EXCALIBUR

RELIGION THREE

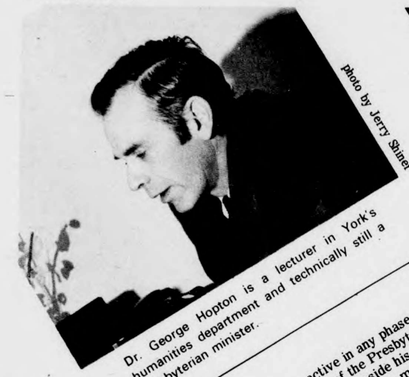

photo by Jerry Shnier

Dr. George Hopton is a lecturer in York's humanities department and technically still a Presbyterian minister.

Hopton

story by Anne Wright

George Hopton entered the Presbyterian ministry believing the Church to be an agent for social change. He discovered it wasn't.

"In its concern for maintaining the life of the institution itself," says Dr. Hopton, "the Church has lost any power for being a directive force in society."

George Hopton was only 18 when he became a candidate for the ministry. It was 1945 and the world was still numb from the tragedy of the Second World War. The magnitude of that tragedy, the massacre of the Jews and the development of the atom bomb had a tremendously cumulative effect on his generation.

"We felt the world was in a hell of a mess," he says. "Perhaps it was youthful idealism but we felt committed to making the world a better place to live. For me, the church seemed the right institution in which to work for this end."

In the years following his ordination in 1953 church bureaucracy combined with the narrow mindedness and pettiness characteristic of parochial life led to a growing disillusionment on his part with the institutional church.

"My idea of priorities both for the church and for the concerned citizen were vastly different from those of the congregation," says Dr. Hopton, minister of two Ontario congregations during the fifties. "They were more concerned with maintaining the life of the institution than in becoming agents of social change."

The present Church, he maintains, is set up on the basis of authoritarianism. This structure has functioned well in the past in that people felt they should be obedient to authority. But it doesn't work and won't work with the young generation of today. The days of the dictator priest are over. Leadership must be shared — the Church must come to terms with this concept of equality as must each and every member of the Church community.

With thoughts along these lines, Dr. Hopton welcomed his appointment as general secretary of the S.C.M. (Student Christian Movement) at the University of Toronto, as an oasis in the desert. The attitudes of the young people he encountered there in his five-year term of office were "tremendously encouraging."

"The students I worked with wanted to deal with the real issues and honestly. Some felt that the institutional church was skirting the major issues and at times they alienated themselves from it completely." The S.C.M. is an independent student organization but the formal church's displeasure with its policy and structure was apparent through a definite decrease in the funds they volunteered during Dr. Hopton's term of office.

Today Dr. Hopton is no longer active in any phase of the ministry of the Presbyterian Church. Setting aside his religious duties in favor of a more fulfilling role in the university community, he came to York in the fall of last year as a lecturer in the Humanities department.

Dr. Hopton still hasn't definitely ruled out the possibility of eventually returning to the active Church ministry. But for the present, he feels fully involved in his role as university professor.

What will be the future of the church? Will unity among the Christian churches ever become reality?

"No doubt some type of unity will come about in the not-too distant future," answers Dr. Hopton, "but by then it will have come at least 20 years too late. Ten years ago the question was of vital importance for the institutional churches to solve if they were to maintain the respect of the community at large. Ten years ago Christian unity and reform would have had a dramatic and beneficial effect on society. But the Church waffled. When unity finally does come about it will most probably come through weakness. The churches will have to unify in order to preserve their strength. And this is a pity. Unity should have come about in a spirit of concern for society — in a spirit of brotherhood.

Foedus

The war is over, God
I am done resisting.
I gout you long enough.
The war is over.
I ran until
the salt sweat ran faster than I.
My foolish soul despaired.
I fought. . .
My head hung, then
raised, defiant. I thought
I felt nails in my dripping palms and that
my flowing sweat was blood.
The war is over.
Blindly I struck at proffered hands.
It seemed
They pressed thorns to my brow.
I am done. . .
A great burden bent my back.
The salt tears on my tongue
were vinegar.
The war is over.
And then. . .
red blood on my head —
I drank.

Chris Mills

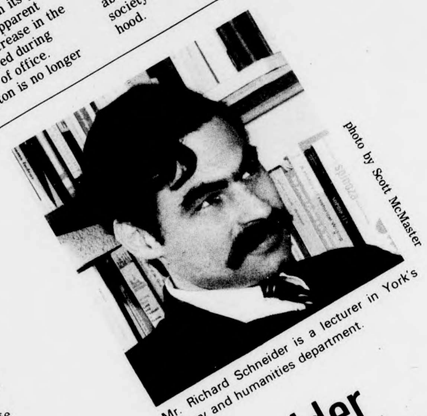

photo by Scott McMaster

Mr. Richard Schneider is a lecturer in York's history and humanities department.

