

THE LIVING CHURCH

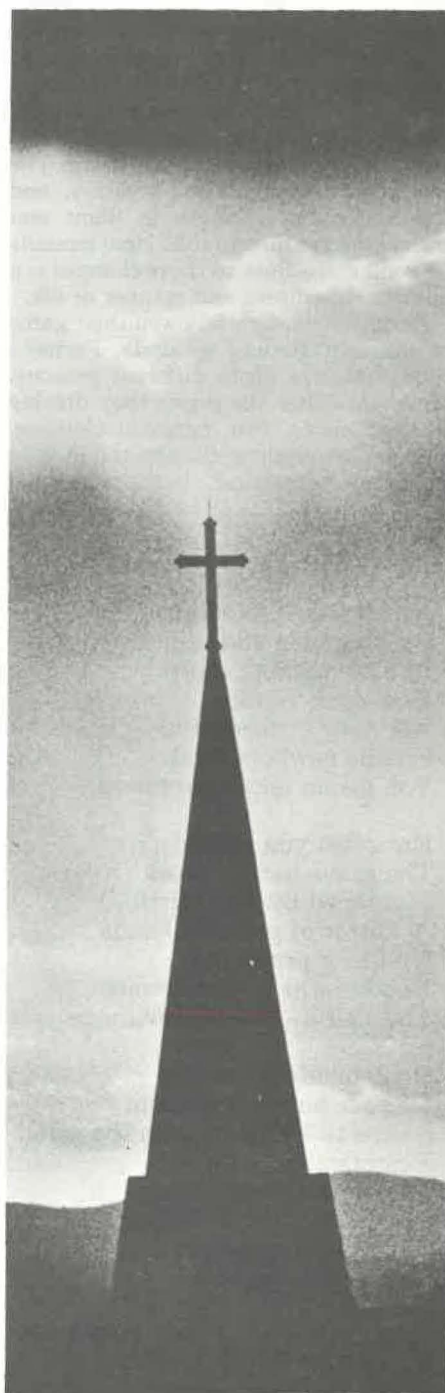
For New Year's Eve

O God our Creator, you have divided our life into days and seasons, and called us to acknowledge your providence year after year: Accept your people who come to offer their praises, and, in your mercy, receive their prayers; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Immortal Lord God, you inhabit eternity, and have brought us your unworthy servants to the close of another year: Pardon, we entreat you, our transgressions of the past, and graciously abide with us all the days of our life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Adapted from Scottish Prayer Book.)

Most gracious and merciful God, you have reconciled us to yourself through Jesus Christ your Son, and called us to new life in him: Grant that we who begin this year in his Name, may complete it to his honor and glory; who lives and reigns now and for ever. Amen.

Prayers from The Book of Occasional Services, to be published by the Church Hymnal Corporation. Reprinted by permission.





THE LIVING CHURCH

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The consideration of our created nature constantly brings us back to the topic of time. Time is the dimension within which our lives are lived out, the stage on which life's drama is played. Now we reach the end of a decade.

Is a decade really something, or is it simply an imaginary unit concocted by journalists and news commentators? Does it have any reality? To reflect on this question sheds at least a little light on the nature of our human condition.

A year is no doubt a real thing. The changes in daylight and weather, and the consequent changes in plant and animal life are undeniable. How humans respond and adjust to these changes is a question of culture and manner of life.

Primitive hunters followed their game to different feeding grounds. Farmers change their work in different seasons. Merchants alter the goods they display in their shops. Our personal clothing, diet, and recreations change, too. A year is indeed something, but our human

response and adaptation to it reflects the particular kind of civilization within which we live. As with so much else in the natural world, we must respond somehow, but our precise way of doing so reflects the wide span of human creativity.

But a decade? Neither animals nor plants are aware of it, although some creatures have a life span of about this length. For humans anything to do with ten is easily grasped because most of us learn to count on our fingers and our numerical system is accordingly organized on the basis of ten. Give or take a year or two, decades often fit patterns in our individual lives. One decade takes us through childhood, another brings us to adulthood, a third takes us through young adulthood — but we need push this no farther. Ten, in any case, is a highly countable number, and ten years is a unit of life we can usually remember, visualize, and grasp. Most of us cannot really plan our future too many years ahead, but we can indeed recall and understand our past by dividing it into manageable units. The decade thus has convenience for a society's memory of its own recent history. We would claim no more for it.

Yet, this is not a small claim. Our lives are lived in a web of past, present, and future. God made us that way. Sanity is impossible without memory. Nature does not provide clear directions for how we handle our memories, but it seems to demand that we handle them somehow. Christians must always scrutinize the past with gratitude for what has been good and penitence for what has been wrong. We must always address the future with trust in God and hope, seeking his will as we go on our way. As we enter the future with Christ, may we indeed know the blessing of his presence during the 1980s.

THE EDITOR

The Living Church Development Program

The purpose of this fund is to keep THE LIVING CHURCH alive and keep it growing. Contributions from readers are acknowledged by individual receipts mailed to them and recognized as legitimate charitable deductions on federal income tax returns.

Previously acknowledged	\$29,051.71
Receipts Nos. 22,221-22,357, Nov. 26-Dec. 6	2,459.50
	\$31,511.21

Nativity — El Greco

Small naked footlight
Bathing men and angels
In a transfixing glare
How open you lie,
And how unshadowed
Fragile newborn flesh
You gleam uncompromised.

Encircled you behold
The grave ascetic faces
Lightened by your birth,
A flutter of graceful hands
Uplifting prayerfully.
You breathe in wonderment
The cherub-studded air.

One already dreaming
Of your holy martyrdom
Seems to lengthen from the earth
Ecstatically.
His Renaissance limbs
Newly released from death.
Shining like a pearl
You are his ransom.

Marjorie Ould

LETTERS

Thank You, Too

All your issues are well done, but now and then one comes along that has personal and particular appeal to my tastes: your November 11 number was one such issue.

"The Anglican Librarian's Lament" was a delight and managed to say the essential about the Anglican tradition in its few lines. Episcopalians, especially clergy, ought to commit it to memory. Though it will not achieve literary-life-everlasting, it would be far more useful to our clergy coming to them with a start when they wake up in the middle of the night wondering what it's all about than if they had learned to parrot Hamlet's soliloquy or the fellow's little talk at Caesar's last rites. Of course, there really is room for all three (one hopes) in our heads. I'm going to cut it out and use it when asked, "what in the name of heaven is Anglicanism?"

Item #2. Thanks for Dr. Simcox's review of Pelikan's third volume in historical theology. Is it also available in paperback? The \$17.50 price is a bit steep, but still worth it. I have worn out the first two volumes in the series and

will have to get new copies when the Scotch tape ultimately fails. Every one should read the Pelikan volumes and I'm very glad to see you calling attention to them.

Item #3. Your "Anglican Mind" editorial. Three cheers for all that was said, etc. Naturally I have some more names to nominate for your list. How about William Clebsch of Stanford? He is an excellent historian and historical theologian. He is also fun to read. And have you read any of Paul van Buren's recent things? Very fine. And what you said about our seminaries! Oh, beautiful!

(The Rev.) NORMAN SIEFFERMAN
Emory University

Atlanta, Ga.

