

THE WITNESS

November, 1975

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■ The Ordained Ministry In The 1970's

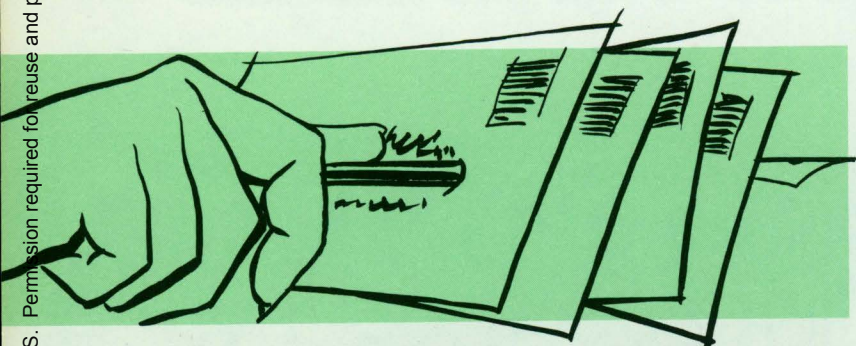
James Lowery

■ Practical Christian Radicalism

Edward S. Kessler

Letters to the Editor

The Witness reserves the right to condense all letters.



Constructive Criticism Helps

I believe that the Church greatly needs a liberal magazine to offset the predominantly conservative periodicals that flood the Church at this time. But as one trained in a liberal theological tradition I find the New WITNESS highly disappointing in its strident and selective partisanship. Though I agree in principle with many, but by no means all, of the stances taken by the WITNESS, I am troubled no less by the general lack of theological and spiritual depth of articles concerning issues that deeply divide our troubled and anguished Church. I wish, too, that it had a broader vision of the worldwide context and complexity of problems that face the Church as it gropes to find effective ways of reordering its mission and strategy.

I hope I have not misjudged your intent. I was taught that "liberalism" means the application of reason to issues and problems, and not a one-sided slant upon them. Perhaps I despair too much of finding a church paper—beyond the more scholarly and erudite ones—that stimulates the mind and heart to think and not merely to endorse.

Massey H. Shepherd, Jr. Berkeley, California

Kind Words Help, Too.

I am one of the former subscribers to the WITNESS who subscribed anew last year. I enjoy the magazine and want it to keep coming.

Elizabeth A. Jenks Philadelphia, Pa.

I enjoyed reading your publication while I was in seminary at EDS and I look forward to the same fine writings and solid reporting in the future. God bless you all in this ministry.

George E. Councell Fontana, California

I thoroughly enjoyed the last two issues of the WITNESS. They talked my language and not the ethereal language of seminary professors.

The Rev. W. Hamilton Aulenbach, D.D. Claremont, California

Thanks, friend

Please accept the enclosed contribution with heartfelt good wishes and love to you and all others who are part of Church and Society.

In this sometimes depressing age when some of us are struggling to maintain our faith in and respect for the established Church, it is reassuring—I would even say essential—to know there is an alternate body such as Church and Society to turn to. As we see our leaders and spokesmen present patterned and predictable solutions to thorny problems, it refreshes the spirit to realize there are men and women around and about who will not accept the compromises and conciliations they are offered but will settle for nothing less than goals they and we know to be true.

Sidney N. Replier Philadelphia, Pa.

Announcing Important Series

Beginning with the December issue the WITNESS will begin the first of an important series of four articles by Edward Joseph Holland entitled "Look at Yourself America", the American Journey.

THE WITNESS

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Eloise and Abelard

by The Rt. Rev. Robert L. DeWitt
Resigned Bishop of Pennsylvania

Eloise hovered in the vicinity of New England during the meeting of the Episcopal House of Bishops in Portland, Maine, in late September. The absence of high winds belied the near presence of the hurricane, whose proximity was betrayed only by the insistent rain.

Abelard was a prominent theologian of the late middle ages whose passionate love affair with a woman named Eloise is one of the great human stories of that era. Theirs was a relationship which profoundly influenced Abelard's understanding and writings on the Christian faith.

One thought of Abelard at the meeting of the House of Bishops. "How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?" was actually one of the questions debated in his time. Such arid issues provided stark contrast to the human reality of his relationship with Eloise, and his great contribution to academic theology was due in part to the humanity of his life with her. The relationship between the academic theologian and the dynamic woman is a parallel to the house of Bishops and the hurricane Eloise.

It was an appropriate setting for the meeting. The weather provided a metaphor. The rains kept coming, day after day. Though activities still went on, there was an uneasy awareness that this was more than just the seasonal rains of the autumnal equinox. The turbulent winds not many leagues away, and the extraordinary tides, were of deeper origin.

