

Why Catholics Put Up With Catholic Bashing

by Deal Hudson, Crisis Magazine Editor & Publisher

(Catalyst 5/1999)

In spite of the success of the Catholic League, two questions need to be answered: 1) Why is Catholic bashing is the only acceptable prejudice left in the United States? 2) Why do Catholics continue to put up with it?

So I decided to put these question to some experts, all regular contributors to *Crisismagazine*. Here is what they said in their own words.

Hadley Arkes: "Catholics have gradually accepted the premises of the other side by absorbing the tonality and the manners of the prejudice. So many Catholics are untutored in their faith that they respond positively to the cultural cues of modern liberalism."

Ralph McInerny: "The lack of concern among Catholics is probably an extension of their self-loathing. This is self-inflicted by self-doubt has created a disposition to start apologizing the moment you hear any criticism." There is clearly a failure of nerve among Catholics and no longer much gratitude for the gift of the Church."

Robert Royal: "Catholics are generally doing well in America; they like America, and they think anti-Catholicism is a kind of fringe position. They do not realize how the prejudices spread by the media create a real threat to the faith."

Fr. James Schall: "So many are weak in their faith they do not see the very fact of Catholic bashing. With the general decline of knowledge about the faith, and move toward false

tolerance, there is little willingness to admit that Catholic doctrines make them different.”

Fr. George Rutler: “Catholics for the last several generations have been trained to melt into the fabric of society, so it is very threatening to be considered counter-cultural. Catholics don’t want to rock the boat any more than is necessary.”

George Marlin: “In New York, Catholic bashing is considered chic, and so-called Catholic politicians are too gutless and too embarrassed to stand up for their faith, let alone punish the bashers. What it comes down to is that Catholics are embarrassed; they want to be part of the ‘in’ crowd, part of the upper crust where they think they will be welcome by going along with the flow of anti-Catholic sentiment. But they are not welcome there, and they will never be accepted.”

Ann Burleigh: “People pick their battles carefully, what they will go to the mat for. Catholics are often confident that they have a fuller truth, so bashing doesn’t seem to really matter. People want to concentrate on the things they can do to evangelize, so you let the chips fall where they may. The prejudice is very real but you can’t allow yourself to get bitter.”

Jody Bottum: “We are the Catholic, which means universal, Church. It is really hard to think of ourselves as a minority. The Catholic Church is also very old; we have seen it come and seen it go, and learned to take the long term view of things. Catholics in America aren’t bothered by it, so they learned to look past it.”

Michael Uhlmann: “There is quite a bit of nativism in American political culture. The nineteenth-century arrival of Catholic immigrants challenged the assumption that America was a Protestant culture. Nativism resurfaced Blaine Amendment to ban public funding of private schools, but the real target was Catholic schools.”

Michael Novak: “It would be surprising if they didn’t hate the Church. Most people define themselves in relation to Catholicism. They call themselves “enlightened” in relation to the Middle Ages; “Protestants” are defined in relation to the Catholic experience. Both unbelievers and other Christians define themselves in relation to the Church. All of our history books have a built-in anti-Catholic bias.”

There are probably many more reasons that Catholics sit passively by while their faith and their pope are being mocked on television, the stage, news programming, and in the movies. At the same time we are protesting the treatment of Catholics in the public square, we should be trying to understand the roots of our own apathy. One doubts that Catholic bashing would be remain so prevalent if Catholics themselves were tired of it.

Catholicism and the Greatest Generation

by William A. Donohue

(Catalyst 3/1999)

In a new book, NBC anchorman Tom Brokaw argues that those Americans who came of age during the Depression and the Second World War constitute our “greatest generation.” Though I was not of that generation (I am one of those “baby boomers”), I would agree: there was something very special about that generation, and it is one that should make all Americans proud.

Brokaw is right to say that “This generation was united not

only by common purpose, but also by common values—duty, honor, economy, courage, service, love of family and country, and above all, responsibility for oneself.” Sounds remarkably like my Uncle Johnny, the Fordham graduate who fought in World War II. Happily, he still epitomizes the virtues Brokaw cited.