The General Ordination Exam

The examining chaplains' revelation that our future priests have but a weak understanding of Scriptures and church history [TLC, Nov. 25] is not surprising, but one suspects that the seminaries must bear only part of the responsibility. Do bishops insist that postulants have a solid undergraduate grounding in British, medieval, and modern European history? Do dioceses support adequately their historians, retain records, and make them available to researchers? Do parish priests make room in their Chris-

After Christ's Mass

The day of His Nativity recedes,
a crow's - footed expanse of limbs and leaves
severe and gaunt;
the fires of great anxiety now banked
with thoughts of brass and cedar
and a discipline of thanks
and courage
practiced as an offering of faith;
a moment's intermission to allow
an exorcism of the year's dark wraiths
of loneliness and want -
a demi-tasse reflection, a refrain
of carols counterpointed by the pain;
a small bouquet of gestures ever healing
in such acute simplicity of feeling;
Light's radical reborning and the fraction
recalling ancient loveliness to action
at the raw interface of now;
my coffee - yet another kind of chalice;
a silence briefly lent,
and faint amusement
at the itching of dissent
by those insisting that the coming was a token.
I have seen the very loaves and fishes broken.

Belle Rollins



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tian education programs for the study of the past?

The examining chaplains' disclosure is a symptom of the general malaise that affects historical studies in this country. The elimination of history from high school curricula, declining enrollments in college-level history courses, and reduced financial support all have their repercussions. General Convention, for instance, no longer funds the *Historical Magazine*.

Our seminarians will continue to remain ignorant about the Six Articles, or the Jesuits, or William White until we as the people of God remember that our past experiences make us what we are today.

D.G. PAZ
Clemson University

Clemson, S.C.

As a recent graduate ('77) of our seminary system, I was not at all shocked by the dismal statistics which revealed a serious lack of factual knowledge of ecclesiastical history/biblical quotations by many of our men and women studying for the ministry.

Forgive me for boasting, but "if I boast, then let me boast in the Lord"; I was one of those persons who scored something approximately 96% accuracy on the two-hour "closed-book" multiple-choice test. While this guessing game does nothing and says nothing about my effectiveness as a pastor and priest, the test does indicate how much or how little is our retention of factual knowledge about the church. I personally am no genius; but having a great affection for historical "trivia" that multiple-choice "game" came naturally!

When I was in seminary, I realized, after talking with classmates, that many were concerned about all the historical/scriptural "trivia" that would be asked. Several weeks before GOE's, two of us called together those interested persons

in our class for two to three brainstorming sessions about "trivia." We sat in a circle of 10 or so, and together with the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, several liturgical dictionaries, the Prayer Book, and the Bible, we took turns firing questions at each other, to test our competency and knowledge of history, liturgy and Bible. Such brainstorming sessions paid off! For example, virtually none of us knew that the Liturgy of Addai and Mari was one of the few Eucharistic Prayers without the "Verba" or words of institution of Jesus. Most did not know that the actual name of the Franciscan Order is the "Friars Minor." Or that "Apostolicae Curae" was the Leonine bull of 1896 which declared Anglican orders invalid . . . etc. etc. ad infinitum!

To those students obsessed with forthcoming GOE's, I would say, try a brainstorming session; you will find it helps tremendously.

(The Rev.) STEVEN M. GIOVANGELO
Holy Trinity Church
Skokie, Ill.

Sacerdotal Offertory

May I reply to those who have written in "Letters" and to me regarding the Offertory in the new Prayer Book, following which the editor may well state, "This correspondence must cease"!

While I understand the rationale in confining the celebrant's part in the Offertory to the Prayer of Oblation, the point is that I do not agree with it. It seems to me pedantic to deny to the celebrant the action of participation in offertory, when all other orders of ministers have done so in a much-elaborated progression of ceremonies. The expanded Offertory is commendable except for stopping short of allowing the celebrant any part in it, unless there are no other ministers present. This remains counter to early liturgies in which the celebrant laid his hand, with prayer,

upon the bread and wine at the conclusion of the offertory.

The suggestion by Fr. Winslett that the '28 BCP had us offering twice, in specific direction to the celebrant to offer and place the oblations and again in the Prayer of Oblation, which he thinks is redundant, is even more "doubled" by our expanded offertory rubrics, plus the Oblation. "Bring," "prepare," "stand," "place," and "present" are all explicit rubrical directions which go beyond those of 1928. They give a sacerdotalism to all others but the celebrant, who is excluded from participation engaged in by all other orders of ministers. Catholic theology has it that in the priest's ministry is summed up the priestly character of Christ and his church; to reduce this to "implicit" reference, with no manual act allowed, when all other ministers' functions are most explicitly and even exhaustively delineated, seems hardly an advance in teaching the faith.

However, it may all be academic, since few places have deacons, and most of the priests will no doubt continue to offer the oblations, although one permanent deacon writes that he offers up the alms, which demonstrates what advertent ex-cision can result in.

(The Rev.) ROBERTS E. EHRGOTT
Grace Church
Ridgway, Pa.

{ "This correspondence must cease." Ed.

Reporting Stringfellow's Speech

I must register my surprise that you would publish the story "Stringfellow Asks P.B. to Resign" [TLC, Oct. 21].

I am surprised that you would give publicity to William Stringfellow's audacity in calling for the resignation of the Presiding Bishop, for in doing so you align the magazine with those who are out to embarrass Bishop Allin over his theological conviction regarding the ordination of women. If you counter that Stringfellow's speech was news, let me remind you of that speaker's article in the February 1978 issue of *The Witness*. There he spells out in detail his vendetta against Bishop Allin, stemming from the bishop's refusal to participate in the William Wendt trial. So the church knows well Stringfellow's opinion of the Presiding Bishop; consequently his speech before the Religious Newswriters Association is no news.

Certainly Episcopal Church unity is not served by giving media coverage to Stringfellow's vengeful audacity.

(The Rev.) HENRY N. HERNDON
Wilmington, Del.

{ We gave no editorial support to Stringfellow's statement, which may indeed have stimulated support for Bishop Allin. Ed.

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December 30, 1979
Christmas 1

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Interfaith Rally Against Racism on Boston Common

Boston Religious leaders and about 4,000 others heard Humberto Cardinal Medeiros make a dynamic and emotional appeal for racial justice at a gathering on Boston Common to kick off an interfaith campaign to bring peace to the racially torn city.

"For the love of God, my fellow citizens," exhorted the Roman Catholic cardinal-archbishop, "let us be good to one another. Let us be the soul of the city from this day forward. Racism — root and stem and branches — must now and forever be driven out of the minds and hearts, out of the living rooms and neighborhoods, out of the social atmosphere and the institutions that make up Boston."

The Rt. Rev. John B. Coburn, Bishop of Massachusetts, was one of the leaders participating in the ecumenical service, which began with a procession of clergy and laity from St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral nearby. The congregation sang "Holy, Holy, Holy," as they made their way to a setting just below the Massachusetts State House.

The gathering was convened to present a "Covenant of Justice, Equity, and

Harmony," drawn up by the city's religious leaders which declared that "in our deeper reverence for the God who commands us and for the nobility of humankind that impels us, we denounce every form of violence in every neighborhood, we lay aside the weapons and words of political conflict, the taunts and jibes of insidious disrespect." Some 200,000 copies of the covenant were distributed to Boston neighborhoods to be signed by residents.