The deliberations and discussions at the House of Bishops were strangely suggestive of the weather. The issue of women's ordination was like the rain. It kept coming.

The Presiding Bishop, John M. Allin, in his sermon early in the meeting made it clear that this was not the prime issue in the life of the church. That settled it? No. Hours of discussion in small groups followed, punctuated by a vote of censure of the bishops who had ordained the eleven women in Philadelphia, July 29, 1974. And that was that? No. "Points of personal privilege" (requests to make individual statements) persisted. The ordaining bishops, said Bp. Murray of the Gulf Coast, had not all been sufficiently penitent. Bp. DeWitt, resigned, of Pennsylvania, responded that one can regret the confusion and discomfort to others occasioned by an act of conscience, but that it would be unconscionable to be penitent over an act done in obedience to what one felt to be the claims of conscience and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And that stopped the rain? No. The theology committee reported a reconsideration of its appraisal of the import of the women's ordinations. The receiving of its report changed the weather? No. Bp. Mosley, Assistant Bishop of Pennsylvania, strongly asserted that the theology committee was leading the House of Bishops astray. That collegiality is a dangerous doctrine if it implies, as it seems to, a requirement of uniformity, he said. Bp. Spears, of Rochester, insisted, twice, that his situation was unique, because the Commission on Ministry and the Standing Committee of his diocese were at one in urging him to regularize the Rev. Merrill Bittner's ordination. And that quieted the rain? No. In the closing moments of the meeting Bp. Sheridan, of Northern Indiana, made a passionate plea that no bishop "issue an ultimatum to the Church" before Minneapolis by unilateral action of any kind. But that did not provide the needed benediction. Bp. Atkins followed with a statement of criticism of the Board of Inquiry, which had failed to indict the bishops who had

continued on back cover

To Those Who Stay:

The Ordained Ministry In the 1970s

by James Lowery

Introduction

In the 1950s, clergy broke down. In the 1960s, they dropped out. In the 1970s, clergy stay and function in ministry which emerges in new shapes and forms linked to basic Christian roots. They look less to the national church and diocese for leadership. The action and inspiration is in the local congregation or special ministry. A growing number do not look to the institutional church for financial support. The seminary plays a lesser role. Increasingly relied on are alternate education, professional academies and clergy associations, and caucuses for blacks and women. It is a changed situation, a threat to some, but a challenge being successfully met by many others.

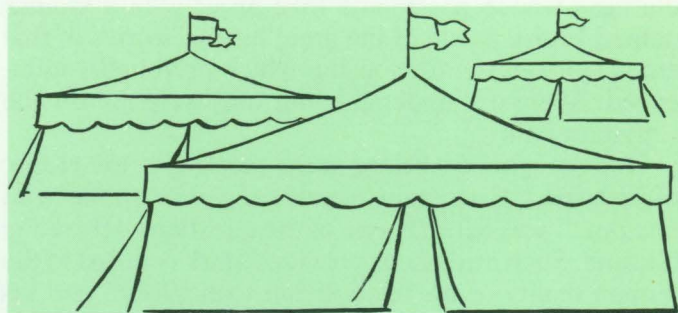
The Congregation

The local congregation is in the forefront again. The beginnings of reaffirming it, after a period of doubt, were in a number of studies inspired by the World Council of Churches. These studies on the congregation as a missionary instrument were associated with such names as Colin Williams, Letty Russell and Gibson Winter in the 1960s. Associated with this reaffirmation was a new understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit. Previously He was understood to work from God through church to world. But an equally Biblical understanding of His work was seen to be from God through history working in the world to the church. Part of the task of the church was to discern the Holy Spirit at work "out there," and to teach Christians to recognize Him, as well as allying church activity with Him. Thus the rector of the church in Newport News, Va. might encourage an energetic woman to organize a squad of women to work with lonely wives of men at sea first, and put second being President of the Episcopal Church Women of the parish.

Along with the reaffirmation of the Holy Spirit in the world, and the power of the local congregation, came less reliance for leadership on the national church and the diocese. A corollary is that while church collections are rising (but not quite as fast as the inflationary spiral), a smaller percentage of money leaves the local parish and community than in years past.