Brokaw’s book is a snapshot look at a cross-section of the lives of ordinary Americans who made it the “greatest generation.” The question remains, however, “What made these men and women so great?” What precisely was it that allowed them to embody such noble values? Clearly there were many contributing factors, but surely among them was the role that Catholicism played in the lives of non-Catholics, as well as Catholics.

The values that Brokaw discusses bear a striking resemblance to what are at root Catholic properties. Communitarian in nature, they are values that place the individual in a subordinate position to such greater social interests as family, community and nation. The communitarian element in Catholic social teaching is plain to see and is given premium status in its emphasis on self-denial: it is from this basis that duty, responsibility and service spring.

While Catholicism was not alone in fostering common values in the 1930s and 1940s, it certainly played a significant role in affecting the cultural landscape. Even those who weren’t Catholic experienced the effect of Catholic moral teaching, and this was especially true of those in the world of publishing, film, broadcasting, education and health. And because these are realms of society that provide no escape, the Catholic impact on the culture was palpable.

If it is true that the cultural ascendancy of Catholicism allowed for considerable social solidarity, it is also true that social cohesion was abetted by both the Depression and the Second World War: the war helped unite the country in a way we haven’t witnessed since, and it came on the heels of

the Depression, which, despite its heartache, also provided for a communitarian spirit. These were tough times, but they were also times of social bonding.

This was a period in American history when Catholicism “went public.” Epitomized by “public Catholics” like Dennis Cardinal Dougherty, the Archbishop of Philadelphia, the Catholic Church in America had finally hit stride. Those who weren’t Catholic also got a chance to be introduced to the Church via Hollywood. In 1938, Americans met Father Flanagan (courtesy of Spencer Tracy) in the movie, “Boys Town.” Pat O’Brien, Karl Malden, Gregory Peck, Barry Fitzgerald and Bing Crosby tutored the public about the lives of other priests as well, projecting the very values that so impress Brokaw.

“Greatest generation” Catholics took their religion seriously. According to Charles Morris, the Philadelphia of the 1930s and 1940s posted a compliance rate with the Easter duty of approximately 99 percent. “Almost all Catholic children went to parochial elementary schools, and almost two-thirds went to Catholic high schools,” says Morris. In addition, “It was not uncommon for the majority of adults to belong to parish organizations like the Sodality and Holy Name Society.” This chapter of our history, when the Forty Hours’ vigil for the Blessed Sacrament was common, and Monday-night novenas were attended by ten thousand people in one parish, is labeled by Morris as “Triumphal-era” Catholicism.

The values that were dominant in the culture, such as those cited by Brokaw, were given public expression by this newly-charged Catholicism. After all, it was the values of duty, honor, service, love of family and country that were taught in the schools, values that found reinforcement in the Baltimore Catechism. And Brokaw’s most celebrated value—responsibility for oneself—was given cultural support through the Confessional.

Modesty was a cultural staple back then, and it was another

value that the Church delivered to the public. Listen to the answer that was given to the following question in 1939, "Do you think it is indecent for women to wear shorts for street wear?" Sixty-three percent said yes, 37 percent no. Women were harder than men on this question: 70 percent answered yes and 30 percent said no; among men the breakdown was 57-43. Even as late as 1948, the majority of Americans were opposed to women wearing slacks. And while it sounds odd to us now, in 1937 66 percent of the public said no to the question, "Would you vote for a woman for President, if she qualified in every other respect?"

Life and death issues also saw the impact of Catholic values on the culture. Consider the following question, asked by Gallup in 1938: "In Chicago recently a family had to decide between letting its newborn baby die and letting it have an operation that would leave the baby blind for life. Which course would you have chosen?" The overall tally was 63 percent in favor of the operation, and 37 percent in favor of letting the baby die. Those were exactly the figures that Protestants posted, but among Catholics the breakdown was 73 to 27; not so curiously, non-church members came in at 58-42.

There was growing sentiment in favor of the distribution of birth control but there was no soft middle ground when it came to divorce. Fully 77 percent said that divorces *should not* be easier to obtain, thus giving public life to Catholic teaching on the subject. It took the feminist movement of the 1960s to upend this position, as cries of injustice were voiced demanding no-fault divorce. Now only ideologues believe that no-fault divorce has helped women.