Initial plans for the covenant and the Common service began several weeks ago when Cardinal Medeiros invited a group of the city's religious leaders to his home to confer on racial tension in Boston. He took the action after the shooting of a 15 year-old black high school football player, Darryl Williams, at a game in the predominantly white Charlestown district. The boy remains paralyzed.

Cathedral Holds Hourly Vigil

The Rev. Canon Charles A. Perry, Provost of Washington Cathedral, announced at the end of November that a vigil will be held at the cathedral for the hostages held at the American embassy in Tehran. Prayers will be said every

hour on the hour during the day.

In addition, the cathedral bells are rung daily at noon, in response to the request made by chargé d'affaires E. Bruce Laingen that church bells be rung across the nation until the hostages are released.

The vigil will take place during the cathedral's usual hours, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., in one of the chapels; after closing hours the vigil will continue in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd on the north side of the cathedral. Good Shepherd is open for prayer and meditation 24 hours a day.

The cathedral has prepared the following prayer, to be used either at home or at church:

"O God of mercy and power, look with compassion upon the hostages held in Tehran. Stand by them by day and by night, grant them strength in body and mind, and give them patience to the time of their release.

"Sustain their relatives and all who love them in their plight; guide our President in his decisions and preserve peace in the world.

"Finally, O Lord, we pray for the people of Iran and America, that looking to the welfare of each other we come through anger and strife to reconciliation and friendship. Amen."

Mr. Laingen's home parish, All Saints' in Chevy Chase, Md., has rung its bells at noon since Thanksgiving.

Dioceses Recover Property in Colorado and Virginia

Three years and one day after St. Mary's Church, Denver, became the first in the nation to secede from the Episcopal Church following the 1976 General Convention, a district judge ruled that its property belongs to the diocese and not to the dissident members.

Judge John Brooks upheld the diocese's contention that the Episcopal Church is a hierarchical institution and that St. Mary's is a subordinate part of that hierarchy.

At the time the parish voted, 197-79, to leave the church, St. Mary's rector was the Rev. James O. Mote. He is now Bishop of the Diocese of the Holy Trinity in the Anglican Catholic Church (ACC).

The disputed property, valued at \$435,000 in 1974, therefore belongs to those members of the parish who voted not to secede in 1976. They have been



Ten lucky listeners of the new Trinity Church Hour on WQXR, Manhattan, are about to receive record albums of Renaissance motets and American anthems sung by the Trinity Church Choir. The Rev. Robert Ray Parks, Trinity's rector, pulls 10 postcards as the Rev. Reuben H. Gums, Executive Director of Tri-State Media Ministries lends a helping hand.

worshiping at other churches, and will continue to do so pending appeal of the court decision.

The Rt. Rev. William C. Frey, Bishop of Colorado, said the outcome was gratifying, but regretted the necessity of going to court. Prior efforts toward an amicable solution were fruitless, he said.

In Virginia, members of Ascension Church in rural Amherst have been ordered by Roanoke Circuit Judge L. L. Koontz, Jr., to return the church property to the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia.

Parishioners voted 59-44 last May to split from the diocese in dispute over the ordination of women to the priesthood and the new Book of Common Prayer. The trouble reportedly has caused a deep rift among the town's 1,000 residents. Church members are prominent in the municipal government, and Judge Koontz, a Presbyterian, was brought in from outside to try the case. The Diocese of Southwestern Virginia won a similar decision earlier this year in Clifton Forge.

Irish Primate to Retire

The Most Rev. George Otto Simms, Archbishop of Armagh and Anglican Primate of All Ireland since 1969, announced in mid-November his intention to retire early in the new year. He is 69 years old.

For the entire period of his archbishopric in Armagh, Dr. Simms has been faced with the troubled situation in Northern Ireland. Again and again he has spoken out against the evil and futility of the violence which has engulfed the entire community at times. He has visited many families of those dead and injured, and, according to the Church of Ireland, "has had all too often the harrowing task of preaching at the funerals of victims."

During his primacy, Dr. Simms has maintained close contact with leaders of all the main churches in Ireland, and his has been the longest continuous link in the talks that have been taking place over the last decade. With annual changes in the leadership of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches, this continuity has been of particular value. He has had warm relationships with his opposite number on "the other hill" in Armagh, first the late Cardinal Conway, and now Cardinal O'Fiaich. Dr. Simms has served as Chairman of the Irish Council of Churches, and as Co-Chairman of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission on the Theology of Marriage, with particular reference to mixed marriages.

At the 1958 Lambeth Conference, Dr. Simms was chairman of the committee responsible for liturgical revision.

The archbishop has a long-standing interest in Celtic manuscripts. He is considered an authority on the Book of Kells, on many aspects of which he gives

lectures in all parts of Ireland. He and Mrs. Simms, the former Mercy Gwynn, have three sons and two daughters. They plan to live in Dublin.

Under the constitution of the Church of Ireland, the House of Bishops, which at present has 12 members, will elect a successor from among their number by a simple majority. This will probably take place some time in February.

Unlicensed Priest Smashes "Bleeding" Statue

In 1977, the Rev. Chester Olszewski, then an Episcopal priest and rector of St. Luke's Church, Eddystone, Pa., had his license to officiate revoked by the Diocese of Pennsylvania for "unauthorized rites and ceremonies in public worship," and refusing to administer communion in the hand. The priest said he adopted such practices as saying the Mass in Latin and placing the communion wafer on the tongue "at the direction of the Holy Family." Their instructions came to him, he said, through the medium of one of his parishioners who possessed a "bleeding statue" of Christ.

The former rector is back in the news for smashing the statue during the 10 a.m. Sunday service at St. Luke's recently. "I was commanded by our Lord to wrap it in an altar cloth and raise it over my head and smash it on the floor," the deposed priest told a reporter. He told the 35 congregants at the small mission church in Delaware County that he would bury the broken shards on the parish grounds but keep the head and hands as relics.

Chester Olszewski, who is now known to his followers as Bishop Ezekiel Elias, claims to be Pope, and has renamed his church "St. Peter's Basilica." The group considers itself to be a conservative Roman Catholic parish, but, in fact, has not been accepted into the Roman Catholic Church.

The Diocese of Pennsylvania has carried out prolonged eviction proceedings against Olszewski and his followers, who continue to use St. Luke's. Delaware County Judge John V. Diggins ruled recently that the diocese could evict Mr. Olszewski from the parish at will.

Non-Stipendiary Clergy Meets

The National Association for a Self-Supporting Active Ministry (NASSAM) held its annual meeting and seminar at the Breech Training Academy near Kansas City, Kan., Nov. 9-11. This organization serves as a channel of communication for active non-stipendiary priests and deacons, for self-supporting lay church workers, and for others interested in encouraging the use of personnel who support themselves while actively serving the church for substantial portions of their time.

The Rt. Rev. Edward Turner, Bishop of Kansas, reported that 20 percent of the clergy of his diocese are non-stipendiary, and several of them took part in the seminar. The Rt. Rev. David R. Cochran, Bishop of Alaska, discussed at length the extensive use of self-supporting and Canon 8 clergy in his jurisdiction: 41 out of 60 clergy are now self-supporting.



Leaders of the National Happening Leaders' Conference are shown at the Bishop Mason Retreat Center in Dallas. The movement, originally begun for the children of Cursilistas in the Diocese of Dallas, seeks to proclaim the Gospel to teenagers and attracted 50 representatives from 19 dioceses at a recent conference. From left to right, Elaine Warnky, the Rev. Church Woehler, Neil Murphy, and the Rev. Patric L. Hutton.

