



by Mattie Ann Callier-Spears

# RELIGION

Scripture of the Week

Luke 20:27-40.

## Can the Institutional Church Survive Some Radical Changes? A United Methodist Becomes a Confirmed Catholic: Retaining a Religious Duality

BY A. LEE HENDERSON



A. Lee Henderson

Have you ever wondered if the institutional church is strong enough to survive the seismic shocks that shake its foundations with radical changes? Perplexing as it might seem, that question surfaced for me as I was doing research for my new book "Crisis, Conflict and Challenge To The Church." Yet the more I pondered, the more positive I felt about these changes. At first they portended to be life-threatening. But as I studied the issues, I gradually came to realize that as within a human patient, the seeming "disease" can create vigorous anti-bodies within the patient, rallying the invalid to better health and even longer life expectancies! The institutional church can also rally, stronger than ever, from the testing. Whether the church responds with stronger ecumenical issues or re-builds its original foundations upon a dominant fundamentalism, depends upon one's analysis and will be borne out as time evaporates the misty frontiers of our debatable future. But I would like to share a unique experience. My own precepts were challenged when I discovered the fascinating case of William R. Farmer, a United Methodist of impeccable professional credentials who elected to combine Catholicism with Methodism in a Christian adventure that is more significant to the way we perceive religion than it appears to be. For this is

more than a superficial leap into dual "citizenship" as a professed member of two substantial churches individually rooted in differing doctrinal worship practices! The religions, says Farmer, have "mutuality" in Protestant-Catholic dialogue, but Farmer acknowledges that the reality he lives is "still hidden to most people." He believes that he is setting seeds for officialdom to deal with...even if the "oneness" of the Christian church, beyond denominational precepts, fails to take place in his lifetime. With growth of awareness centered in all people to self-express and stand up and be counted, the desire to democratize can be confusing within the church. Here, too, we all count. But to those of us who have become the professional church, the hierarchy can be used to expedite the full objective of the church: to render strong, inviolate, and dependable the church body that must serve our absolute spiritual, and even our secular needs! I do believe that change can modify the institutional church without tearing it down! William R. Farmer's example is a prime example of duality that did not destroy either denomination. His official stand on espousing two denominations took place on January 25, 1990. An associated Press article by George W. Cornell quoted him as saying: "I don't regard it as a conversion or that I've put away my Methodist heritage at all." After the Rev. William R. Farmer, assistant pastor at St. Luke's Community Methodist Church in Dallas, Texas,

joined Holy Cross Roman Catholic Church in Dallas, he continued to teach at his Methodist university post. He was a veteran New Testament professor at Southern Methodist University's Perkins School of Theology. Commenting on his formal adoption of Catholicism, the Rev. Timothy Gollop at the Catholic Holy Cross parish applauded Farmer for "bringing into that church a very rich Methodist heritage." It is fascinating to take note of Farmer's aims. Has he, perhaps, given us, too, cause to re-evaluate our distressed or "abandoned" properties? Can they be resurrected under the aegis of a leadership trail in "duality" outside the boundaries of the strict A.M.E. Church definition with an agreeable partnership drawn, if not from another religious affiliation...from a willing college-based real estate or management school administration. Divesting ourselves of responsibility into a "Receivership" eliminates risk, but also impedes our potentials. Exploring all new possibilities certainly has merit. Farmer, a Caucasian pioneer, tackled not only a religious but a racial frontier in the work he undertook. Because he and Gollop...another white man, involved themselves in two congregations in Dallas comprised largely of Blacks and Hispanics. "I'm trying to be fully in both congregations in a single ministry, and in the whole church, recognizing its oneness, above all in matters of race," notes Farmer. Echoes of our founder Richard Allen ring in Farmer's voice as our mandate does, "God Our Father, Man Our

Brother, Christ Our Redeemer." Farmer claims that "The new age of ecumenism" is taking place in concepts of God's 'option for the poor.' "It's grassroots ecumenism. It's happening all over the world," says William R. Farmer. "It's happening in homes, in churches. Officials don't know what to do with it. Accordingly, there are no provisions for it, and no restrictions against it. "It's best not to cause a scandal, but go ahead and do it, being sure you're doing it in good conscience and doing it in obedience to the Gospel." Writer Peter Steinfels of The New York Times noted that Christians have been propelled by "the Great Commission," Jesus' final command to His apostles, as recounted in St. Matthew's Gospel to "go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations." In contrast to the fundamentalist evangelicals, he points to Christian and Buddhist monks currently sharing monastic life, and Jesuit priests in India who combine their Christian beliefs and Hindu traditions. Interreligious understanding and evangelization have created tensions. Yet the way religions relate to each other will impact world peace. According to Pope John Paul II dialogue between major religions, regarded as highly valuable, placed less than an encyclical on missionary work: conversion of non-Christians and establishment of new churches. The Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Canberra, Australia, although seriously affected by the focus on the war in the Persian Gulf, covered a mixed agenda for almost all Protestant and Orthodox denominations. Nearly four thousand delegates attended the meetings through February 20, 1991.