In 1938, radio owners were asked if they had heard any vulgar broadcast that offended them in the last year. Remarkably, 85 percent said no. This is even more incredible when one thinks what passed for vulgarity back then. Today, it is virtually impossible not to have one's sensibilities assaulted while simply driving to work: if it's not the commentary of radio

talk-show hosts that offends, or the lyrics of pop music, it's a highway billboard or the bumper sticker in front of you that comes on like gang-busters.

It was in the 1950s that the "greatest generation" presided over families. This was a time when it seemed as though Catholicism had captured the culture. "The Catholic impulse," writes Morris, "was perfectly in accord with powerful forces that were transforming American society and culture in the 1940s and 1950s," so much so that Morris dubs this period, "A Catholicizing America." With Bishop Fulton J. Sheen dominating prime-time TV, it is with good reason that Protestants—who outnumbered Catholics 2 to 1—told sociologist Will Herberg that they felt "threatened" with Catholic domination.

The "greatest generation" had so much to teach, and it is not their failure that much of what they bequeathed has been lost. One does not have to be a romantic or a nostalgia-ridden neurotic to appreciate the degree of civility and community that existed not too long ago. Elementary etiquette, manners and deference to superiors were taken for granted. Manliness, and femininity, were also natural by-products. Yes, there was racism, sexism—injustice of all kinds—but at least within each circle of race, ethnicity, community and family, there was a sense of cohesion. Now selfishness has become the characteristic cultural statement of our day, a trait that is as celebrated by our elites as it is exercised by the public.

The coarseness of our contemporary culture is due, in part, to the extent that Catholicism has receded in its influence. It has receded for two reasons: a) we have lost the will to engage the culture with the kind of passion we once did and b) the dominant culture, as formed by our elites, is increasingly unreceptive to Catholicism.

To recapture the culture, Catholicism will have to first awaken from its defensive posture. Internal divisions, scandal in the priesthood and financial woes have chastened the

leadership, giving way to a mentality that plays not to lose, instead of playing to win. This will have to change, not only for the betterment of the Church, but for the betterment of society.

Regarding the dominant culture, it is the job of the Catholic League to fend off onslaughts against the Church. A hostile dominant culture surrounds us and it will not retreat without a battle. Unfortunately, too many Catholics still believe that the Catholic way is to make peace with the culture, and that is why they resist the work of the Catholic League. The league is forward-looking and will not succumb to the politics of accommodation. It is one thing to be prudential (a plus), quite another to be without principle.

The “greatest generation” paid its dues and it passed the baton to the rest of us. That baton was dropped by my generation and must now be fielded once again. What’s at stake is more than pride—the culture itself is on the line. Catholicism can play a role, a very big role, in regenerating the culture. Whether it seeks to grab the baton is uncertain, but one thing is for sure: the Catholic League will do all it can to see to it that it does.

The Trinity Foundation Looks at Catholicism

by William A. Donohue

(Catalyst 12/1998)

We get so much anti-Catholic literature sent to us from Protestant, mostly Evangelical, sources that it's enough to make me wonder whether the Reformation ever ended. Some of it is just plain stupid, but there is also some pretty sophisticated stuff being published. This is not the place for a rigorous analysis of what's out there (interested readers should consult the magazines *This Rock* and *Envoy* for more extended treatment), but I do want to bring to your attention some recent developments.

"The structure of the Roman Catholic Church is a totalitarian hierarchy." Furthermore, "It must never be forgotten that the Roman Papacy is an absolute, unlimited, tyrannical monarchy, a worldly, secular government." It never will be forgotten, at least to those who heard Richard Bennett's words: for three straight days, October 8-10, a small group of Catholic-hating Christians assembled in Erwin, Tennessee to hear claptrap like this at the first annual Trinity Foundation Conference on Christianity and Roman Catholicism. The Catholic League sent its own Arthur Delaney to spy on the conference and bring home the bacon, so to speak. He did not disappoint.

There was the usual Mary-bashing that one would expect at such a meeting, e.g., Timothy F. Kauffman concluded his paper on "Marian Superstition" by exclaiming, "Roman Catholicism is literally in league with the devil." Books, videos, pamphlets and other material were on sale, as well as compendiums that compared the Bible to Vatican II Documents and the Catechism of the Catholic Church (you can guess which source came out on top). Organizational charts of the "Roman Catholic State-Church" were thoughtfully provided.