The Rev. Edward L. Hook of Colorado Springs, is president of NASSAM. The Rev. James L. Lowery of Boston is secretary and the Rev. Frances G. Zielinski of Chicago is treasurer.

Black Clergy Consultation Held in Atlanta

A recent two-day conference in Atlanta gave concentrated attention to the recruitment, training, and deployment of black clergy in the Episcopal Church. Results of a survey of bishops, black clergy, theological seminary deans and students which was conducted for the Episcopal Commission for Black Ministries were presented to the 65 participants by the Rev. Frank Turner, staff officer for Black Ministries at the Episcopal Church Center.

Black Episcopal clergy today are generally American-born with college and seminary training and degrees, the survey reveals. They tend to be Anglo-Catholic in persuasion with a moderately liberal outlook. They are committed to their vocation, and only 8 percent indicated dissatisfaction with their present positions.

Fr. Turner said today black clergy come to their ministry primarily through the family, the church, and a priest who is a strong role model. Black clerics tend to serve black congregations — it is “foolish to think otherwise,” said Fr. Turner. He said it is easier to place white clergy in black congregations than it is to secure the reverse.

Two participants, the Rt. Rev. Bennett Sims, Bishop of Atlanta, and Dr. Joseph Pelham, dean of students at Colgate Rochester/Bexley Hall/Crozer, Rochester, N. Y., presented models of recruitment and training in which they are engaged.

Dr. J. Carlton Hayden, chairman of the department of history at Morgan State University in Baltimore, traced the role of black clergy in the Episcopal Church from the 19th century to World War I. Historically, opportunities for black clergy to fulfill their ministries have been limited, he said. Black parishes are small and salaries inadequate. Very little upward mobility existed, and by and large, black clergy were excluded from the mainstream of the church, occupying a marginal status.

The suggested strategy for recruitment includes an emphasis on increasing the number of blacks in the church, on improving opportunities for effective entry and support, and employing past successful sources. Training strategy might include equipping for diverse forms of ministry, pre-theological training, and internship programs.

It was printed out that the goal of the deployment strategy would be to have an open system without regard to sex or race.

CONVENTIONS

The **Diocese of Pennsylvania** met in convention in October at the Church of St. Luke and the Epiphany, Philadelphia.

Resolutions passed included the following: salaries for full-time clergy were raised by eight percent, a task force will take action to aid women trapped in the “poverty cycle,” and a boycott of all Nestle products was urged, if the diocesan council “concludes, after further investigation, that there is no alternative in Christian conscience.”

Another resolution referred to the refusal of the General Synod of the Church of England to permit women ordained elsewhere to officiate as clergy in England. “This action,” said the resolution, “deplored by the Archbishop of Canterbury and others, is contrary to the recommendations of the Lambeth Conference of 1978, discriminatory and insulting to the clergy of the Episcopal Church . . . therefore, let it be resolved that the 196th convention of the Diocese of Pennsylvania memorialize our sadness as we face this discontinuance of our mutual acceptance of duly ordained persons from our respective provinces. . . .”

A budget of \$1,505,000 was adopted for 1980.

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The 21st council of the **Diocese of Northwest Texas** took place in Lubbock from November 16-18. The Church of the Holy Cross, Lubbock, was admitted to the diocese as a new mission, and St. Peter's Church, Borger, was granted permission to try self-support for one year. St. Michael and All Angels, Shamrock, was moved to the status of preaching station.

New guidelines for the establishment of new missions, for a viable mission, and for admission to parish status were adopted. Ten percent of the diocese's Venture in Mission funds were designated for the establishment of a permanent Latin-American chair at the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest.

A budget of \$463,344 was adopted for 1980.

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Meeting at the Cathedral Church of St. Luke, Orlando, the convention of the **Diocese of Central Florida** voted to join Venture in Mission, and set the goal for its capital funds campaign at \$3,029,000.

Of this amount, \$329,000 will go to the diocese's companion Diocese of Honduras, \$50,000 will go to the Diocese of Jerusalem, \$50,000 is designated for the Wheelhouse in Lakeland, Fla., a residence where disabled young adults learn

skills and independence, and \$100,000 will be given to Christian Prison Ministries, Inc.

The remainder of the fund will be used in the diocese.

Convention also endorsed procedures for implementing a system of voluntary giving by parishes for the support of the diocese's administration and programs. Under this system, the diocese no longer will set assessments and quotas but will prepare and present annual funding proposals only after it has received pledges from its congregations.

In his address to convention, the Rt. Rev. William H. Folwell, Bishop of Central Florida, offered himself as mediator and his office as neutral territory in which Florida's agricultural business disputes might be negotiated.

In the past year, Central Florida's diocesan newspaper published articles dealing with the attempts of Florida farmworkers to organize. The owner-grower position was stated also, and the diocese was the target of criticism from both sides.

Bishop Folwell responded, saying “Owners and growers are human beings, many are Christians, and many of those are Episcopalians. Farm workers are human beings, many are Christians, very few are Episcopalians. But the church's task is serve *all* people in the work and ministry of reconciliation. The efforts to establish better working conditions may — or may not — be served best by labor organization. But the problem, the struggle will not evaporate. If we ignore it, we will not serve our moral commitment as Christians.”

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Delegates to the 11th convention of the **Diocese of Southwest Florida** raised their Venture in Mission-Southwest Florida goal from \$2.5 million to \$3.5 million.

A groundswell of support for an amendment to raise an additional \$1 million for the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief arose after the Rt. Rev. E. Paul Haynes, Bishop of Southwest Florida, announced the convention offerings would be matched by the diocesan council and sent to Cambodia.

Clergy and laymen lined up before convention microphones to speak in favor of the amendment, and the amended resolution passed unanimously just before the arrival of the Presiding Bishop himself.

When asked if he was suprised by the convention's action, the Rt. Rev. John M. Allin said, “No, I expect such things from Christians.”

A proposed budget of \$827,643 was adopted for 1980, and the founding members of the newest diocesan mission, All Angels by the Sea on Longboat Key, were introduced by the Ven. Hoyt B. Massey, priest-in-charge.

EVENTS and COMMENTS...

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL REPORT

Response to human needs was a major concern reflected in most of the deliberations of the Episcopal Church's national Executive Council at its meeting December 12-14 at Seabury House, Greenwich, Conn. Nearly three-fourths of the members were new to the council having been recently elected by General Convention or their respective provinces.

The Rt. Rev. John M. Allin, Presiding Bishop, asked council to analyze a working paper prepared by the Coalition of Urban Bishops entitled, "The Challenge for Evangelism and Mission." He said council has a responsibility to engage the whole church in ministry to the "phenomena of urban plague which affects the whole country and world."

The concern for urban needs was also stressed by the Rt. Rev. Donald J. Parsons, Bishop of Quincy, in his report for the education for ministry and mission committee. He said materials and information about urban problems should be developed to heighten awareness of this ministry and said the committee hoped to get the next Church School Missionary Offering to focus on children in the urban areas of the United States.