Peter Steinfels anticipated that inter-religious understanding vs. evangelization would be a major theme at the World Council of Churches assembly. What should the Rev. William R. Farmer say? The Bishops are expected to adjudicate Farmer's special status in Dallas. But it was unresolved when Farmer took a temporary leave to serve as resident theologian at the Methodist Mission Resource Center at Emory University in Atlanta and as a research scholar at Columbia Presbyterian Seminary, also in Atlanta. A unification theme does occur in reports that Catholic dialogue teams with Methodists, Lutherans, and Episcopalians are beginning to concur on many major issues. Among them says Farmer, is a modified papacy, with the Pope as presiding officer over a representative council! Farmer notes that basic agreement has been found on "Christ's real presence" in Holy Communion. And he points out that the Roman Catholic understanding of it is very close to that of Methodist Founder John Wesley. Farmer's controversial challenge to divided loyalties can be seen in his statement that, "There still are differences and some are important, but they're not great enough to justify our not being able to share the Lord's Supper. "It is a scandal that we're divided at the Lord's table." Designed to do away with such division, Farmer's bold decision to pursue his dual membership is a challenge against barriers...the "Berlin Walls" of Christendom. The churches, he believes, "should find some way of taking communion together on an officially approved ba-

sis." You may not agree with Farmer's extraordinary stand, yet an analysis of its purpose can shed much light on the hierarchy of the future, and the problems that will certainly challenge it. Change from within or change from without, the church has an opportunity to grow from such challenges. Some provocative questions arise. Is the church nationwide rushing forward to meet its challenges, or is it drifting off-course to founder and capitulate to those abuses within its power structure? Farmer's concern for a multi-ethnicity cuts a wide swath across the artificial divisions of humanity by economic boundaries...the poor served by the "poor" church and the middle-class by the "middle class"; church, and the rich by the "rich" church. People will cross-over, but will the concerns of the church hierarchy accommodate such moves? What a shocking situation we see within our churches when they reflect the rich vs. poor parish syndrome and make no moves at all to compensate for God's Kingdom as a valuable, manipulated piece of property with programs that embraced those. Heaven has no right side of the tracks, does it, and Jesus certainly did not envision such inequities as he instructed His disciples to spread the Gospel! The African Methodist Episcopal Church, founded by Richard Allen, an ex-slave, emerges today politically, and spiritually as a potential thunderbolt to stir our consciousness and re-assess our resistance to change.\* \*Crisis, Conflict And Challenge by A. Lee Henderson, new book copyrighted material.

### Red Cross Pathways Program Begins Rap Course

Although rap is well-known as a popular style of music it is also an American Red Cross course to assist young people aged 10 to 13 and their parents with the difficult transition from childhood to adolescence. The primary goal of RAP, Reaching Adolescents and Parents, is to help adolescents avoid sexual activity and pregnancy. This comprehensive program is taught by trained Red Cross instructors. Topics covered in the 10 week

program include: self esteem, peer pressure, sexual maturity, physical and emotional changes of puberty, and determining goals. The RAP course will be introduced to the Red Cross Pathways Program during March through May. Pathways is an American Red Cross program for young women attending middle school in North and Northeast Portland. For more information, contact Lynn Ervins at 284-1234, ext. 194.

### First time in the Pacific Northwest! NATIONAL CONVENTION



Dr. George H. McKinney  
National President, NBEA

National Black Evangelical Association  
Wednesday, April 3  
Sunday, April 7  
at the  
Sheraton Airport Hotel  
Theme:  
"In the midst of these years, REVIVE US!"

