

EDMOND La B. CHERBONNIER (when used, middle name's initial "La B." is the family preference)

EDMOND LA BEAUME CHERBONNIER

American philosopher-theologian and [Episcopal Church deacon](#), the Rev. Dr. Edmond La Beaume Cherbonnier was born on February 11, 1918, in Saint Louis, Missouri, to [Edward Goodwin Cherbonnier](#) (sometime vice president of the Ralston Purina Company) and Adelaide Alice (La Beaume) Cherbonnier.

After graduation from Saint Louis Country Day School, Cherbonnier entered Harvard University, where he majored in geology. In 1939 he received the degree of Bachelor of Arts *cum laude*. During his undergraduate years, when associated with Harvard's Winthrop House (one of twelve undergraduate residences), he was elected President of the Phillips Brooks House Association (a student-run public service organization). According to the [Harvard Crimson](#)*, he was a member of the Winthrop House Committee and the Glee Club as well as an active participant for several years in social service work at Brooks House. (*For all Harvard-related items, enter "Cherbonnier" in the *Crimson's* "Search.")

A brief post as a teacher of Latin at Avon Old Farms School in Avon, Connecticut, preceded Cherbonnier's matriculation at Union Theological Seminary, New York; his graduate studies were interrupted while he served as a naval aviator during World War II. After his wartime service, he resumed his theological education and in 1947 received the degree of Bachelor of Divinity from Union. In the same year (5/28/1947) he was ordained a deacon by the Episcopal Bishop of Missouri. Subsequent study on a Fiske Fellowship from Harvard led to the degrees of Bachelor of Arts (1948) and Master of Arts (1952) from Cambridge University, England. Additionally, from 1948-1949 Cherbonnier was in residence as a Union Seminary Travelling Fellow at the University of Strasbourg and the University of Zurich.

By the time he formally entered the doctoral program at Columbia University, Cherbonnier had been married for six years to the former Phyllis White of St. Louis, who was awarded a Master of Arts degree in religion from Columbia in 1950. (She is the daughter of the late Dr. and Mrs. Park J. White of St. Louis.) Her master's thesis was entitled [The Preservation of the Individual in the Thoughts of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard](#). (If required, submit "Cherbonnier" in the space "Search Library Catalog" at "author.")

While studying during the 1949-1950 school year, Cherbonnier was a tutor-assistant to Henry P. Van Dusen at Union. A one-year appointment as assistant professor of religion at [Vassar](#) (1950-1951) saw at its conclusion a Ph.D. degree in religion conferred by Columbia. His doctoral thesis was entitled [Freedom and Time: A Study in Some Recent Contributions to the Problem](#).

From Vassar, Cherbonnier joined the faculty of [Barnard College](#)** of Columbia University, where he remained until the spring of 1955 as assistant and associate professor of religion. In addition, from 1952 to 1955 he served as Deacon at the nearby Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine (during the Deanship of the later controversial Bishop of California James A. Pike). The *New York Times* highlighted one of his cathedral sermons in an article (see below) "Worship Of Ideals Held Destructive - St. John's Deacon Warns on Idolatry of Democracy as a Danger of Our Time" (May 31, 1954).

** (Enter "Cherbonnier" in the provided search space via *Barnard Bulletin Online 1901-2002*.)

As early as 1952 in Cherbonnier's career, Reinhold Niebuhr expressed gratitude to his wife and to Cherbonnier in his Preface to *The Irony Of The American History* "for careful reading of my manuscript and for many suggestions for its improvement and to Professor Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., of Harvard who read most of the chapters and suggested important amendments." (1952, p. ix)

In 1955 Cherbonnier's well-received book [Hardness of Heart](#) was published by Doubleday. A volume in the "Christian Faith Series" edited by Reinhold Niebuhr, the study provided a contemporary interpretation of the doctrine of sin. During the next year it was published by London's Victor Gollancz Ltd. An especially supportive observation came from noted psychiatrist Karl Menninger, M.D. in his *The Vital Balance* (1963, p. 375):

Cherbonnier in his beautiful essay, *Hardness of Heart*, describes the forms of idolatry indulged in

by the hardhearted. He lists the hidden gods of cynicism as nationalism, humanism, phallicism, promiscuity, the glorification of money, and the various euphemisms such as frugality, shrewdness, and sound economy. Cherbonnier also lists iconoclasm, existentialist despair, and a so-called state of “adjustment” and “relatedness” toward which some psychiatrists are believed to steer their patients.