The Rt. Rev. William H. Folwell, Bishop of Central Florida, chairman of the World Mission Committee, suggested there was a need for further evaluation of Partners in Mission. "There is a general lack of understanding as to what the PIM consultation is," he said, and suggested more study is needed before another PIM consultation is held in the U.S.

The Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief was scrutinized carefully before the council approved the hiring of additional staff to develop the fund. Because of the refugee resettlement and Cambodian hunger crisis, the fund has had to develop new concepts dealing with new problems, Bishop Folwell said. The Episcopal Church has resettled more refugees than any other church group, but some council members questioned the propriety of money being accepted from the U.S. government for each refugee settled by the Episcopal sponsorship though the funds are received theoretically from the World Council of Churches.

The most lively discussion of the meeting preceded a 24-13 vote to support a resolution asking the council to co-sponsor a resolution with the Diocese of Rochester requesting Kodak Corporation to terminate business interests in South Africa. The resolution was introduced by John K. Cannon of Michigan, chairman of the committee on social responsibility. The Rev. Maurice Benitez of Houston said there are other countries who violate human rights, but "we do not pass resolutions against organizations who do business with them." The Rev. Denis O'Pray of Minnesota said the church must continue to speak out against apartheid and human rights violations so that "we come out on the side of right." Bishop Allin cautioned council members about being seen as representatives of the entire Episcopal Church when they make public decisions on corporate responsibility and business practices.

Sandra Anderson

VISIONS AND VISION

Are all visions to be dismissed as visualizations, self-hypnosis, hallucinations, hysteria, neurosis, psychosis, auditory dysfunction, indigestion or the DTs?

ANONYMOUS

Flying at 37,000 feet in a 747 jet is an experience unique to the latter part of our technological century.

The urge to escape the bond of gravity, however, is as old as man, whether breaking out of the physical realm, or spiritual, or from somberness into laughter, which are all aspects of the same desire.

And for me it is summed up in the fall and spring when the migration of wild geese occurs, great flocks winging overhead, waking me in the night, or pulling me from my work in the early morning as they begin the day's journey, rising from nearby reedbeds and flapping heavily until they catch the updrafts of the rapidly lightening dawn. Their cries call to me, evoking a longing, a homesickness, a tugging at my heart that often increases in intensity until I, too, flap my would-be wings, exultantly with them at first, then, slowing, and, a little embarrassed, sadly stopping because it is not given to me to join them. But one can always hope.

The view from a 747 is higher than a goose enjoys, and the aircraft itself is very beautiful. The cabin is built on a continuous curve, and the broad wing has a reverse angle two-thirds of the way out that gives it a lovely sweep, leading your eye into infinity. My last flight West to East was an advertising executive's dream: we took off in perfect weather, the engines' rumble calling in their own way to my earthbound yearn-

ing to be free, and as the plane rolled down the runway, there was the mounting excitement that, feathers or no, we were going to *fly*, and then the intense pleasure of the behemoth's gently lifting off and becoming airborne.

Early snow had covered the western mountains of The Great Plains, and as we flew past the sun, past the morning and noon toward dusk and darkness, clouds began to gather beneath us until in the evening glow of our foreshortened day, the silver expanse of wing with its two cavernous engine pods pointed to fantastic shapes rising rose and mauve and gold over the horizon, and visions and hopes beyond speech.

We who are, by our biology, earthbound, tend to study life from the point of view of microcosm, and from this intuit the macrocosm. 747s help us, a little, to see, for once, our earth as a macrocosm that is really a microcosm of the universe. The mystics find the universe, seen and unseen, in hazelnuts, grains of sand, and wildflowers. And their visions communicate to us a vision, a perspective, that widens the lens of our hearts, enabling us to glimpse through theirs a depth of field we had not dreamed existed.

Yet, these days, visions have fallen into disrepute. When we hear of someone having a vision, we tend outwardly to sneer with our empirical selves, a reaction that is more than a little fear of being laughed at for our credulity, and, in-

wardly, in our intuitive selves, the green-eyed serpent, Envy, twists and writhes and enjoys his Eden-borne havoc.

For this split in us is diabolical: it is one of the most poignant results of the Fall, perfectly described in the allegory of Adam and Eve, who were not content with the direct perception of God and his creation, but wanted something more: the empirical knowledge that could and would, quite literally, put God to the test. This is our inheritance from our first parents, redeemed only in part by the vantage point from 747s and other mechanical imitations of wild geese.

But our curiosity about the lore of visions persists, and now psychology supposedly has given us a whole natural history which far surpasses Adolphe Tanquerey's succinct summary of the three types of visions in his 19th century book, *The Spiritual Life*: apparitions, imaginative visions, and intellectual visions. Thus by supplying us with a surfeit of descriptive jargon, these psychological empiricists encourage us to dismiss all visions as visualizations, self-hypnosis, hallucinations, hysteria, neurosis, psychosis, auditory dysfunction, indigestion, or the DTs.

The church's own history of mania for classification and so-called other-worldliness occasionally has slipped into manicheism and gnosticism in her denial of the goodness of *all* of creation, and implied that visions are secret knowledge imparted to the select few. This attitude has added to our discomfort with visions, so that we tend to think of them as not occurring outside certain rigid categories that are impossibly foreign to our age and experience, or, at the other extreme, manifesting themselves in ways such as depicted by Bernini's sentimental extravaganza in marble of St. Teresa in ecstasy.

But visions are the stuff of ordinary life, and without them we would long

ago have yielded to despair. Because we do not often have them in the modes described by Tanqueray's tidy system, we tend not only *not* to recognize them as such, but also to miss the subtle direction God gives us in our lives and our hearts' response which the perception of his overwhelming love elicits.

Visions such as Tanqueray describes still do occur. I heard, for example, of a lady who had an intense experience of the Passion of Christ in all three ways simultaneously while washing the dishes and, characteristically, this lady went right on washing the dishes through the whole thing. I'm sure she has never read Tanqueray, but the description, even second-hand, was classic.

Our visions are usually more indistinct, more oblique. We tend to think of them in the amorphous category of "ideas" or "ideals." The 747 began as an idea. The United Nations is both an idea and an ideal. The religious life is an ideal.

We are now suspended in that unsettling period marking the end of one year and the beginning of another in the sequence of convenience we call time. The sun has already begun its new cycle. Humans are a little behind, as usual, and while the sun knows its charted course, we use these days to do a little adding up: of our income taxes, our failures, our sins, and our successes, all in the light of projected ideas and ideals we had 12 months ago.

La Canción de la Nana

(Spanish Carol)

Bye-low!

May lullaby
croon of sleep caress you;
nod, my little Jesus, slumber
bless you!

Bye-low!

May cinnamon
bud, and lily fold you,
deep within a scented silence
hold you!

Bye-low!

May infant eyes –
sunlit skies that blind me –
droop in drowsy rest, though darkness
find me.

Bye-low!

May infant eyes –
mirrors that I cherish –
close against my image, though I
perish.

Bye-low!

The while you sleep,
the swaddlings of my boy
I'll wash until the river laughs
for joy.

Bye-low!

The while you sleep,
the swaddlings of my child
I'll dry on shrubs where rosemary
grows wild.

Bye-low!

May lullaby
keep your cradle swinging –
lazy, lazy, rocking to my
singing!

translated by Gloria Maxson

The result of this numerical and spiritual mathematics evokes mixed reactions: some of us will celebrate, some of us will weep; some of us will go to bed early, knowing that on January 1st we will still have with us the horrors of a starving Cambodian population, torture in political prisons, the rape of the earth and our own souls. Some of us, having run out of ideals, having denied our visions, will commit suicide.

