

# The Gospel

## According to McLuhan

BY THE  
EDITORS

Pennsylvania  
Notebook

GET with it, said the philosopher of pop, a tall, gray-haired professor named Herbert Marshall McLuhan.

Type is out. TV is in. Modern communications are altering the world before your very eyes. "The message is the medium"; the way information is presented is at least as important as the information itself.

Thus overturning the usual assumptions about communications, Dr. McLuhan began the second annual A.V.B. Geoghegan Lecture this spring at the Annenberg School. He spoke to an audience of 600 which overflowed into classrooms equipped with closed-circuit television. Media executives in three-piece suits sat beside mods in Carnaby Street clothes. Beautifully coiffed matrons squeezed next to students who hadn't visited a barber all term. The derisive and the disciples, they all came making it seem that Dr. McLuhan is himself unquestionably "camp." Moreover, like it or not, as Richard Schickel once pointed out in *Harper's*, the eclectic Canadian professor appears on his way to becoming "one of those annoying 'seminal' thinkers whose arguments you must adapt, incorporate, or dispose of" before pressing on.

Batman is a kind of hero for Dr. McLuhan. The video comic strip through which Bruce Wayne capers represents the "mosaic" style of organization the Geoghegan Lecturer believes is the quintessence of electronic technology. BANG! SLAM! POW! CRUNCH! There is no gradation of sound, Batman is a "happening" in which everything occurs at once. In its simultaneousness, therefore, this sort of "instant communications" is the diametrical opposite of the printed word which by its very nature tends to reduce everything to the linear and the sequential. For Dr. McLuhan, Johann Gutenberg emerges as a kind of villain. The Riddler, as it were, who in inventing movable type led

man away from whole and valid experience into a world of fragmentation and rationalization where human beings are, at best, detached and, at worst, alienated from their environment.

Pre-literate people were (and are), in Dr. McLuhan's view, involved in the universe in a way that has always escaped the scribbler. Dependent on intuition and emotion rather than logic to make sense out of things, the noble savage experienced life directly. Through touch and taste and smell he partook of the world about him, achieving a "balanced orchestration of the senses" which the invention of the phonetic alphabet upset. The University of Toronto professor said that the printed line became the organizing principle of Western man's life. It caused him to place the highest value upon abstract thought, and made him capable of action "without reaction or involvement."

Marshall McLuhan's principal thesis is that electronic technology is reversing this trend toward nearly total objectivity. Television, he believes, has reduced the world to a "global village." Like their primitive ancestors, video fans experience life firsthand. Little surface data is given them, so they are forced to involve themselves deeply in order to perceive hidden meanings. "The audience," he said, "becomes the screen not the camera." Every viewer is a participant; he's part of the act. And Dr. McLuhan even went on to predict audience participation in the "top-level solution of top-level problems in prime time." Apparently he anticipates citizens in their easy chairs giving the National Security Council a hand.

You say you figured out how Goldfinger rigged those canasta games before Bond did, but you just can't see yourself being much help to J. Edgar Hoover. Well, that's typical, according to Dr. McLuhan. "People," he ex-

plained, "are always perceiving the old environment and missing the new one." This rear-view mirror outlook is exemplified, he said, by movies shown on television. Here we have a medium with seemingly limitless possibilities for "involving" its audience deeply and immediately in the whole world, and we sit around following the storyline of ancient Bogart films. Dr. McLuhan suggests that we'd be better off to study contemporary forms while they're having their maximal effect instead of blithely equating the traditional with art.

In his view, art is a kind of DEW line, a Distant Early Warning system that signals changes in culture. Baudelaire and Joyce served notice of the end of "the era of literature as such," he said, when they founded literary modernism. Abstract expressionism is likewise an ensign as are the polyphonic scores of Satie or Schoenberg. Even Andy Warhole's nightclub, *The Plastic Inevitable*, and Rudi Gernreich's vinyl fashions qualify as semaphors in Dr. McLuhan's communications theory which explains why the "camp" followers have adopted the 54-year-old Canadian as an "oracle of pop."

By training, Marshall McLuhan is a man of letters. A onetime English professor, he studied at Cambridge and his first teaching job was at the University of Wisconsin. Now director of the Center for Culture and Technology at the University of Toronto, he presides over what amounts to an interdisciplinary seminar that is constantly in session. And it is here, more than anywhere else, that he tests his ideas, trying them on and discarding them, it often seems, like a lady before a counter filled with hats.

The author of three books, *Mechanical Bridge*, *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, and *Understanding Media*, Dr. McLuhan has been harshly treated by literary critics. He was called "fuzzy-

*Continued on page 37*

Institute of Technology for six years, and before that post was professor at George Washington University for two years. His bachelor's in chemistry (1927), master's in physics (1933), and doctorate in physics (1935) were all awarded by the University of California at Berkeley.