Tentmakers

In former days the ordained ministry was usually linked with full-time service, full-time support by the parish, and the use of special permanent buildings (church edifice, parish house, rectory). All of this is now up for grabs. Perhaps the most outstanding change is the mushrooming of the tentmaking or self-supporting ministry in the Episcopal Church. Studies by the Clergy Deployment Office, the National Council of Churches, and the National Assn. for the Self-Supporting Active Ministry all confirm the fact that 14 to 16 percent of our active ordained man/womanpower pursue an ecclesiastical ministry on top of a compensation base which is, in major part, from non-church or non-church connected sources. This move has Christian roots in the manner in which the Apostle Paul operated on his missionary journeys—earning his keep by making tents.



Some of the tentmakers have seminary backgrounds. Some are local men and women of character, experience, and ability who have prepared locally, then ordained in place, and never leave their original jobs. Our estimate is that these two groups are becoming about equal in number, with a temporary overplus of seminary men at present, due to the clergy surplus. And it is a surplus only if one thinks in terms of full-time paid positions. For this style, in the words of Dr. H. Boone Porter, is a way to multiply the ministry of Christ and to give proper attention to many small groups and special areas needing ministry.

The thing to remember about the self-supporting ministry is that it is growing, that it is once again normative, and that it forces a restoration of a lay frontline ministry. We see the necessity, 10 years from now, of one-half of our clergy exercising their ministry on a secular financial base. But we also see seminaries and dioceses (with some notable exceptions, such as Alaska and Indianapolis), not providing competent support. Instead, it is usually better to look to such places as the national fellowship of tentmakers, the National Assn. for Self-Supporting Active Ministry.

Supports

The clergy find support from several directions. Support comes from "above," through bishops, archdeacons, national agencies, and the seminaries. It comes from "below" through lay people, especially key persons such as the "rector's warden." From the left side, support comes from other professionals in the community (doctors, judges, lawyers, etc.) and groups such as case work agencies, career centers, pastoral counseling centers. From behind, the prime support is the parson's family. And the right hand of support is the peer group—caucuses, clergy associations, professional academies, colleague groups, etc.

One of the tragic facts of the 1970s has been the ineffectiveness of the above supports. For example, the half-dozen national agencies dealing with uncoordinated parts of ministry-support have been bankrolled to the tune of \$500,000 per year (it takes much detective work to uncover it all) but with the exception of the Church Pension Fund and the Clergy Deployment Office, we have precious little to show for it.

On the other hand, a positive factor has been the growth of peer support. Our decade sees a black caucus formed, effective, and institutionalized through the Union of Black Episcopalians and the black desk in New York. The Episcopal Women's Caucus is active for women's rights. The National Center for the Diaconate in Evanston, Ill. coordinates activity for those called to the perpetual diaconate (many of whom cannot wait for women priests to be a norm, so that they can then say "No!" and reaffirm the greatness of their Sacred Order). There are more than two dozen diocesan associations in the National Network of Episcopal Clergy Associations, which deal with three kinds of local and national issues: proper physical, financial, and legal equipment of clergy to do a

job; the practitioners of ministry having a say in raising standards all along the career spectrum, from recruitment to retirement; and mutual support of the brethren by the brethren. Then, peer support in specialties is offered by such interfaith associations as the Assn. of Clinical Pastoral Education, the American Assn. of Pastoral Counselors, the Society for the Advancement of Continuing Education in Ministry, the Assn. for Creative Change, and the Academy of Parish Clergy.

Theological Education

Another drastically weakened support is the theological seminary, which used to provide the normative preparation program for the vast majority of ordinands. The happenings of our decade show the appearance of several options:

(1) **The residentiary full-time seminary** is oriented towards the college graduate able to leave his community of origin and to raise tuition, and who is usually unproven in all but "heritage-handling" when he is ordained. His Christian community life is the abnormal hothouse of the graduate theological seminary.

(2) **The weekend and night school** (e.g. Mercer School of Theology, Long Island, N.Y.) is oriented towards the gainfully employed person, who may or may not continue in that position in order to support his/her religious ministry. It opens up theological education to those of lesser financial means and educational levels. It requires both organization and commitment to juggle one's way through the busy dual life leading to ordination. The student may or may not have a Christian community life in a local parish.

(3) **The seminary without walls** (e.g. Inter-Met in Washington, D.C.) is oriented towards the person who has already "sold" a congregation or agency on employing him as a lay minister, who brings some skill with him to allow this contract to be made, and who then in addition has a group life with his fellow seminarians. He then contracts for heritage learning, as needs are discovered, with theological seminaries in his metropolitan area. The local congregation/special ministry is looked on as the chief place of community, learning, and growth. Everything else is secondary, but important, in feeding into that primal emphasis. He comes to ordination certified academically and in terms of individually-rated developed skills.