WORKSHOPS AND LUNCHEONS: to be held at various local churches, Multnomah School of the Bible and Warner Pacific College.  
YOUTH PROGRAM: with Rev. Henry Greenidge, 287-5226  
CHILDREN'S TRACK: with North Portland Assn. of Christian Educators, 288-2919  
RECONCILIATION RALLY  
Sunday, April 7, at 7 p.m., at the Oregon Convention Center  
Black and white pastors and congregations join in an 11 a.m. exchange!  
For programs and further information  
NBEA office - 5736 N. Albina - 289-0143



Bishop A.E. Wells, Convention Chair; Bishop G. Johnson, Co-Chair; Rev. G. Carney, Co-Chair; Rev. J. Hamlin, National Coordinator

## Maranatha Church

4222 N.E. 12th Avenue, Portland, Oregon

### Sunday Services

sunday School  
9:00 A.M.  
Morning Worship  
10:30 A.M.  
Evening Worship  
6:00 P.M.  
Midweek Service - Wednesday  
7:00 P.M.  
Saturday - BASIC Youth Service  
7:00 P.M.



Rev. Wendall H. Wallace  
Senior Pastor

"Maranatha Live" Radio Program/Talk Show KPDQ 93.7 FM 800 AM  
11:00 P.M. to 12:00 midnight (Each Sunday)

## St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church

8101 N. Fiske Avenue  
Portland, Oregon 97203

Church Phone: 289-0147

Study Phone: 289-1911

Sunday Service  
10:45  
Sunday School  
9:30  
Bible Study  
6:00  
Evening Service  
7:00 P.M.



Pastor, Rev. James C.E. Faulkner

Theme: Whatever you're going to do for the Lord, do it now.  
I Peter iv.11

### CREED OF THE BLACK PRESS

The Black Press believes that America can best lead the world away from social and national antagonisms when it accords to every person, regardless of race, color, or creed, full human and legal rights. Having no person, fearing no person, the Black Press strives to help every person in the firm belief that all are hurt as long as anyone is held back.

### MT OLIVET BAPTIST CHURCH

WE ARE MOVING  
SUNDAY SERVICES  
TO



Stone Tower Church,  
N.E. Sandy Blvd. & 30th  
Worship Services 8:00 A.M. & 11:00 A.M.  
Church School 9:30 A.M. to 10:30 A.M.  
Bible Study, Wednesdays, 116 N.E. Schuyler  
10:30 A.M. and 6:30 P.M.

Radio Ministry each Sunday, 8:00 A.M.-KBMS

A Teaching Church With A Reaching Ministry  
Dr. James E. Martin, Senior Pastor

Church Office 116 N.E. Schuyler.

## North Portland Bible College

SPRING TERM '91

April 1 - June 14, 1991

Time	Courses offered	Instructors
Mon. Eve. 6:30 - 9:30	OT SURVEY III LAY COUNSELING	Pastor James Coleman Bro. Rodney Cook
Tue. Morn. 9 - noon	NT SURVEY III GENESIS II	Sis. Beth Nance Bro. Michael Lindsey
Tue. Eve. 6:30 - 9:30	NT SURVEY III I & II TIMOTHY & TITUS	Sis. Beth Nance Dr. Peter Law
Thur. Eve. 6:30 - 9:30	INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY MUSIC READING/ CHOIR IB	Bro. Michael Lindsey Sis. Faye Smith

REGISTRATION AND TUITION - still only \$35.00 for the first class, \$25 for each additional class.  
HOW TO REGISTER: a. Phone 288-2919 for registration materials. b. Come early to the first session of your selected class.

PLEASE NOTE: Our new, temporary location is in Berean Baptist Church 4822 N. Vancouver Avenue. Entrance on Wygant.

P.O. Box 11437 + Portland, Oregon 97211 + (503) 288-2919



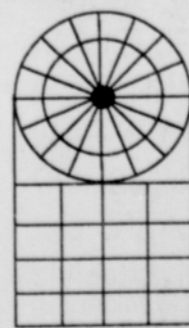
Jesus Loves You!

## Allen Temple CME Church

Psalm 34:3

4236 NE Eighth Avenue  
(corner of 8th & Skidmore)  
Portland, Oregon 97211

(503) 287-0261  
Phillip S. Nelson, Pastor



### From Rough Cut To Polished Piece

What: Video Showcase  
When: Saturday, March 30, 1991 7:30 - 9:30 pm  
Where: Portland Cable Access (PCA) 2766 NE MLK, Jr. Portland, OR 97212

### NOTICE

Youth Are The Most Important People In Our Lives But We're Losing Our Kid's to Gang Violence!!!

Black and white comes together in the Portland Observer  
4747 N.E. MLK Blvd  
Portland, OR 97211  
(503) 288-0033 Fax: 288-0015