
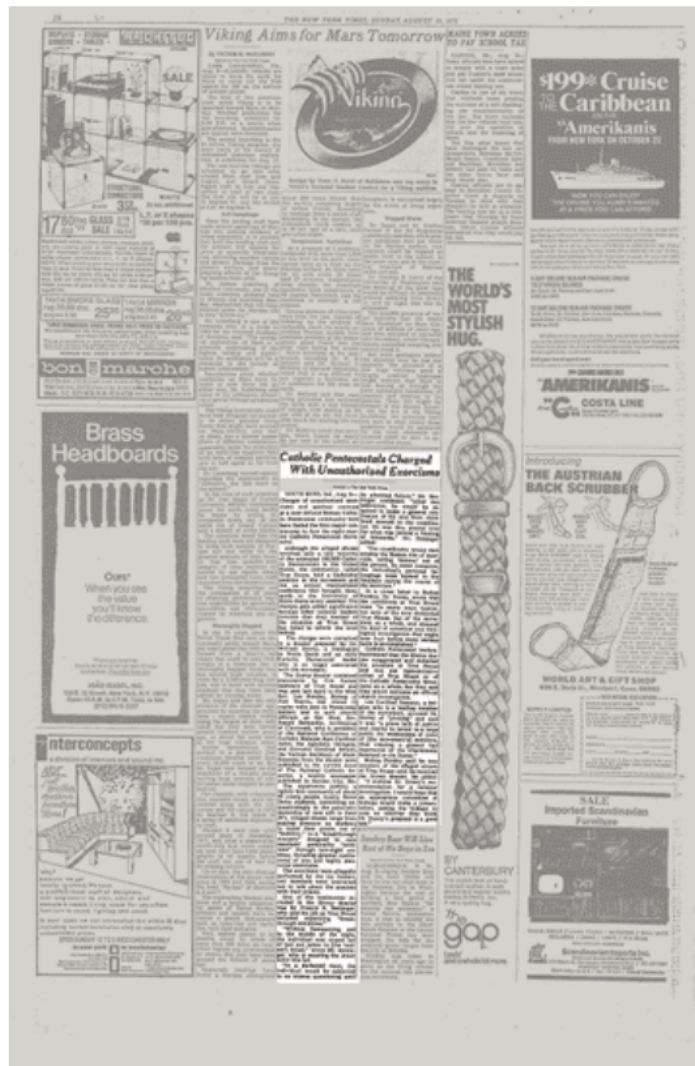


Catholic Pentecostals Charged With Unauthorized Exorcisms

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SOUTH BEND, Ind., Aug. 9—Charges of unauthorized exorcisms and spiritual coercion at a now defunct Roman Catholic Pentecostal community here have fueled the first major controversy to face the eight-year-old Catholic Pentecostal movement.

Although the alleged abuses involved only a tiny minority of the estimated 100,000 Catholic Pentecostals in the United States, the community, called True House, held a leadership position in the movement and ran an annual international conference that brought thousands to the University of Notre Dame every summer. The charges gain added significance because other national leaders concede that they learned of the situation at True House but failed to inform the local bishop.

The charges were contained in a dossier prepared by Dr. William Storey, a theologian at Notre Dame and an early Catholic Pentecostal leader who is no longer associated with the movement.

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The Storey dossier contained statements by five former members of True House and was sent last April to the Most Rev. Leo Pursley, Bishop of Fort Wayne, Ind. About 12 copies were sent to Pentecostal leaders and to such church officials as the Most Rev. Joseph Bernardin, Archbishop, of Cincinnati, who is president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops; Jean Cardinal Jadot, the Apostolic Delegate, and Giovanni Cardinal Benelli, the Vatican Secretary of State. Excerpts from the dossier were published in the current issue of The National Catholic Reporter, a weekly newspaper published in Kansas City, Mo.

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The statements portray a tightly knit community of about 60 young people, mostly Notre Dame students, submitting unquestioningly to the autocratic leadership of men still in their 20's. Alleged abuses range from putting pressure on students to lower their grades out of “humility,” to a “breakthrough ministry” designed to cure members' personality “problems” through late-night sessions, including general confessions of sins and highly emotional exorcisms.

The exorcisms were allegedly performed by the lay leaders, and members were instructed not to talk about the sessions with their priests.

One of the testimonies included in the Storey dossier was by Francis R. Hettinger, who said his job at True House included organizing “breakthrough ministries.

“Without forewarning, and in the middle of the night, the individual was roused out of bed and taken to [the leaders'] house,” wrote Mr. Hettinger, who is entering the Jesuit order this fall.

“In a darkened room, the individual would be subjected to an intense questioning until he admitted failure,” Mr. Hettinger continued. “After this admission, he would be required to make a general confession of his sins from childhood onward to the coordinator. He was then prayed over for what was termed a ‘healing of memoribs,’” Mr. Hettinger added:

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“The coordinator would then employ the Roman rite of exorcism, calling ‘demons’ out of the person. In some instances, the individual's personal belongings were burned in the fireplace during the course of the exorcism.”

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In a cover letter to Bishop Pursley, Dr. Storey wrote that the conditions at True House were “in many ways typical, not only of the now disbanded True House, but of the movement as a whole, and demand the kind of canonical and theological investigation that might bear fruit before more serious harm is accomplished.”

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Catholic Pentecostal leaders maintained that the Storey dossier exaggerated and distorted the situation at True House and was not representative either of True House or of the Catholic Pentecostal Movement as a whole, but they said they would welcome an official church investigation.

Leo Cardinal Suenens, a Belgian who is a leading member of the movement, accused Dr. Storey of “plotting” and said it was “a grave lack of justice and charity to reveal to a large public the weaknesses of some of [the movement's] members, thus creating a general bad impression of the Charismatic Renewal in the States.”

Bishop Pursley said he was unaware of the alleged abuses at True House until he received the Storey dossier. He added: “I endorse Dr. Storey's recommendation for a national investigation. I would hope that an appropriate committee of bishops would make a presentation, asking the bishops to vote on whether they think Dr. Storey's proposal is a good one.”



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