(4) **The theology by extension scheme** (e.g. Presbyterian program in Guatemala) involves life in a local congregation, correspondence study at home, weekly or

fortnightly small-group classes with professors out in the field from the extension center in an area not requiring much travel for individual students, and a yearly residence of a few weeks at the extension center itself. This scheme especially has opened up theological education to present local church leaders, and to those of humbler classes and financial means, but developed local-ministry skills.

What we see is the latter three, and especially the latter two, methods, open up ordination to a wider range of persons in terms of age, financial status and cultural background. They often are able to make use of more experienced persons with better developed ministry skills, checked out before ordination.

The residential seminaries have not stood still. What has happened is that they are now offering, in addition to their normal preparation-for-ordination curriculum, resident programs for lay people who do not intend to be ordained, as well as continuing education programs for those in the parishes. Some of them also have offered programs in the academic study of religion leading to research degrees, which are important in the life of the total church.

We foresee fewer residentiary seminaries, but believe those that remain may do well either in metropolitan clusters, or in well-defined specialties, such as the Episcopal Seminary in Kentucky with town and country work. We note the proliferation of weekend and night schools. We are excited about the seminary without walls. We foresee the mushrooming of the theology by extension scheme. And we warn the residentiary seminaries they must learn to live with the fact that they are only *one* track, in these days, to prepare men and women for ordination. If they find a special niche, fine. If they offer new programs for new constituencies, fine. But if they recruit students just to balance budgets, they then become more a part of the problem than of the solution.

Another change in theological education is the growth of courses and events in continuing education. These are provided by the seminaries, by special centers, by secular universities and other institutions. They are brokered to clergy by special institutions, and by responsible diocesan persons. They might helpfully be classified under heritage training, skill training, personal growth, career development, and therapy. Some center on subject matter, some center on the person him/herself. And some concentrate on the place and practice of ministry. Some see the clergyperson as the chief resource, and some see him/her as the ignorant

piglet to suck the savant teat! There is a wide range. Our experience is that continuing education and career development go together, that clergy are most highly motivated to these efforts about 5-10 years out (seeing where one fits in and what gaps need to be dealt with); at mid-career (change or restrengthening for the same); and at preparation for retirement time. Ideal is the situation where clergy performance review *as an aid to his growth*, and where the review and continuing training process is really "owned" by the clergyperson. Our observation is that this kind of thinking and planned continuing education involvement is the practice of a growing number of clergy, but it is still not touching the majority of us.



What then? Where do these trends lead?

First, we forecast an opportunity for an increase of trained lay Christian ministry. Now that the churches are once again a minority movement, people belonging for reasons of social status, rather than Christian commitment, are dropping out. Those left are a stalwart salt of the earth. In the growing number of places where the clergy see their principal work, after the worship and praise of God, as training, enabling, and supporting Christians in ministry and mission, marvels are busting out all over. The need is to encourage clergy who are help-and-push-others-to-do-things people, rather than boss-men, do-it-all-myself, lone-ranger people. (Bishops fit in here too!)

Second, we see it most important that we look carefully at the whole clergy career spectrum, and emphasize selection. It is our sad duty to deal with a number of clergy 5-30 years past ordination whose record shows that honorable exit from the ordained ministry, due to unsuitability for religious leadership, is indicated. At many places in their past record, before ordination, individual people tried to "blow the

whistle" on these individuals, but the bishop or seminary dean or commission on ministry never acted on these warnings. We believe selection today is easier than in decades past, because we are in a position to accept only persons who have already a demonstrated Christian commitment, tested character, and proved effectiveness in communications, human relations, and personal growth. And we believe that, of all our institutions, the residentiary seminary is the most deficient in making selections in this manner, because they do not require proved Christian commitment before allowing work in a pre-ordination program.

Finally, we need to have our goals straight in choosing what are the functions of an ordained clergy. Without priorities, we are like the knight who jumps on his white charger and gallops off in several directions at once. If our goal is holy men and women, then we pick people who are already noted as prayerful. If our goal is to face the unknown with confidence, then we pick people who are "creatively weird," in the words of Dean Urban Holmes of Sewanee. If our goal is excellence, we stop picking such "bland" ordinands. If our goal is missionary, then we pick people with drive, who can function without ecclesiastical financial support, and who can create Christian community wherever they are. The basic question, one must see, is whether the church wants to be the Church.

The Rev. James Lowery, Executive Director, Enablement, Inc.

Rejoinder to "Those Who Stay: the Ordained Ministry in the seventies" by Edward Coolidge

It's good to count your blessings. Congregations do exist that live out their missionary possibilities. There are clergy who have rediscovered "tentmaking ministries" whether alone or in teams. As a non-parochial clergyperson I haven't been much involved in these things but I have seen them.

