

made relatively little difference in media coverage of the incident.

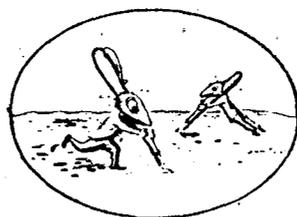
As a consequence, the Humphrey-Truong case may prove a significant new step in the advance of post-Watergate morality. In the FBI prosecutions, considerations of national security have been downplayed as mere excuses for abuse of power by a corrupt administration—an impression heightened by making L. Patrick Gray the primary defendant. In the

Humphrey-Truong matter, however, considerations of national security have been downplayed as simply insufficient to justify surreptitious surveillance. While both positions are short-sighted, the latter has considerably greater potential for weakening our ability to respond both to domestic terrorism and foreign aggression. The current rush to limit the tactics available to our law-enforcement and intelligence-gathering agencies rests on a serious distortion of

recent history, coupled with a well-nigh hysterical overestimation of the dangers involved in permitting the executive branch to conduct warrantless surveillance of spies and saboteurs. One may be sure that, as Congress and the media wax rhetorical about the largely imaginary threat to liberty posed by our own FBI and CIA, neither the terrorists nor the Kremlin will be indulging in any agonizing re-appraisals of their methods and tactics. □

## AMONG THE INTELLECTUALOIDS

by A. James McAdams



### Bishops to the Barricades

The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States (PECUSA) is one of America's wealthiest and most powerful denominations; it is also one heavily swayed by the winds of our country's portside *Zeitgeist*. In recent years, leading representatives of PECUSA have embroiled the Church in such extra-sacred activities as the funding of student radicals and black militants. A year and a half ago the Church took one of the most radical theological steps of the century when it voted to admit women to its priesthood and to alter substantially its traditional liturgy. Now PECUSA-watchers are predicting that the Church will use its 1979 National Convention to open the doors of the priesthood to homosexuals and possibly even sanction homosexual marriage.

Spearheading this effort to transform Church practice are the Episcopal publications, the most important of which is the voice of the national Church, *The Episcopalian*. Although claiming to speak equally for all Episcopal interests, *The Episcopalian* has actually been leading a subtle campaign over the years for doctrinal revision and societal change. This effort has been reinforced by countless smaller diocesan and parish publications which lobby for similar concerns through folksy, down-to-earth appeals on the level of the grass roots. More explicitly radical publications also play a role. Of these, the most notable is *The Witness*, a recent issue of

which paints a flattering picture of Castro's Cuba and defends the Puerto Rican terrorists Maria Cueto and Raisa Nemikin (both members of PECUSA's National Commission on Hispanic Affairs). *The Witness* is backed up by several special-interest publications, the best known of which is *Integrity*, the very vocal and at times astonishingly uninhibited organ of the gay set.

The most revealing of these publications, however, is the recently released *Witness*-sponsored "Study/Action Guide," *Struggling With the System: Probing Alternatives* (available for \$5.75 from *The Witness*, Box 359, Ambler, PA 19002). The political orientation of this collection of articles and commentary, which consistently rivals even Hans Küng in theologic innovation, is unabashedly radical, though this radicalism is ill-served by the fact that the "Guide's" content often reflects the political acumen of a college sophomore taking his first course in Marxism. Nevertheless, the mere fact that the collection was edited by an Episcopal bishop (Robert L. DeWitt), and published by an outfit whose board of directors includes five other bishops (Morris Arnold, Lloyd Gressle, John Hines, John Krumm, and Brooke Mosley), should alert us that theology has taken an interesting turn in the upper reaches of the Episcopal hierarchy.

In fact, *Struggling With the System* was never intended to be merely an intellectual exercise. According to its editors, the "Study/Action Guide" was prepared to assist "local groups"—specifically, cells of 10-12 Christian activists assembling for

discussion at regular intervals in each other's homes—"in their struggle to understand the nature of American oppression and to explore ways out of it." In these pages we learn that oppression and its attendant evils (poverty, inflation, unemployment, sexism) have too often been blamed on the failings of individuals, when the root cause of such injustice is really the systemic malfunction of American institutions. These institutions, we are told, must be understood, corrected, abolished if necessary, and it is precisely the function of the "Guide" to show how this can be accomplished.

The first question the editors ask is an easy one: "What's Wrong With Life in the United States?" The answer: Monopoly Capitalism. "God's law says that the wealth of the world should be shared by all, and should never form oppressive monopolies." But American monopolies and kindred demon spirits are hard at work contravening God's will. To prove the point, the editors provide an article on the "alienating" and "profit-hungry" New York Telephone Company and a piece by the infamous Harvard theologian, Harvey Cox; on "Barbie Doll and the Spectre of Cultural Imperialism." Still another article purports to explain the origins of the capitalist world "empire," appealing to such expansive generalizations as "The underdevelopment of the 'Third World' is the direct result of its being incorporated, for the last 400 years, into the global capitalist system."