Now the father of a daughter, [Laurie Goodwin](#), in the fall of 1955 Cherbonnier was invited by Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, to establish a religion department. A son, Camden La Beauce, was born the summer following his first academic year at Trinity. After serving two years as an associate professor, he was promoted to full professor and was then joined by a [second department member](#) (Dr. Theodor Marcus Mauch). Under Cherbonnier’s chairmanship, the department was enlarged to a staff of five full-time professors plus adjunct faculty.

In 1959 the University of Vermont awarded Professor Cherbonnier the degree of Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*. His 1962-63 sabbatical leave in England was partially underwritten by a Lilly Post-Doctoral Fellowship and was spent in further work on distinctions between mystical and biblical thought.

Dr. Cherbonnier was on another leave for the 1970-1972 academic years plus the first semester of the 1972-1973 year, also spent in England. He retired from his Trinity post in 1983.

For many years he has also been interested in the Shroud of Turin and the life of Saint Joan of Arc (1412-1431 C.E.). Furthermore, he is a chaplain in the [Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem - Priory in the United States](#). (See also http://www.saintjohn.org/usapriory/2005_memberlist_eh.asp/)

Dr. Cherbonnier’s published writings, including *Hardness of Heart*, are accessible in the Cherbonnier subsite of <http://www.philosophy-religion.org/>. His papers were published in distinguished scholarly journals, such as the *Harvard Theological Review*, *Commentary*, *Theology Today*, *Conservative Judaism*, and the *Journal of Religion*. Additionally, he contributed essays to dictionaries as well as chapters to a number of books.

Among the many acknowledgments of, references to, or quotations from his works throughout the years (supportable via a “Cherbonnier” search at amazon.com) are those in Joseph Fletcher’s celebrated *Situation Ethics* (1956, p. 28); *The Expository Times* (Vol. LXVIII, No. 1, October 1956); Henderlite’s *Forgiveness and Hope: Toward a Theology for Protestant Christian Education* (1961, p. 59); Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel’s *The Prophets* (1962, p. 244), *Between God and Man* (1965, p. 269), and *God In Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism* (1976, p. 304); Dilley’s *Metaphysics and Religious Language* (1964, pp. iii, 110-112); Hunt’s *The Paradox of Christian Tragedy* (1985, pp. 71, 88, 89); Patterson’s *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary (Volume 4) 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job* (1988, p. 682); Kirkpatrick’s *Together Bound: God, History, and the Religious Community* (1994, p. xv); Preuss’ *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 1 (1995, p. 347); Guthrie’s *Faces in the Clouds: A New Theory of Religion* (1995, p. 253); Barlow’s *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (1997, p. 125); Wilson’s *The Blood and the Shroud: New Evidence That the World’s Most Sacred Relic Is Real* (1999, p. xiv); *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (2001, p. 1107); Cook’s *The Church Speaks, Volume 2: Papers of the Commission on Theology Reformed Church in America, 1985-2000* (2002, p. 303); Keyes’ *Seeing Through Cynicism: A Reconsideration of the Power of Suspicion* (2006, p. 77); and the *Trinity College Reporter* (spring 2007, p. 46).

As well, his scholarship and some of its implications were explored in a New York University 1973 Ph.D. dissertation, namely, Nolan’s [The Significance of the Religious Thought of Edmond La B. Cherbonnier for A Basic Objective for Religious Education](#).

ADDITIONAL LISTINGS:

[Episcopal Clerical Directory](#) (Enter “Cherbonnier” in the space provided.)

[Trinity College Catalogue Issue 2007-2008](#), p. 479 – (pdf file):

The Episcopal Church Annual (See Diocese of Missouri, Non-Parochial Clergy)

EDMOND L. CHERBONNIER *Professor of Religion, Emeritus*

B.A. 1939 (Harvard Univ.), B.D. 1947 (Union Theological Seminary), B.A. 1948, M.A. 1952 (Cambridge Univ.), Ph.D. 1951 (Columbia Univ.), D.D. 1959 (Univ. of Vermont) [1955, Ret. 1983]

[DIAKONEO](#) [North American Association for the Diaconate] (Advent 2006 Vol. 28 # 4; p. 17) –
(pdf file)

Google Search (including Google Scholar search) – insert: Edmond La B. Cherbonnier, Edmond LaB. Cherbonnier, E. Cherbonnier, etc.