Schneider

by Chris Mills

There is a man talking.

The words gather themselves up and encircle you. Some hurl themselves at you, colliding with each other in the eagerness of their assault. Some tiptoe up to your ear and startle you. Some hesitate, retreat, and finally make their sally. Some merely present themselves before you, awaiting your inspection.

You are apprehensive, confused, and almost convinced. You are surprised, enraged, exhilarated, and almost convinced. You have heard many of the words before probably most of them. What is it that gives them this peculiar vitality, this urgency? Perhaps it's the eyes. They bring you to a strange alertness. Together with the words they pin you to your prejudices and you are helpless to disclaim them. Whatever it is, you are impressed with the sincerity, the overwhelming love which pervades and illuminates the things he is saying.

But what, after all, is he saying? What's he really getting at?

"Conversion", n. 1: a change in nature or form 2: an experience associated with a decisive adoption of religion. (Merriam Webster Pocket Dictionary)

How dull!

You are skeptical, swaddled in your smug agnosticism. But you have a 'job to do' and you'll get it done (Is that not the primary ethic of the Upper Candian mentality?).

So you keep asking questions; you try to argue — you even win a few trivial points. And after a while you get a glimpse of what he's really talking about. Suddenly your agnosticism doesn't fit so well: it's somewhat snug across the shoulders and considerably too short in the sleeves.

He tells you two Very Tales, giving due credit to their original author.

It seems that once upon a time there was a fairly well-to-do Torontonian who had two sons. The elder was intelligent, cheerful, respectful to his parents, industrious, and ambitious. He received an MBA from the University of Western Ontario and went on to establish himself as a shrewd but ethical businessman and a good citizen. If he had any vices he was never caught. He was in every way a credit to his father and a joy to his mother.

But the younger son made rather a poor showing of it. He was expelled first from Upper Canada College, then from Ridley, and was one of five hundred and thirteen students rejected by York. Fed up with authority, he asked his father for his share of the insurance policy-trust fund, and moved to a pad on Bedford Road, which he shared with some seven to twenty-odd other pseudo-hippies. In due time he contracted gonorrhea (from a girl he met on the steps of the Grab Bag), and hepatitis (from eating in Webster's Restaurant). When, as was inevitable, he was busted for possession, the judge gave him the alternatives of a fail term or a suspended sentence in his father's custody. On his way back to Bayview, he argued it out with himself and decided that it would be nice to have a warm place to stay, especially now that summer was over, and anyway, he sort of missed the old geezer. When he met his father he figured a little drama would help his chances, so he got down on his knees and wept tears that were only part crocodile. He asked for forgiveness, and for a job as an office boy, or maybe as a gardener.

At this point his older brother came in and started to say, "Well, Dad, I think we should give him a chance to prove himself. Let's give him a job and let him work his way up in the company."

But before he could get it all out, the old man was on his knees too, crying, laughing, and embracing his wayward son.

"Call the caterers!" he cried. "We're giving the biggest party Toronto has ever seen. My son has come back!" "

You think you've heard the story before, or maybe you've met someone like one of the characters. While you puzzle over it he begins another Very Tale.

Once upon a similar time a young man was beaten by a gang of thugs and left bleeding in a gutter. A lawyer went by, but he had had a grueling day in court, and needed this case like a hole in the head. Then a couple of men passed on their way home from a Church Council meeting, but they didn't have time to get involved, so they didn't even slow down to the legal speed limit.

Hours later a dishwasher from a Chinese restaurant stopped to find the man unconscious. He took him to the nearest Holiday Inn and told the manager to get him some medical attention. Saith the landlord, "No way, not till you put your money where your mouth is." So the poor old chink left all his money and his watch and came back to see if the youth needed anything, every day until he was well enough to stand the subway ride home.

The man keeps talking, and gradually he makes you see why you think you've heard the stories before. YOU are the old man, and the sons, and the beaten youth, and the lawyer, and the innkeeper, and the old Chinese, yes, and the thugs too! You. (and your room-mate, and that guy reading this paper over your shoulder). If you are human, as I trust you are (although it's not listed under admission requirements in the calendar.), you are all of these things. And guess what! So was a man named Jesus ben-Joseph. Your humanity was perfected in him in its totality, the good and the evil of it. Christ is Everyman; every man is Christ. A man is confronted by his own humanity and the reality of his own Christness. Conversion.

So what?

