wrong title, from short reading of my stationery. And note the "s" tacked on to Revelation!]

The letter's last two words context my position and that of the plaintiffs: "under God." As for the decision-making in this case, it's a metaphor of the combination of sensitivity (compassion) and intelligence we need to face identity/intimacy issues at all levels, including national and international.

To the Editor:  
Your editorial May 16 assumes that citizens would welcome a national identification card, to privilege them over "the invisible immigrants." You add that the use of Social Security cards (as a forerunner of the projected I.D. cards) has "never been known to restrict the civil liberties of Americans." But this is not so. In the Federal case *Stevens v. Berger*, won against the Government two months ago, plaintiffs claimed that the absence of Social Security numbers was restricting their civil liberties. Father and mother were vigorously job-hunting, and meanwhile needed public assistance but could not get it because they refused to permit their four young children to be given Social Security numbers.  
Basis of the refusal? Religious conviction, based on the 13th chapter of Revelation: All who do not have "the mark of the Beast"—i.e., government I.D.—are subject to immediate seizure and execution—i.e., cannot buy food. (I was the expert witness against the Government, and we won on the ground of the First Amendment.)  
Nevertheless, I consider a national I.D. card necessary. And dangerous. One more razor-edge of decision-making for our humanity under God.  
WILLIS ELLIOTT  
Dean, New York Theological Seminary  
New York, May 16, 1977