

This is the most immodest thinksheet I have ever written. It is crass self-promotion, blatant autopuffery, and cannot possibly be justified in the light of Christian sainthood. If I were you, I wouldn't even bother to read it.

The 24 Jan 79 CHRISTIAN CENTURY carried "Doers" at the Growing Edge, an editorial piece based on a survey of America's religion editors--of whom the dean, in my opinion, is the ideas- and religion-editor of NEWSWEEK, Ken Woodward, who selected me as #1 undersung American religionist.

Here's what he was asked:

the christian CENTURY

Rather than focusing on well-known figures who are "household words," we'd like to single out less obvious, lesser-known choices — bright, articulate, committed persons who are using their talents and energies effectively in the field of religion; men and women who — whether youthful, in middle years or older — are "comers" who are at the growing edge; those who are bringing new life and health to the religious scene, and whose contributions are creative, innovative, exciting or significant. Whether they are presently attracting attention or working in quiet obscurity, these are individuals whose impact may be felt or recognized more in future years.

Among those nominated by our panel are bishops, educators, pastors and activists. The nominees share one characteristic: a commitment to religion that is expressed through creative community service. In addition, most of them define an active ecumenism as a significant aspect of their pursuit.

And here's what he said:*

Easy choice: Willis E. Elliott, 60, dean of lay theological education at New York Theological Seminary, is one of the most brilliant, creative, biblical, ecumenical — and unheralded — churchmen of the past three decades. Raised and rooted in evangelicalism, educated north and south (one of his two doctorates is from the University of Chicago), Willis has served ten years as a pastor, ten more as a denominational (UCC) executive and another ten as a seminary professor and dean of experimental programs. He has anticipated, helped guide and participated in almost every major U.S. church movement since the 1940s. He is above all a wise counselor and highly discerning observer of the shifting relations between religion and culture. He is a deeply Christian intellectual and witty gentleman whose judgments, both personal and professional, I treasure more highly on more subjects than those of anyone else. Perhaps the reason Willis is not better known nationally is that people like me who "make" people keep Willis for our own enlightenment.

KENNETH L. WOODWARD,
Newsweek.

*Without consulting me, so I have a few changes: (1) Before the three decades he mentioned, I taught in colleges and seminaries (especially Hebrew and Greek) for 1/2 decade; (2) During the past decade, I was first Prof. of Pastoral Theology, then (as in the article's beginning) Dean of Lay Theological Education, and am now Dean of Exploratory Programs; (3) I was not "raised in evangelicalism," but I am "rooted" in it.