The word "vision" has become almost a dirty word in our technical religious lingo, and this is a tragedy. Paradoxically, when we speak in secular language it isn't so bad. We say, for example, of someone with new ideas, "He has real vision." Or, listen to Celia in T.S. Eliot's play, *The Cocktail Party* as she tries to describe to Reilly, a guardian angel posing as a psychiatrist, the motivating power of her life:

"It's not that I'm afraid of being hurt again:
Nothing again can either hurt or heal.
I have thought at moments that the
ecstasy is real
Although those who experience it may
have no reality."

She continues,
"But what, or whom I loved,
Or what in me was loving, I do not
know.
And if that is all meaningless, I want
to be cured
Of craving for something I cannot find
And the shame of never finding it. . . .
"You see, I think I really had a vision
of something
Though I don't know what it is. I don't
want to forget it.
I want to live with it. I could do
without everything,
Put up with anything, if I might
cherish it. . . ."

While it may not be given to us like Celia to follow our visions to the end of being crucified on an anthill, we all *do* have visions, every one of us, each according to his or her own nature. They are the deep, driving force in our lives, and can be evil as well as holy. And although we may on occasion have visions that resemble classical descriptions, our visions are, for the most part, not seen even with our inward eyes; they lie too deep in us for that. To bring ourselves to an awareness of these visions takes hard work, struggle, an unflinching examination of self, the kind of objectivity that embraces pain and finds Truth – yes, and even the Passion of Christ – at the kitchen sink. It does not come about by chemical short-circuiting of our physiology, or a casual gourmet pilfering of another culture's holiness.

A priest recently told me that the four things he cherishes most in life, not in any particular order, are: being with his wife, fathering his kids from diapers to adulthood, celebrating the Eucharist,

and preaching. "I'm *always* preparing sermons in the back of my mind," he told me. And there is no doubt at all that, for the most part, when this man opens his mouth in the pulpit, what comes out is extraordinary. He told me, laughing, that someone he hadn't seen for a while heard him preach one day and afterward came up and hesitantly asked if something unusual in the way of a conversion experience had happened in his life. And my friend's reply was, no, he was the same old sinful person, but he knew that when he preached something else took over.

I believe this priest's experience is common to us all in the humble, ordinary stuff of our individual lives. When he is sermonizing in the back of his mind, he is, in fact, not only trying to communicate, to make manifest, the vision of God which he sees with and continually refers to in his heart, but also is engaged in worship, in adoration.

So too with each one of us. This vision of God, though we may not have recognized it as such, these visions of God give us the ability to know, even when we don't know, the direction of our lives. We thus have something in common with wild geese and 747s, as Thomas Merton confided in a candid moment, "In the end, we're all flying blind." But within this very blindness lies the perspective, the hope that keeps us from being overcome at year's end, that helps us face the ongoing Cambodias, gulags, and daily petty cruelties to one another. It is the knowledge of our hearts of our forgiveness, that beyond crucifixion is resurrection, that deep within us, calling us beyond conscious knowledge is the constant loving look at the Father, which is Christ praying in us, and which oblique vision leads us to desire him with a love that can come only from him; to grow in the purity of heart that, we have been promised by Jesus our Lord, will bring us to see him face to Face.

What time-besotted earth, lurching
among
the planets sees God's sense of
revolutions?
Time-turnings in men's souls are never
wrung
from safety into painless evolutions.
Not often have tangential lives become
one spiraled helix. Early on, mistrust,
like some fell Pegasus from fathers',
sons'
own mingled blood springs. Ashes
ground to dust.
Stunned by hatred, famine, pestilence,
a night of sense and soul, the old world
reels
toward death: the young impelled to
violence,
the aged, fear. And angels break the
seals.
Energy is made of rotting mass
times measured light. And man's
forgiveness.

FILM REVIEWS

HALF-TRUTHS AND UNTRUTHS

By MICHAEL HEFNER

Woody Allen's *Manhattan* is about the splintered lives and loves of some modish upper-middle class New Yorkers who have no guiding principles except those of taste and "openness;" so every shift of fashion must be watched and carefully assessed in relation to "image." Their lives are therefore exhausting, a circle of futility which leads to worrying about death. This is promising material for satire, but *Manhattan* fails because it finally takes the pretensions of its characters at face value.

Diane Keaton dominated *Annie Hall*, and Allen played a free-style portrait of himself as a writer and stand-up comic whose main function was to comment ironically on the action. In *Manhattan*, Allen is again a writer, still commenting on the action. But irony is superceded here by self-regarding sentimentality. The writer-director-star, true to the style of the age, exalts himself at the center of the film, while Keaton, as one of his girl friends, a flighty intellectual, is relegated to her most unattractive role to date.

Detachment is forsworn because Allen's character is in the same general fix as the others, with no corrective vision of his own. He drifts from affair to affair, quits his TV job to work on a novel that never materializes, announces a laundry list of art and artifacts that makes "life worth living," using his pseudo angst as a platform from which to patronize the audience.

Michael Hefner, of *Lincoln Park, Mich.*, is *TLC's* film reviewer.

The film's best moment is that which most effectively exposes its flaccidness. Meryl Streep, who is meant to be unsympathetic as Allen's lesbian ex-wife, emerges briskly – blonde mane slung insolently over one shoulder – onto a New York sidewalk, with Allen tagging miserably alongside. Next to her superior height, he calls to mind the Allen of old – the *nebish* – and it seems she will step on him. Actually, in her business-like performance, she steps on the movie, and it never recovers.

Gordon Willis is once again Allen's photographer, and his black-and-white, Stieglitz-inspired views of Manhattan are nice enough; but then Allen pours on an over-orchestrated Gershwin score, and the aestheticism turns into sickly nostalgia for a vanished urban glamor – which scarcely existed anyway, except for a lucky few – and thereby deepens the atmosphere of self-pity. Unfortunately, this talented comedian has chosen to become a windbag.

Revolutions have a perverse way of producing unexpected results, and Allen's '70s people, in hindsight, are as truly children of the revolutionary '60s as were the hippies, who seem on balance a good deal more attractive in the 1967 musical *Hair*, translated to the screen by Czech director Milos Forman, from an adaptation by Michael Weller.

A square draftee (John Savage) shows up in New York to see some sights before induction, and the film depicts his adventures with hippies he meets in Central Park. The film-maker's class-baiting tends toward a dampening effect from time to time, but the driving ex-

uberance of the musical numbers more than compensates. The unusually high quota of exhilarating moments are mostly supplied by Treat Williams's splendid performance as a hippie leader; Twyla Tharp's dancers; and Cheryl Barnes's great delivery of the blues ballad, "Easy to Be Hard."

The techniques of melodrama often work best when applied to realistic situations in which falsely inflated emotional appeals may the more easily be made to appear genuine. *The China Syndrome*, with a first-rate script by Mike Gray, T.S. Cook and James Bridges, who also directed, comes as close to getting away with this sleight-of-hand as any film has done in years. The controversial subject, too well known to need reiteration here, and the film's canny timing, make it seem a political event, and audiences, more than willing to overlook Bridges's lumbering direction, are not disappointed.