Still, "What Right Does the Church Have to Speak About These Things?"

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According to our editors, every right in the world. The problem is that the Church has for too long been directed by merely "liberal" Christians, who have failed "to define the real sources of sin in our time [and] to provide a compelling moral mandate for radical change and real hope for the future." The liberal, it seems, looks for reform and reconciliation within the system, but "the truth of the matter is that one cannot expect to improve a system that is inherently irrational and unjust." The enlightened Christian knows that he must be "uncompromisingly active" in his struggle to shape the world, and he can be assured that the moral precedents for his own radicalism have already been set by the likes of Jesus Christ, the Church League for Industrial Democracy, the Philadelphia Task Force for Women and Religion, and Gustavo Gutierrez. It is written: "Political action is *not* secular and suspect; it is the body of the faithful engaged in the mission of Christ." It is good to liberate man spiritually, but even better to liberate him socially, economically, and politically, too.

But "What is the 'Capitalist System'?" Our editors seem satisfied with a straightforward, 19th-century Marxian critique. "Capitalism can be characterized as a particular mode of production in which labor becomes a commodity like any other object of exchange." Further, "in the last 500 years the central tendency of history has been the growing separation of producers from the means of production and their transformation into proletarians." Capitalism is inefficient and wasteful; it is irrational; it is unjust. It is a notorious breeder of sexism, and it fosters racism which "is useful to capitalism because it obfuscates class interests and provides a convenient psychological outlet for worker frustration, thereby reinforcing the existing class structure."

We all want to know, "Is There an Alternative?" Happily, our editors think there is. "Socialism will remedy the major evils of capitalism, abolish exploitation, poverty, insecurity, and war, and make for greater welfare and happiness of man." But a necessary dose of realism must accompany this optimistic countenance, for the socialist road is a hard one: "Socialism does not mean piecemeal patchwork reform of capitalism. It means revolutionary change—the reconstruction of society along entirely different lines." Evidently, our editors see themselves as acutely aware of this fact, and they invoke worthy examples of revolutionary socialism which may be useful in the radical reconstruction of our own society. In particular, the Chinese experiment intrigues them. "It is clear," one Episcopal priest argues, "that the Chinese success in transforming their economy and way of life is due to more than a central authority. True, politics is pervasive, but it [seems] to be a participatory politics—far more so than ours." In another article, this writer notes that

"God's creation is still unfolding; His promises are being fulfilled in China and in today's world." What one still wants to know is, which promises?

What is one to make of this "Study/Action Guide"? On impulse, we might want to conclude that Marxists have taken over the Episcopal Church and that a serious revolutionary threat looms imminent. But I doubt that true Marxists (if there still be such creatures) would really want to associate themselves with publications like *Struggling With the System*. If this is Marxism, it is do-gooding Marxism of the pulpit, the armchair, and the pool-side; it is Sunday-afternoon-following-Mass-on-the-yacht-with-cocktail-and-guilty-conscience-in-hand Marxism; and in so many respects, it is just plain nonsense.

What makes the publication of such foolishness so remarkable—and annoying—is

that it comes to us under the auspices of men who should know better and who can rightly be expected to manifest behavior befitting their high stations. These are men to whom thousands of Americans look for daily guidance in matters of faith and morals. In representing a church, they are entrusted with the preservation of something which is precious to the lives of many. When they act in an irresponsible and unthinking manner—as they have in permitting the publication of this tract—they betray that trust and threaten to violate something—a tradition and a faith—which is considerably more important than their own utopian fantasies.

Undoubtedly, there are Episcopalians who will take *Struggling With the System* and related publications quite seriously. Some may be fooled, taking what they read to be the gospel truth about American society and about the nature of Christian



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activity within that society. Others, not so fooled, may pack up their bags in disgust and leave the Church. Either way, something is clearly amiss, for which the Church's highest authorities, its bishops, are at least partly responsible.

The point is that there really is no place for publications of this sort within the Church, or at least by Church authorities. If bishops or priests have private dreams of being "little Lenins," they would do well

to keep their dialectical confessions to the psychiatrist's couch. *Struggling With the System, The Witness, Integrity*, and their counterparts in other churches—pick your own house of worship—only make a mockery of religious activity.