But we have to do more than count (and bet on) our blessings. Their sweet taste will turn to ashes in our mouths if we don't "find in God's mercy the occasion to repent" of serious injustices and idolatries even more characteristic of our ecclesiastical system. The fact is that "those who stay" include many who are

trapped in heartbreaking situations, while others—minorities, women, and many non-parochial clergy are excluded. We all know that, and Mr. Lowery's failure to mention even the issue of women's ordination as part of the 1970's scene is puzzling and disturbing.

I'll limit my own comments to the situation of non-parochial clergy since I know it first hand. Some contemporary thinking identifies "ordained ministry" with membership in a particular professional class that perceives its own self-interest in the context of parishes (hence the term "non-parochial"). As an ordained minister one may belong to this group by accepting a call to a parish or by finding employment in some parochial support-group (diocesan staff, cathedral clergy, etc.). One may also have a kind of "associate membership" as a college chaplain or the like—but members of this sub-group already speak a language quite different from the dominant class. And then there are the ordained ministers employed fulltime in secular work with little if any parish connection. Nobody seems to know what to do with us beyond suggesting we at least provide "Sunday supply" occasionally so as to keep our professional standing intact.

This whole attitude toward the ordained ministry is a damnable offense. I am proud of my ordination and profoundly humbled by it. Woe to me if I do not find ways in which to work out my vocation in the far countries of secularity! Woe to the established church in the 1970's if it does not recognize the quietly forming house churches, the courageous and sometimes solitary witness of secular ministers, the faithful pastoral ministrations to latent and alienated believers and non-believers that occur because we are here. Much as one must admire the Academy of Parish Clergy's accomplishments in upgrading professional standards, it's high time we outgrew our love affair with professionalism and any passion for social status as "clergy." There's so very much to be done, and the church has dwelt in a comfortable cultural ghetto for too long. Among "those who have left" and "those who can't get in" are many of the most socially sensitive and committed members of our church. I agree with Mr. Lowery that "the basic question, one must see, is really whether the Church wants to be the Church." As soon as "those who stay" want to sit down with the rest of us and talk about goals, I'd be honored to be present.

The Rev. Edward Cole Coolidge, director of the Program Department of Community Action in greater Middletown, Connecticut.

Practical Christian Radicalism

by Edward S. Kessler

The practical radical is neither anarchic nor reformist. He starts off by admitting that "institution" is not a dirty word. People have a natural desire to stabilize things, to take the charismatic and organize it. What today's practical Christian radical is trying to say is that we cannot live abundantly with the Christian institutions we have; not only do they impede the gospel, but they are a dying remnant with little long-time survival value, in spite of occasional outbreaks of 'success' or the 'Spirit.'

However, the practical Christian radical is not a defeatist. He is, in fact, the only one whose practical wisdom and theological vision hold forth any possibility of building new institutions through which the gospel of the Kingdom may be expressed.

The practical radical starts his thinking about the future of the Church with the assumption that the Church in its present form is a dying institution. But, the present forms of the institutional Church will be a long time dying. A skeleton of the old all-inclusive Church will remain by the continuing absorption of the smaller, weaker units into larger, stronger ones. Because of the concentration of effort on reorganization for maintenance and survival, the main churches will have little time, energy or money for radical reformulation of either gospel or ministry.

The practical Christian radical, therefore, must work with these two practical assumptions:

- The old institutions will not 'get out of the way' except that they will disappear more rapidly in areas of greatest need like the inner city and small communities where radical experimentation will be more readily welcomed, or at least tolerated; and,
- New Christian institutions cannot be built on the foundations of the wreckage of the old churches. The churches—local units or established hierarchies—have already an over-crowded agenda increasingly concentrated on survival. Radical strategy and tactics, by their nature, cannot be placed on another person's or group's agenda, especially not at the bottom of the list of agenda items.