The plot is constructed around a race for various kinds of information – the desperate buying of time – and there is enough suspense in the story to neutralize the director's best efforts to dissipate it. Michael Douglas is as attractive an actor as is currently to be seen in American movies, while Jack Lemmon, as a plant technician caught in conflicting loyalties, displays only the ghost of his former talent. Jane Fonda, although she might have given her character more contrasts, acts with a skill and professionalism that are formidable, and so complaints may seem ungrateful.

Of his daughter's performance in *Klute* (1971), Henry Fonda said, "She's not just good, she's sensational." In that film and in the 1969 *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*, she was sensational, the best actress of the time. By contrast, subsequent appearances have seemed pallid, even allowing for the limitations imposed by roles. It is hard to know what to say about this, except that perhaps the contradictions and compromises inherent in simultaneously pursuing political activism and consolidating her position as an important movie star have made her excessively cautious, at times even boring. Politics doesn't always corrupt art – or religion either, for that matter – but it can do a lot of damage.

In *Norma Rae*, Sally Field shows what a talented actress can do when she gives herself completely to a character. The movie, directed by Martin Ritt, and set in a one-industry textile town in the South, tells a fairly routine story about a young widow with children, a millworker, who lives at home with her parents, also hands at the mill. She is recruited into the organizing efforts of a young unionist from New York (Ron Liebman), and takes up this campaign at about the same time as she takes a new husband (Beau Bridges). The complications pro-

ceed predictably, and without nearly enough political bite. It is Field's characterization that provides all the tension.

Monty Python's Life of Brian has attracted the hostility of the officially pious, ostensibly because the film is a crude takeoff on the life of Christ. The gimmick here is a case of mistaken identity: A fellow named Brian is plagued from birth by followers who insist he is the Messiah, and he can't convince them he isn't. A figure who actually represents Jesus is glimpsed only briefly, and with no discernible irreverence, once in the manger and finally at the occasion of the Sermon on the Mount.

At the sermon, we focus on the unruly edge of the multitude where Brian and his mother mill about amid pushing, fighting and shouting. This seems to me



Actor Graham Chapman, as Brian, in "Monty Python's Life of Brian": A crude takeoff on the life of Christ?

a reasonable enough representation of Jesus' followers, then and now, for the movie is really a takeoff on ourselves. It is in this scene that my favorite crude joke in this film occurs.

On account of the tumult, people in Brian's part of the crowd can hardly hear the sermon. Someone reports that Jesus has said, "Blessed are the cheesemakers," and while this curious statement is being considered an idiotic clerico-academic type explains that of course Jesus doesn't mean only cheesemakers but "all manufacturers of dairy products." If the self-complacent are offended – well, let them stay home.

Class jokes used to be a staple of Hollywood comedies, and the jokes were usually on the rich, or people who put on airs. The fun the Marx Brothers used to poke at Margaret Dumont's bosom –

that majestic symbol of everything overstuffed and respectable – has become almost an emblem of the democratic myth. Perhaps this light-heartedness was only possible against the background of a more *laissez-faire* world in which everything was understood to depend on the toss of the dice at one's birth and the exercise of one's wits thereafter, and in which equality of opportunity, let alone of outcome, was not a principle which threatened settled arrangements in any serious way. The push for equality seems, paradoxically, to have produced a more high-strung populace in which jockeying for position, or special status, is no laughing matter.

Breaking Away, about some lower class college town kids who successfully challenge some arrogant rich kids at the local university, is a new comedy about class frictions that nevertheless manages a little light-heartedness, and pleases audiences enormously by suggesting that with enough spit and determination the relatively poor kid can win the race, get the girl and enter an institution from which he previously had felt excluded. This film, directed by Peter Yates, and featuring likable performances from Dennis Christopher, Dennis Quaid, Daniel Stern and especially Jackie Earle Haley, as a little guy with a powerful fist, is so ingratiating in its presentation of the old myth that one is momentarily happy to assent to what one knows is among the cruelest of the half-truths by which our society lives.

Public awareness of movies last summer was largely dominated by horror films. Various publications ran analyses offering social, psychological and even spiritual explanations for the horror film "phenomenon," which tended to read like a rehash of similar essays which appeared a few years back on the equally thankless topic of disaster epics. The more recent articles, however, have no more acumen in locating reasons for the latest fad than did the earlier ones. The most obvious explanations – huge profits and saturation advertising – are downplayed or ignored in favor of so much cant about primal fears and religious dread.

Tales that frighten will always have a basic appeal and are certainly a proper subject for aesthetic inquiry and critical discrimination. But, with a few notable exceptions and for a variety of reasons, there have been hardly any good horror movies since the 50s. Perhaps it is possible, however, to discern in the half dozen or so shockers that came and went last summer like a bad dream a new law: The more expensive and bloated the production, and the more gross its effects, the less likely will it be to frighten in an entertaining or significant way. The scariest thing about these movies is the power of their publicists to herd audiences into theaters.

EDITORIALS

Goodbye to the '70s

The transition from one decade to another seems to have a certain solemnity. Some of the possible reasons for this are suggested in "The First Article." For better or for worse, the past ten years have had a distinct character and flavor of their own. Some terrible events have occurred in our country, in the world, and in the church. Some very good things have also happened. In any case, we do well to enter a new decade with St. Paul's example: "Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-4). We wish a most happy decade to all our readers.

A Continuing Problem

The year 1979 has not brought us noticeably closer to any solution of a major problem of the Episcopal Church, namely our unsuccessful deployment of our clergy and lay church personnel. Years ago, before anyone talked about professional development or personnel policy, most bishops made some sort of effort to assign young clergy to suitable positions in which they would become competent and then steer them on to subsequent positions suitable to their talents and interests. Today, bishops may make such efforts, but in fact the job market is catch-as-catch-can. Many priests are today holding on to jobs for which they are quite unfitted, because there is nothing else they can find. Others have gone reluctantly into secular work. Many

former professional and experienced lay church workers have abandoned all hope of church employment. Dissatisfaction, demoralization, and discouragement have been felt by many.

We recently heard of a highly talented and highly trained priest who was asked to take a very responsible position in our church. He replied that he would have been delighted to have had this appointment a few years ago. In the meantime, however, he had been forced to take secular employment. He had settled in another city, bought a house, pursued other interests, etc. The church was the loser. Lost too were thousands of dollars in theological and graduate education that had been invested in him. With some variation, this tale could be repeated many times. The problem is not solving itself.

Classified Employment Advertisements

We believe that any steps which can be taken to improve the employment situation in our church are to be encouraged. One step we commend to our readers is the use of classified advertisements in the back of this magazine. Such ads can be placed by persons seeking jobs, or by churches, institutions, or dioceses which have openings. From time to time some exceptionally fine positions have been advertised here, and very competent people have offered their services. Such ads may be anonymous, using a box number we will gladly assign. The rates are reasonable, and we urge advertisers to use enough words to say what needs to be said in an attractive way. We observe that well-worded ads do get results. We also urge continuing an ad for at least three successive weeks.

BOOKS

Colonial Episcopalianism

THE GLEBE HOUSE. Text by Richard E. Crews, drawings by Melbourne Brindle. The Church Missions Publishing Co. (Copies available from the Curator, the Glebe House, P.O. Box 245, Woodbury, Conn. 06798. Postage \$1.) Not paginated. \$3.00 paper.

