

ministry as a second career

Elliott responded

Beginning in September 1970, New York Theological Seminary is offering a unique program of exploration and preparation — something so fresh and hopeful that it caught TIME's eye when it was in an early-draft stage.

We call the program "Second Career" because it is designed for Christian men and women who would like to commit themselves to serious exploration of the possibility of career change into clergy vocations, especially those who wish to aim at ordination at the point of retirement from their secular employment. But it is open also to mid-career stock-takers seeking disciplined answers to the questions *Adam, where are you and who are you?* And to laity who want to deepen their Christian commitment and to improve their knowledge and skills in lay ministry.

For all in the program, one solid benefit will be the continuous serious treatment of the nagging larger questions that the furious pace and multiple obligations of modern living keep pushing into the back of the mind. For those who want to target in on ordination at retirement, followed by unsalaried (or pension-supplement salary) professional ministry, the program will be second-career preparation. The latter, working with the seminary, will reach an ordination agreement each with his own communion. The common aim, no matter what a participant's specific intention in joining the program, will be to grow both as a self-directed Christian (over against the society's pressures) and as a Spirit-directed servant of God and man in church and world.

More than . . . and less than . . . The program is *more than* just "taking courses" and thus piling up credit toward a degree, or taking lay courses under seminary auspices. Each participant will be (1) in a learning group of not more than twelve and (2) on his own learning-track with tutorial consultation. But the program is for those continuing in secular employment and is thus *less than* fulltime seminary work. Less in time-input, but not in

is described above, includes great texts in all the theological fields: biblical, historical, theological, and practical — most of them in inexpensive paperback. Central here is the Bible, whose use will pervade the group sessions — for knowing Scripture, and becoming skillful in its use, are high objectives of the program, and in line with the seminary's emphasis on "doing theology," i.e. standing on the hyphen between the world and the Word and letting them interpret each other. The supervisor will help each participant design a course of study for himself, for his own growth as a person and a minister. The process will not be mechanical, but careful records will be kept both for self-discipline and for possible future uses. . . . Just as the participants are the agenda, to a very large extent they are also the curriculum — full of ideas, processes, and projects.

How long is the program? It stops when you've gotten out of it what you want for your ministry. If what you want is a Certificate of Competence in Ministry, that will take about five schoolyears. If in addition or instead you want ordination, how long that will take must be determined by your communion working with you and the seminary. A strong factor, whatever your goal, will be the amount of time beyond group-time that you can give to your study and its clinical and other involvements.

Credit? Because of the differing intentions and prior academic achievements of participants, certification of achievement will differ. The traditional academic degree for seminarians, the Bachelor of Divinity or equivalent, might be possible; but a Certificate of Competence in Ministry would be more appropriate — whether the participant intends ordination or aims at improving his competence and effectiveness in lay ministry. A strong reason for keeping a study diary and file is that on the basis of this material the question of accreditation can be raised at any time. In theological education, the whole issue of accreditation is becoming more fluid.

"The Second Career Program at New York Theological Seminary," a mimeo paper, expands on this introduction. It is available for the asking.

quality and efficiency. **QUALITY:** Personnel and other resources will be the highest available, and the combination of extended-session group experience and tutorial guidance is an unbeatable combination for quality education.

EFFICIENCY: The program does not lead you through masses of academic irrelevancy but starts *right where you are*, with your strengths and weaknesses, building on your long experience and the human-relations and other usable skills you've learned in your years of secular employment, church work, and community involvement. From the first session you and your fellows will be teachers as well as students, along with the lay dean (the program's supervisor) and consultants brought in for specific purposes — and, on occasion, a spouse of a participant.

The design is basically simple, an extended session every other week throughout the schoolyear, September through May. Usually the same night of the week, though the group is free to vary it to achieve full attendance, participants come directly from work to the seminary, engage in a wide variety of learning experiences till 11 p.m., then either retire at the seminary or go home. (The cost of dinner and overnight is modest, about \$7.) The educational style is "action/reflection," with the theoretical as servant of the practical. In addition to developing its own style and process, the group will each session help each participant reflect on and evaluate where he is in his worlds — home, work, church, civic life, play — and in his study.

From time to time as the group may decide, there will be longer periods of concentrated group experience — several long weekends a year, and perhaps a summer week. Many courses at the seminary are open to Second Career participants without charge, and the group will be kept posted as to other opportunities in the New York area in line with the Second Career program intentions.

The curriculum content, in addition to what