Christian radicalism is the new wine of the gospel that cannot be contained in the old wineskins of the existing churches. True Christian radicalism can be identified by the extent to which it is a dynamic force based on these unchanging principles:

- The uniqueness of Jesus which points to the absolute demand that we join in:
- Discipleship to the Kingdom which demands personal conversion. This personal conversion is not for the benefit of the converted one. Rather, it empowers the converted to make a commitment to the Kingdom which can only be expressed through membership in
- A "discipled" Christian group. The test (or fruits) of conversion is different from the experience of conversion. We can identify the converted by their willingness to join "discipled" groups which have the marks of the Kingdom as Jesus defined them. These marks include:
 - a) Having a different life-style from the world, which means living as if already in the Kingdom;
 - b) Having a determination to change the world by what the "discipled" group does and how it does it, as a living, acted parable of the Kingdom;
 - c) Having a commitment in each member that will carry right onto the Cross (the punishment handed out by a privileged world which rejects the Good News for the poor);
 - d) Being a group which cultivates in its life such arcane practices as 'enemy-loving', 'first shall be last', and 'leaders who are servants'; and,
 - e) ABOVE ALL, having an enduring commitment to those at the bottom of the social and economic heap: the people of the inner city and the neglected village, the homeless, the depressed, the addicts, the mal-treated, the prisoners—all the forgotten, the oppressed, the lost, the unlovable.

Such a Christian radicalism is practical not in the numbers it will attract but in the way it challenges Christians and non-Christians. Even for those unable to accept the entire life-demanding and life-giving challenge, such Christian radicalism points a direction for what we do and indicates what sort of groups we must support. No theology has any guarantee, but the gospel message is clear; unless you are with those healing groups that are on the side of the poor and oppressed, you will certainly not find the Kingdom.

For a variety of reasons, it is important for radicals to stay within the Church, even when they know the limits of reform, renewal and ecumenical movements. They must participate in order to raise serious Gospel-Kingdom questions about a number of issues while the Establishment imagines that anything which is done in the name of the Church is all right by nature. Here are three examples:

- Resource distribution. The Churches are withdrawing from the inner cities and concentrating more on center cities and affluent areas. In a time of shrinking resources, it is tempting for the churches to switch funds from areas of the poor and projects which aid them and concentrate on in-house, survival tactics instead.
- The substance of ministry. The over-emphasis on 'relevance' means we 'minister' to the rulers of the age rather than to the failures and outcasts; we have industrial missions to the employed rather than the unemployed; educational projects (including fee-paying schools) for the better-off rather than the ineducable or the educationally deprived or handicapped.
- Style of ministry. We cannot do things for the poor. Our resources must be used by those in need as they define the need, not as we say what is best for them. If the poor of the inner city continue to suffer, if the people of small communities cannot obtain abundant life, if the little churches are being wiped out, annihilated by 'church planning', then we must prophesy so that the Establishment can learn to accept its cross and die for those at the bottom. There is no other gospel way.

The practical Christian radical, in addition to his life and work in the Church, must commit himself to some on-going work of discipleship to the Kingdom. He will be concerned about his own theology, his own spirituality, and also the objective work of helping to develop new, alternative forms for the Church of the future.

- Theology can be a sterile exercise for anyone who does not enrich his theological understanding with his own sweat from some struggle for those at the bottom.
- Spirituality for the practical Christian radical has nothing to do with obtaining inner peace of mind. Spirituality consists of those attitudes and actions which one develops by allowing oneself to be used by those whom the world keeps forgetting at the critical moments.
- The Church of the future. We should have learned by now that the Church of the future will not arise from confirmation candidates or youth clubs. Nor will it be found in reform, renewal or ecumenism. The practical Christian radical will undertake seriously his participation in groups which he can see as disciples of the Kingdom; he will even find it necessary to create new groups. Thus, alongside the existing churches, sometimes in harmony with them, the

practical Christian radical will begin to build the new Christian communities from which the Church of the future will arise.

In all this, the practical Christian radical will not be surprised at the number of professing Christians who will support a 'radical' view. After all, the Churches are still the places where the gospels are read and preached and, sometimes, even lived by. However, though we pray, preach, prophesy or plan, we will change the world only through the Kingdom groups in which we play a part. Such is the meaning of Christian discipleship.

If we would create the Church of the future, we cannot begin with the churches as they are nor can we begin with management or planning techniques. Creating the Church of the future is a process that begins from the gospel; works through an understanding of ourselves and our times; and moves on to the creating and empowering of groups of people who are disciples of the Kingdom. In their power to heal and to change the world, such groups will themselves be the bearers of the Good News.

The Rev. Edward S. Kessler, Durham Diocesan Planning officer and associate director of the Urban Theology Unit, Sheffield, England.

Response to Edward S. Kessler's "Practical Christian Radicalism"

by Richard L. York

I

Most of Kessler's articles reads like a restatement of the basic ideas made popular by the 'underground church' or 'liberated church' movement of the late 1960's. The Berkeley Free Church, and many other 'discipled Kingdom groups,' were abruptly weened from their financial resources by Mother Church for candidly proclaiming that same understanding of the faith.