Naturally, there is a place for the religiously-motivated criticism of modern society. Religion, after all, does have something to do with human involvement in the world, and American life—its

politics, its economy, its culture—is hardly above criticism. Yet when publications like these choose to court muddled thinking and puerile crusading, as has become their wont, religious activity becomes distorted; social criticism, irresponsible and perverse. However amusing we may find these publications at times, they nevertheless tend to wreak havoc upon the traditions, religious and otherwise, which have shaped our world. □

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John Nollson

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## Author's Reply

While I know it is bad form to respond to a review of one's work, Thatcher Grubell, in his review of my new collection of short pieces (*The Cultural Milieux in the Space-Time Continuum: Essays on the Emerging Aesthetic of the Nth Dimension*, Oral Roberts University Press, xvii + 679 pp., \$18.98), makes so many errors of fact that I have to wonder whether he bothered to read the book.

Indeed, so numerous are his blunders, his misinterpretations, his misconstruals, his misconstructions that a complete listing of them would take me more time than I have available.

Just consider his bigoted blast at the genre. Grubell writes: "Nollson's work is proof-positive: short pieces got no reason to live." Is this not the tip-off that the book will get no fair hearing from such a low-grade wiseacre? And why does he claim that my essay "Who Buys Those Little Pewter Statues From the Franklin Mint Anyway?" skirts the real issue? If he had read the footnotes, he would have seen my reference to the presence of the Franklin Mint in *Philadelphia*. Not *Topeka*, as he claims.

But these are petty details. I maintain throughout that the aesthetic of the Nth Dimension will almost certainly be characterized by what I choose to call *truberance*. This is a wholly new and original concept, not just a seventh kind of irony. Grubell should know better. If I believed that the aesthetic of the various dimensions, beginning with the first and running right on through infinity to the Nth, could be comprehended by kinds of irony—or at least dissonance—I would have so numbered the ironies, so that in the Nth Dimension, there would be N kinds of irony. Surely not seven. And that is precisely why I had to invent the notion of *truberance*, the means whereby the plastic arts, the literary arts,

the cinematic arts, and the purely technological arts like laser-light shows will surely become mirror images of themselves when seen from the *other side* of a black hole.

Anti-sculpture will not appear, accordingly, until it can be fabricated from antimatter, not pewter. Hence the essay on the output of the Franklin Mint. But Grubell is so dense that he cannot make the simplest distinction between an argument and its own refutation.

I argue, further, that one of the central benefits of *truberance*, both as a real fact and as an analytic convention, is its prediction that the aesthetic world of the Nth Dimension will be characterized not merely by a unity of the arts, but by a new companionability among artists themselves. Fistfights, backbiting, lovers' quarrels, and the like will disappear. The basic antagonism will vanish. Why?

As I write on p. 419: "Our life in the world of three dimensions allows us to imagine the existence of, at the most, three sexes: homosexuality, bisexuality, and unisexuality. Trisexuality is a logical possibility. In the fourth dimension, tetrasexuality appears, followed by penta-, hexa-, septa-, octo-, nona-, and decasexuality as we move on out the old space warp. It is therefore inevitable that the Nth Dimension will be characterized by Nsexuality, or anti-sexuality, precisely the opposite of the way things are now. True, advanced computers will be required to keep track of the N sexes, their permutations, combinations, and possibilities, but we are well enough prepared for that. In fact, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology already has an artificial intelligence laboratory."

It is a reflection on Grubell's lack of intellectual potency that he can, by his own admission, comprehend the existence of no more than five sexes. Beyond that, he

starts to have trouble with his roommates. But I do not see why he cannot cope with this problem without venting his spleen on decent and diligent scholars who are just trying to earn an honest living.

But let us suppose, just for a moment, that I am wrong and that Grubell is right. Even this charitable assumption cannot explain his perverse insistence that my work ought to be grouped with an earlier school of rhetoricians whose theories took hold in suburban Milwaukee in the late 1930s.

The Milwaukee Modalists, as they have come to be called, were nothing but a splinter group, intellectually irrelevant and analytically trivial. If it were otherwise, they would have moved to New York, or at least Chicago, where they would have become a school and not a forgotten sect. It is the worst form of libel to link me with a group of dull Protestants who have failed to produce a single literary autobiography of any merit. In fact, I have a letter from the titular head of the Modalists—his thoroughly conventional name escapes me—wherein he asserts that I have nothing to do with them, nor they with me. How much longer will it take before intellectual life in this country is finally rid of the McCarthyist tactic of guilt by association?

Perhaps we are on to something. Grubell's review of my book is laced with spite, envy, jealousy, resentment, bile, venom, gall, phlegm, vulgarity, gelatin, rancor, obduracy, stinginess, and escarole. He is neither sure-witted nor sure-handed nor sure-footed but, like a lumbering podiatrist, he tramples on every canon of intellectual decency. He slaps his tail against the tide of learning, like a baleen whale protesting the inevitability of his own extinction. He is, in sum, a typically unrepentant Dreyfusard—or so he would have us think.

What else does he have to hide? □