So this makes your whole life a sacrament, in the fullest meaning of the word. A sacrament involves an encounter with others in which Christ is present. We live in the Sacrament by and with Christ through encounter with others. Got it?

There is a man talking. You don't know yet if you can accept what he is saying, but it has that ring to it. You do know you can never close your mind to it completely.

There is a man talking.

Read: Ignazio Silone, *Bread and Wine*; Prosper of Aquitane, *The Call of All the Nations*; "The Ancient Christian Writers"; "The Church in the Modern World" in *Documents of Vatican Council II*; E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Sacrament of the Encounter with God*; F.X. Durrwell, *The Resurrection*.

photo by Ian Rothman

Dr. F. M. Quealey is a former Roman Catholic priest, now a member of York's history and humanities department.

Quealey

story by Anne Wright

"The insurance company and the Roman Catholic Church are the two most successful agencies that run a business out of fear . . . the pope's mistake was the best thing that could have happened to the Catholic Church — it is making people think for themselves . . . the Catholic Church was more radical before the Vatican Council — today it has pulled back — any change now is mere tokenism . . . guilt regarding usage of the pill is the result of low quality Catholic education — separate schools are finally on a par academically with public schools but they have fallen down on the quality of their religious training . . ."

The man speaking is Dr. F. M. Quealey, formerly Father Quealey.

A Basilian father for six years (preceded by 10 years of preparatory training), Dr. Quealey formally left the Roman Catholic priesthood in August 1967.

"In a sense I was thrown out before I could actually quit," he explains. "My superiors felt I was too radical to retain the responsibilities of an institutional figure any longer."

Radical? Yes, definitely radical in the rigid eyes of the institutional Catholic Church. Radical in that he encouraged congregational participation and was saying the Mass entirely in English two or three years before it was introduced in the other Canadian churches. Radical in that he let the people themselves serve communion — bread **and** wine. Radical in that he never refused communion to anyone, regardless of religious denomination. Radical too, in that he gave free form sermons, encouraged poetry readings and dance during the Offertory, and often served Mass to the beat of a jazz ensemble or a string quartet.

But all this is really only so much surface detail. The institutional church, in Dr. Quealey's opinion, is becoming increasingly irrelevant with regard to the real form. They are pulling back and are consolidating Church power in the opposite direction of reform.

"We are in a worse state now than before the Vatican Council", impresses Dr. Quealey. "The tragedy is that renewal had happened at the Council but reform has not. Catholic reform is available at the top but it has not been translated into fact. In the words of an old theologian, we have the new wine, but still the old wineskin — the old structure. The clergy, many of whom were still quite willing to play the role of God in their respective parishes, hadn't prepared themselves for the moment of reform, nor had they prepared their congregations. Thus, many like myself were either dismissed from the priesthood or else, disillusioned by Church bureaucracy, left of their own accord.

So too was it that a great number of Catholic laymen were thrown into confusion by Pope Paul's encyclical on birth control.

"The pope discredited himself when he took the traditional stand on the pill issue," states Dr. Quealey. "Who gives a damn today about his infallibility? He was obviously not talking about marriage in his encyclical but about pontifical power. Basically the pope was frightened to make any changes in the doctrine on marriage, even using the recommendations of his own commission. He was frightened since he felt people would not accept the authority and the power of the Church has grown up and that a change of attitude is necessary. 'When I was a child,' wrote St. Paul, 'I thought as a child. Now that I have become a man, I have put away childish things'."

For those Catholics on the verge of deciding such issues for themselves using personal conscience as their guide, the fact that "the pope goofed" might have served as the final push into moral self-government, argues Dr. Quealey. And for Catholics free and responsible enough to recognize the pope's irrelevancy in this situation, his mistake would merely exemplify once more their realization that salvation lay not in a formal structure but in themselves and in their relationships.

Will traditional worship and institutional religion then as we know it soon die out?

"No, not in the immediate future", replies Dr. Quealey who entered the seminary at the age of 17 having experienced the best and worst features of "a shanty Irish background" here in Toronto. "People want to be told what to do. That's why the Roman Catholic Church has been so successful. Besides, no-one today would care that much to set up another institutional church to replace it.

Religion Three

Each year, all across Canada more and more clergymen are dropping out of the ministry. Some are disillusioned because they think the church is out of touch with reality. Others feel they can work better for society outside the confines of the institutional church.

Excalibur takes a look at two such men this week. Dr. F. M. Quealey, formerly a Roman Catholic priest, and Dr. George Hopton, a minister (though in name only) of the Presbyterian Church have both set aside their clerical duties in favor of the secular life. Both are members of the history and the humanities departments here at York. Another member of this department is Mr. Richard Schneider. Though a layman, Mr. Schneider has his own personal theory of religion and conversion.