Although he does not present any shockingly new ideas, Kessler does outline with beautiful clarity the state of the institutional church, where to look for *the* Church of *any* future, and in his 'unchanging principles,' the content of the gospel itself.

II

Following the demise of the New Left in the early 1970's, and relieved of revolution pounding at Grace Cathedral's facsimile-Ghiberti doors, the Episcopal Diocese of California fulfilled every practical Christian radical's prophecy. It dissolved its Department of New and Urban Ministries, reduced the budget of the De-

partment of Social Relations from \$15,000 to \$2,000, and retreated into endless and extravagantly expensive studies for survival.

After a year of low-profile retreat, I now find myself "priest-in-charge" of two failing parishes in the flatland-black-ghetto of Oakland. St. Augustine's is primarily black, and four blocks away, Trinity is primarily white. Neither can afford a fulltime pastor, and they have had little or no contact with each other, until now, for obvious reasons. We are engaged, initially motivated by institutional survival and Diocesan planning, in merger talks and the whole matter of new wine in old wineskins.

III

At last week's all-day workshop of our merger committee, I distributed copies of Kessler's article. The response was fascinating and full of hope. After only one comment that Kessler's premise was 'anarchic' and designed to 'destroy the Church,' these beloved disciples of the inner city, this little remnant, all understood. "Let's leave financial studies and reports until later! We can't begin there. If we want to be Church, then we must begin with gospel—with becoming a disciplined community, serving the people for Christ's sake." One written statement read that we must begin with "a removal of Christian cataracts, so that we might all move beyond our own desires for a comfortable worship to the broader level of Christ's mission to the people." Kessler's thought excited and redirected the rest of the day's work. Kessler is neat and correct, but abstract. My questions remain: practical, fleshy, full of love for some very real people.

- Can 'disciplined Christian groups' mushroom from the compost heap of the old dying Church?
- Are 'Kingdom groups' always secular communities; what we used to call 'the Church of Jesus incognito'?
- When a dying innercity parish of the institutional church holds on for years at the bottom, neglected, can't it rise again? Blessed are the poor, for they've got nowhere to go but up?
- And isn't God after all always creating the new out of the old, where we least expect it, like some resurrection I've heard of?
- And, most important to me, what about Art, Vera, Ina, Katherine, Bill, Harriet, Sue, Marjorie, Bernard, Lucinda, Earl, Jeannette, Howard and the others?

The Rev. Richard L. York, Priest-in-charge: St. Augustine's & Trinity Episcopal Churches, Oakland, California.

Also in Response to Practical Christian Radicalism

Marcus G. Raskin

1) The disappearance of the church from the inner city may be counted as a blessing if a different spirit emerges among the people and if a street ministry comes into being.

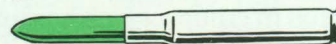
2) Conversely, the greatest struggle for the life of the church and of religions is in the middle classes and finally in those corporate boardrooms where men of power invest the capital of the churches (badly) and **against** the community. The churches are running to the middle classes because they also sense the coming disaster of the middle class, whose members are torn between inner decency, personal greed and fear.

3) There is a struggle around the question of Jesus which I as a Jew or Muslims in black communities must feel. Can we only be "practical" if we convert? Is there no room for the atheist, the communist, those who see religion as an inevitable handwaiter of power? Or is Jesus a symbolic set of exemplary actions and teachings which can be shared by outsiders?

4) I think that phrases like loving one's enemy must be analyzed. We love aspects of our enemy, that which is invariant and in all of us. Therefore we act in ways which proscribe us from doing certain things. There must be ways of distinguishing the core of a person's humanness from a series of acts which he performs, that in fact are performed as a result of social organization (e.g., The SAC bombardier who drops nuclear weapons.)

5) The idea of leaders being servants still presents the principle of hierarchy. I think it important to broaden the concept of democracy making clear what all can do and should do, with people being leaders on particular tasks, some of which can be shared and others of which are delegated. Thus, the question is not how to be leaders and servants but how to be equal—and in what? I suppose for Christians it should now mean equality in the living of Christ. For the rest of us, we will have to see.

Marcus G. Raskin, co-director of the Institute for Policy Studies, Washington, D.C.



Biting the bullet

From England we hear that Church of England bishops have called for an end to palaces to live in, and to the employment of full-time gardeners.

IMAGO DEI

by Jamie Holt

In the beginning
before you were, was I
I am

It was I who gave you form
and life, choice and lust
love and death.

These gifts I gave you.
They were mine and you are me.
As old as time, sometimes sick
usually sad I made you . . .
I made you in the likeness of me.