**Faculty.** Dr. John M. Marshall, Philadelphia, professor of anatomy at the University's School of Medicine, in an automobile accident in Uganda, Africa; April 19. Dr. Marshall had been in Africa since last July on a Guggenheim Fellowship and was teaching at Makerere Medical College, Kampala, Uganda, an international medical school serving Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. He joined the medical faculty at Pennsylvania in 1953 as assistant professor. He received a career development award from the U. S. Public Health Service in 1960. He had specialized in fundamental cytochemical studies in various types of cells, including those in the pituitary

## NOTEBOOK

*Continued from page 3*

gland, pancreas, muscle, and amoeba. He was the author of numerous scientific articles and was an internationally known scholar in protein and cytochemical research. He was graduated from Rice Institute (Houston, Tex.) in 1941 and received his master of science (1948), M.D. (cum laude, 1950), and Ph.D. degrees (1953) from the University of Illinois.

'94 C, '99 M. Dr. Thomas S. Githens, Philadelphia, 87-year-old retired physician and authority on mosses; April 10. Dr. Githens did research at the Rockefeller Institute in New York and then became associated with the H. K. Mulford Co., which later became part of Merck Sharp & Dohme. He was co-author of a text used in many medical schools, and during the Second World War wrote pamphlets for the Government on poisonous plants of Africa. He was a consultant on the moss collection at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.

'95 C, '99 Gr. Dr. Victor W. Dippell, Lancaster, March 30.

'99 PD. Dr. Franklin Rightmire, Sea Girt, N. J., March 17.

'00 M. Dr. Richard P. Williams, Miami-burg, Ohio, April 1.

'00 MC. Dr. Nelson M. Brinkerhoff, Upper Darby, an ophthalmologist; April 20.

'01 L. Edwin C. Emhardt, Philadelphia, retired attorney, real estate man, and former city official and state representative; May 8. Emhardt became supervisor of the Bureau of Weights and Measures in 1934 while he was a member of the State Legislature. He was a former special counsel for the State Banking Association.

'01 M. Dr. John R. Maxwell, Orlando, Fla., December 12, 1965.

'02 V. Dr. Kenneth E. Paget, Sussex, England, January 25.

'03 C. T. Carlyle Jones, Yonkers, N. Y., a retired lawyer who had worked in the legal department of the Aetna Life Insurance Company for 30 years, retiring about 1950; May 1.

'04 D. Dr. William W. Leonard, Norwich, Conn., August 31, 1965.

'04 D. Dr. Francis P. McEnerney, Derby, Conn., November 3, 1965.

'05 D. Dr. Willard H. Richards, Northampton, March 25.

'06 Ar. Harry L. Porter, Cleveland Heights, Ohio, a retired chief architect for H. K. Ferguson Inc., structural engineers; April 18. Porter retired in 1952 and had been an active member of the University's Cleveland Alumni Club.

'06 CE. Col. Ridgway P. Smith, Yonkers, N. Y., April 10.

'07 D. Dr. George A. Burdick, Syracuse, N. Y., March 30.

'08 C, '10 L. Barry H. Hepburn, Philadelphia, prominent retired attorney who was a member of the firm of Hepburn & Hepburn, established by his father, W. Horace Hepburn, in 1880; April 19. Hepburn practiced law for 55 years before retiring last December 1. He was Deputy Attorney General of Pennsylvania during the administration of Governor George Earle and formerly was chief counsel for the State Labor Relations Board.

'08 C, '11 L. H. Harrison Smith, Philadel-

phian, March 31.

'08 Ev. Frank C. Eves, Denver, Colo., March 15, 1965.

'08 PD. Dr. Arthur C. Dietrick, Hoboken, N. J., March 8.

'08 V. Dr. Benjamin Price, West Chester, veterinarian and former Chester County treasurer; April 12. Dr. Price was a director of the First National Bank of Chester and a member of the board of managers of the Chester County Hospital. He served as chief veterinarian at horse shows at Devon, Rose-tree, Radnor Hunt, and elsewhere, and as judge in shows in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, and New Jersey. He was also on the advisory board of the University's School of Veterinary Medicine.

'09 Gr. Dr. Herbert C. Bell, Middletown, Conn., former mayor of Middletown and for 20 years professor of history at Wesleyan University; April 12. Dr. Bell came to the United States from Canada in 1903. He was an instructor in history at the University of Wisconsin from 1909 to 1912 and professor of history at Bowdoin College from 1912 to 1926, except for an absence from 1917 until 1919 when he served in the American Expeditionary Force in World War I. He was commissioned an officer in military intelligence, later being promoted to captain, and received a personal citation from General John Pershing for outstanding service. Following the war he worked with General Bliss on some of the detail in connection with the formation of the League of Nations and for some time was

gland, pancreas, muscle, and amoeba. He was the author of numerous scientific articles and was an internationally known scholar in protein and cytochemical research. He was graduated from Rice Institute (Houston, Tex.) in 1941 and received his master of science (1948), M.D. (cum laude, 1950), and Ph.D. degrees (1953) from the University of Illinois.