There were once many glebe houses. This one was the colonial rectory of Woodbury, Conn., where on the Feast of the Annunciation in 1783 ten clergymen of the area met to elect the first American bishop. A century later the house was restored and preserved for the church and the public. This folio-sized brochure (11 x 14 inches) tells the story of the house, of Bishop Seabury,

and of the church in Connecticut. On almost every page there are handsome detailed drawings of the interesting woodwork and contemporary furnishings of the house.

Anyone interested in Episcopal Church history or Americana will enjoy this elegantly printed publication. It is the bargain of the year for the coffee table.

H.B.P.

Positive Approach

HEALING AND THE ABUNDANT LIFE. By Malcolm H. Miner. Morehouse-Barlow. Pp. 107. \$3.75 paper.

The church continues to hear a great deal about Christian healing these days, from Emily Gardiner Neal to Agnes Sanford, from Francis MacNutt to Morton Kelsey, and nestled among these giants should be a very prominent niche for the Rev. Malcolm Miner. In his first book, *Healing is for Real*, Fr. Miner gave a fine apology for physical healing. In

his latest book, *Healing and the Abundant Life*, he has expanded his thesis to include the whole person who may live the abundant life promised by Our Lord, if he lives up to his potential, the potential God has given him.

He writes in a clear, concise style with a great deal of vitality. He combines solid Scriptural theology with personal testimony in a way that makes for easy and exciting reading. Some may find him a bit simplistic, echoing somewhat *The Power of Positive Thinking*, but to this reader, he preaches a positive reaction to life and to spirituality that is not vulgar optimism, but rather a statement of fact rooted and grounded in the theological virtue of Christian hope. As he says, "The abundant life is not a life without suffering."

This is a fine little book, and belongs in the library of anyone who is interested in Christian healing.

(The Very Rev.) JAMES W. LEECH
All Saints Cathedral
Milwaukee, Wis.

Another View

By JOHN M. GESSELL

General Convention did not act correctly in the matter of the ordination of homosexual persons. It should have left the decision to the pastoral discretion of diocesan authority — bishops, standing committees, and commissions on the ministry. I had earlier predicted that the spirit of Port St. Lucie would cut off thoughtful consideration of the convention's own (Spears) Commission's report which, together with a long line of witnesses in Denver, recommended that the issue not become the subject of legislation. The

The Rev. John M. Gessell is professor of Christian ethics at the School of Theology, The University of the South, Seawane, Tenn. This article takes a different view from that of the editorial, "The Moral Teaching of Jesus," by the Very Rev. O. C. Edwards [TLC, Nov. 4].

danger now is not only that the church may act untheologically and unjustly, but that it will tempt coercion, subterfuge, and dishonesty, and that it will invoke doubt, fear, and anxiety for all who are in any way involved in decisions concerning ordinands and their ordination to holy orders. Did convention itself act "in accordance with the teachings of Christ so that [they] may be a wholesome example to all people . . ."? And who gave a scriptural warrant to require that which can be only voluntarily offered, celibacy?

The resolution declares into law that which is doubtful or, at least, under serious debate by moral theologians. It makes homosexual persons into sexual outlaws and segregates them from pastoral care. Fortunately, 136 deputies and 21 bishops publicly indicated their dissent from this decision.

This matter reveals the church's obsession with sex (not sexuality). This action idolatizes homosexuality, making it the subject of the church's obsessive concern and canonizing it as *the* sin. It ignores the inconclusive insights and the ambiguities of scripture as well as the inconclusive evidence of social scientific work being done on human sexuality.

The inability of convention to handle this matter with wisdom and maturity

and in the spirit of Christ was clear in the debate carried on in the House of Deputies as it considered the Spears report. One observer reported that it was a "low and dirty scene with name-calling and the whole works."

One phenomenon in particular is of special interest to the theologian, the appeal to scripture. Whenever the church discusses issues of human sexuality — such as the ordination of women or of homosexual persons — the discussion frequently falls back on to the safer ground of scriptural fundamentalism. William Stringfellow described this as the "notorious abuse of the Bible" by Episcopalians. The state of the present discussion suggests that we must look again at how moral judgments are formed.

In facing most other moral dilemmas, we first gather information on human experience as part of our reflection. We do not normally make *a priori* applications of a general rule. Indeed, this is what Christian ethics assumes as its task — faithful reflection on moral experience. But in discussion of human sexuality, the threat involved appears to be so great that it often presses us to fall back into the end-zone of proof-texting to protect previously occupied moral positions.

Candor requires the ethicist to state that the Pauline evidence on matters of human sexuality, especially the references in the Pauline epistles to homosexuality, is ambiguous. There is no way to sidestep the exegetical and hermeneutical problems. It is not possible to draw directly from the Pauline corpus unequivocal moral imperatives to guide us in making decisions in the difficult matter of the ordination of homosexual persons. Further, candor requires us to note that the biblical witness and that of church tradition is apparently normally anti-homosexual. But it is also important to note that Paul talks about homosexual prostitution as part of idolatrous cultic behavior.

How can we be true to the biblical witness if the Bible will not give us final unequivocal moral advice?

Humanity is capable of self-transcendence. This is in part what it means to be human. We are not absolutely defined and determined by our animal and physical natures. The meaning of the moral act cannot be exhausted by its physical determinism. That would leave no room for responsible use of human freedom.

Nor is the moral act absolutely defined by an extrinsic rule of obligation, nor by a reputed rule of Scripture or of tradition. Such applicationism would preclude moral choice. In any case, such a line of inquiry comes apart on the rocks of historical experience (e.g., slavery).

In other words, normative theories of ethical obligation are not grounded solely by the appeal to Scripture nor by the

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appeal to nature, but by a careful, arduous, responsible use of theological reason reflecting on human experience in the light of our knowledge of God as revealed by Holy Scripture.

This is the process (surely, a most difficult and exacting one) by which norms for the guidance of Christian conscience and conduct are to be formulated and reformulated. Certain historical periods seem to require more attention to revision than others. This is one of them. The church, and its General Convention, are part of that process of reflection, revision, and re-formulation. This is no time to close the door on discussion. The church has no business engraving laws in stone. It does have the responsibility to encourage and support the people of God on their way as pilgrims in search for appropriate expressions of their experience of God's mysterious love.

Dec. 26-30

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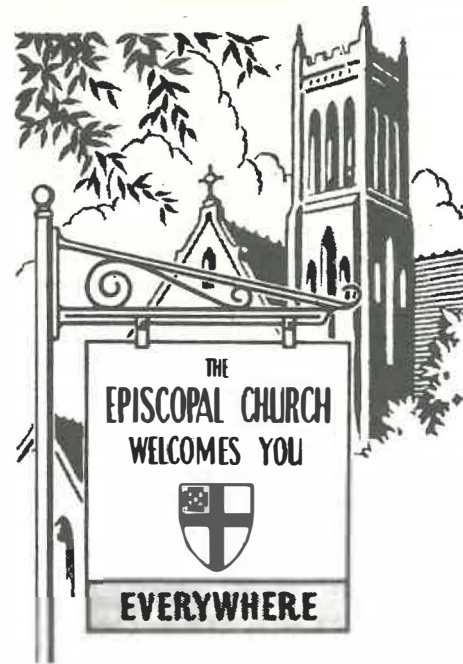
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