You are my child, my son.
I give you what I have to give.
And this . . . this silver beaten cup
and this bottle of the oldest vintage
perhaps one day you will be god enough
to pour yourself a drought.
But know this first, the wine is bitter—
a vicious brew. Fermented thorn
collected drops from whipped backs
Tears from rejected eyes. This is my only gift

And the old man baptized the wondering babe
with a divine tear
and sent him to walk our paths with us.

JAMIE HOLT a Fifth former
The Episcopal Academy, Philadelphia, PA.



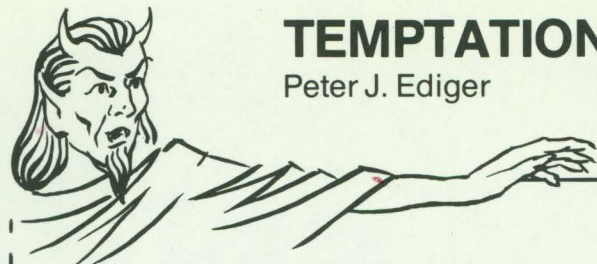
C of E Not Ready for Women

The Church of England, mother Church of the Episcopal Church USA, has been advised by its Standing Committee of the General Synod to take no action when it debated the subject of the ordination of women to the priesthood.

"No amount of charity to the oppressed justifies silence before the oppressors."

Robert Maxwell

National Catholic Reporter May 16, 1975



TEMPTATION

Peter J. Ediger

The devil took the Christians to a very high mountain, the mountain of academic-socio-economic success and showed them all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and he said to the Christians

all this will I give you . . .

- financial security
- acceptance in your society
- many opportunities for doing good
- choice seats at Presidential Prayer breakfasts
- tax exemption for your worship centers and your service programs
- many other benefits too numerous to mention

if you will fall down and worship me . . .

- bless the armies which protect your privileges
- close your eyes and your mouth to injustice to others as long as your privileges remain intact
- turn your conscience over to me

—two helpful hints:

- 1) memorize "give to Caesar what is Caesar's" and forget the rest of that saying
 - 2) profusely use (misuse) Romans 13 and forget the rest of the New Testament
- pay taxes without question for my armies around the world
 - a few words of dissent to support our moral image is OK, as long as you refrain from any form of civil disobedience.

And the Christians said (multiple choice—check one):

- ☐ we want to keep our mission-service program going, so . . .
- ☐ we're uneasy with your terms, but we like the benefits . . .
- ☐ would you serve as one of our Trustees? We need more practical minds like yours . . .
- ☐ you shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.

Reprinted by Permission "God and Caesar"

continued from page 2

ordained the women priests, urging that the House of Bishops should publicly have repudiated the report. It was still raining when he concluded. Bp. Dean was the last speaker at the meeting. A Canadian, he was for some years the Executive Officer of the entire Anglican Communion. Speaking on a comparison of the Canadian and American Episcopal Churches, he noted that it would never occur to the Canadian Church to have a canon instructing bishops on how to ordain persons to the priesthood. It assumes they know. But it was still raining when the meeting adjourned . . .

There was a nagging notion that this was more than just a series of rainy days, that more than the issue of woman priests was clouding the ecclesiastical climate. Other aspects of the weather were observed. The Presiding Bishop in his opening address said that something needed to be said, but that he was not sure what it was, nor how to say it. He suspected, he said, that it lay in the direction of such questions as "How do we agree?", and "How do we agree to disagree?"

Bp. Krumm, of Southern Ohio, reporting on deeper ecumenical affairs, mentioned that most of the interest in church unity comes from Asia and Africa, and wondered aloud whether this is because the church in the U.S.A. is too affluent, too safe?

Then there was a major presentation on world hunger, chaired by Bp. Browning. Not a question of how many celestial beings can dance on a pin, but whether, and how many human beings can live on this earth. Eloise was again intruding into Abelard's study. The hurricane was indicating its presence behind the rain. There was more than a suggestion of a world order which is in radical and dangerous disorder. There was a melancholy awareness that in the presence of a hurricane, the church was wetting a finger to the wind—while it was raining in Portland.

And so the meeting of the House of Bishops concluded, with the Presiding Bishop leading the bishops in a celebration of the eucharist. Significantly, the service used was that of the 1928 Prayer Book,—after hours of discussion, thousands of dollars and years of work on a new revision. True, during the receiving of communion, a hymn spontaneously obtruded and was sung by the communicants—"We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord"—But the Peace was not passed (the personal greeting of the communicants to each other).

When the bishops left a few minutes later to return to their several homes, it was still raining. This time, Abelard had met Eloise, but left before he got to know her, before she had a chance to relate him to this world.

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