'94 C, '99 M. Dr. Thomas S. Githens, Philadelphia, 87-year-old retired physician and authority on mosses; April 10. Dr. Githens did research at the Rockefeller Institute in New York and then became associated with the H. K. Mulford Co., which later became part of Merck Sharp & Dohme. He was co-author of a text used in many medical schools, and during the Second World War wrote pamphlets for the Government on poisonous plants of Africa. He was a consultant on the moss collection at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.

'95 C, '99 Gr. Dr. Victor W. Dippell, Lancaster, March 30.

'99 PD. Dr. Franklin Rightmire, Sea Girt, N. J., March 17.

'00 M. Dr. Richard P. Williams, Miami-burg, Ohio, April 1.

'00 MC. Dr. Nelson M. Brinkerhoff, Upper Darby, an ophthalmologist; April 20.

'01 L. Edwin C. Emhardt, Philadelphia, retired attorney, real estate man, and former city official and state representative; May 8. Emhardt became supervisor of the Bureau of Weights and Measures in 1934 while he was a member of the State Legislature. He was a former special counsel for the State Banking Association.

'01 M. Dr. John R. Maxwell, Orlando, Fla., December 12, 1965.

'02 V. Dr. Kenneth E. Paget, Sussex, England, January 25.

'03 C. T. Carlyle Jones, Yonkers, N. Y., a retired lawyer who had worked in the legal department of the Aetna Life Insurance Company for 30 years, retiring about 1950; May 1.

'04 D. Dr. William W. Leonard, Norwich, Conn., August 31, 1965.

'04 D. Dr. Francis P. McEnerney, Derby, Conn., November 3, 1965.

'05 D. Dr. Willard H. Richards, Northampton, March 25.

'06 Ar. Harry L. Porter, Cleveland Heights, Ohio, a retired chief architect for H. K. Ferguson Inc., structural engineers; April 18. Porter retired in 1952 and had been an active member of the University's Cleveland Alumni Club.

'06 CE. Col. Ridgway P. Smith, Yonkers, N. Y., April 10.

'07 D. Dr. George A. Burdick, Syracuse, N. Y., March 30.

'08 C, '10 L. Barry H. Hepburn, Philadelphia, prominent retired attorney who was a member of the firm of Hepburn & Hepburn, established by his father, W. Horace Hepburn, in 1880; April 19. Hepburn practiced law for 55 years before retiring last December 1. He was Deputy Attorney General of Pennsylvania during the administration of Governor George Earle and formerly was chief counsel for the State Labor Relations Board.

'08 C, '11 L. H. Harrison Smith, Philadel-

phia, March 31.

'08 Ev. Frank C. Eves, Denver, Colo., March 15, 1965.

'08 PD. Dr. Arthur C. Dietrick, Hoboken, N. J., March 8.

'08 V. Dr. Benjamin Price, West Chester, veterinarian and former Chester County treasurer; April 12. Dr. Price was a director of the First National Bank of Chester and a member of the board of managers of the Chester County Hospital. He served as chief veterinarian at horse shows at Devon, Rose-tree, Radnor Hunt, and elsewhere, and as judge in shows in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, and New Jersey. He was also on the advisory board of the University's School of Veterinary Medicine.

'09 Gr. Dr. Herbert C. Bell, Middletown, Conn., former mayor of Middletown and for 20 years professor of history at Wesleyan University; April 12. Dr. Bell came to the United States from Canada in 1903. He was an instructor in history at the University of Wisconsin from 1909 to 1912 and professor of history at Bowdoin College from 1912 to 1926, except for an absence from 1917 until 1919 when he served in the American Expeditionary Force in World War I. He was commissioned an officer in military intelligence, later being promoted to captain, and received a personal citation from General John Pershing for outstanding service. Following the war he worked with General Bliss on some of the detail in connection with the formation of the League of Nations and for some time was

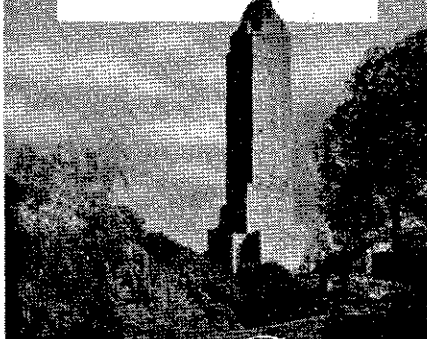
*Exquisite  
Accommodations  
in New York*

AVAILABLE FOR  
TRANSIENT OCCUPANCY

Single Rooms \$24-\$30  
Double Rooms \$28-\$36  
Two Room Suites from \$46

Adjacent to smart shops.  
Convenient to theatres.

TELEPHONE (212) TE 8-8000  
TWX 710-581-27644



*Hotel Pierre*  
OVERLOOKING CENTRAL PARK  
FIFTH AVE. at 61st ST. • NEW YORK 10021