

## Violence Appalls Religious Leaders

New York

Something's wrong with us, something blind, hard and wanton which triggers the fury and the fanatic's bullets, religious leaders said in talking about violence in the United States.

The death of Senator Robert F. Kennedy, and other recent destructive upheavals and deaths are evidence they said, of both a moral sickness and smoldering hostilities pervading American society.

"We've lost the sense of the sanctity of life," Rabbi Dr. Abraham Heschel, a noted Biblical scholar, said. "We've become a nation of cynics, master debunkers of quality, nobility and the great values.

"We've surrendered our religious traditions for a cheap, self-regulating attitude which assumes it has no need of higher laws. It's a conspiracy of all of us. We've all failed."

It is this general environment of shattered standards, strong-arm tactics and undisciplined behavior — not just the mania of individual perpetrators — which the religious thinkers cited as a catalyst to the violent acts.

"Statistically, the number that commit the acts are small, but they're inclined to do it by the whole atmosphere of brute force," said the Rev. Robert McNamara, a Fordham University sociologist.

"We're sick, sick, sick. We've allowed the mass entertainment media, television, movies and comic books, to glorify violence in a terribly unhealthy way. The amount of sadism and masochism is incredible."

Others cited the growth of militarism including the Vietnam war, the trend toward permissiveness and the over-all mechanization of life as engendering intense frustrations coupled with exploding disorder.

"The crushing burden of our enormously complex social structures produces an inner tension and a sense of helplessness that makes people feel threatened and to react violent," said the Rev. Avery Dulles of the Jesuits' Woodstock College in Maryland.

"It's a perilous time. We're going to have to find some more orderly way of channeling the new dynamics of change."

The widespread availability of arms also was seen as accommodating the outbreaks of sniper fire in cities and assassinations, including those of President John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King.

"The ease with which deadly weapons can be obtained in this country is really shocking," said the Rev. John Macquarrie, a British-born Anglican now teaching at Union Theological Seminary.

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