John W. Robbins opened the meeting with a lecture called, "Bleating Wolves: The Meaning of Evangelicals and Catholics Together." Suffice it to say that he is opposed to any such embrace. Robbins has a particular vendetta against Charles Colson, the Evangelical who is leading a serious dialogue with Catholics like Father Richard John Neuhaus. So angered is he

(and speaker James E. Bordwine) by the good relations that Colson and Neuhaus have forged, that Robbins blasts today's Protestant churches as being "almost as corrupt and apostate as the Roman State-Church herself." Almost. But we're still number one.

Robbins, who was a legislative assistant in the 1980s to Congressman Ron Paul of Texas, not only purports to understand "Romanist history," he even takes a shot at predicting the future. Billy Graham, he says, will continue down the path of his corruption by endorsing "future pro-Romanist statements." Worse, Graham's son, Franklin, "will make further approaches to Rome." But these overtures will not go unanswered, Robbins assures us, as he and his Trinity Foundation buddies will battle back.

"All of my prognostications," Robbins announces, "assume that history is drawing to a close, that the time of judgment has come, and that we are entering the final conflict." That goes without saying. But wait, he gives himself an out: "But that may not be so." So which is it? "Perhaps a gracious God will grant repentance to millions as the remnant proclaim his Gospel in ever clearer and bolder terms." The operative word is "perhaps." But perhaps not, in which case it's all over but the shouting. Alleluia.

What I don't quite get is Robbins' fixation on this business of "justification by faith alone." Even he doesn't believe it. On page 3 of his paper, he thanks the supporters of the Trinity Foundation for hanging in there, acknowledging that there is almost no support for what he's doing in the Protestant community. Of his backers, he says, "They will receive a great reward in Heaven for the help they have given us." So acts count after all.

Robbins saved his big guns for the last day of the conference. That was when he took aim at "The Political Thought of the Roman State-Church." His one-hour talk was an historical

overview of what is wrong with Catholicism (how would you like to listen to that at 8:00 on a Saturday morning?). No doubt he could fill a library with his thoughts.

Robbins began by noting that "this is still a free country—no thanks to the Roman State-Church, of course." But of course. He then informed the True Believers that "if the Roman State-Church had her way, meetings such as this would be proscribed; those of you in attendance would be arrested, questioned, and possibly imprisoned; while those of us who speak would be judicially condemned to prison or perhaps to execution—all in the name of God and Jesus Christ." No mention of torture, but that was just an oversight.

"This absolute world monarchy," is how Robbins describes the Catholic Church in world history, "developed into the first totalitarian power in the West, and the mother of twentieth century totalitarianism." So the Church gave birth to fascism and communism. Given the fact that Hitler, Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot brutalized members of all faith communities—and had particular disdain for Roman Catholicism—it is amazing that someone like Robbins, who has read so much, has learned so little.

A quick tour of Robbins' mind looks like a mental rummage sale. He labels Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger "the current Grand Inquisitor." Ratzinger, who functions as the pope's chief executive, shouldn't feel bad: just last year that title was branded on me, and by a Catholic magazine, no less (*America*).

Robbins finds great fault with such Catholic principles as solidarity, subsidiarity and the common good. Solidarity may sound nice, but the way the Vatican understands it, it is nothing more than a "vague collectivist notion" that the Church uses "in building its argument for world fascism." And all along I thought it had something to do with "Love thy neighbor." Now I know it is a Hitlerian doctrine.

Consult the Catechism and you will find that the principle of subsidiarity means that the Church has a preference for servicing people with agencies that are close to the people. It's a fairly elementary understanding of human organizations, one that fits well with the American system of federalism. But for Robbins, this teaching is a ruse, a mendacious way to manipulate the masses. "There is little accommodation needed," he writes, "between the principle of subsidiarity and the theory behind the fascist regimes of the twentieth century." Chalk up two victories for Hitler.

You guessed it—what the Church means by the common good constitutes a third Hitlerian influence. To be fair, Robbins credits Aristotle as the source of the Church's idea of the common good. But in a footnote, he quotes another deep-thinking Trinity Foundation malcontent, Gordon Clark, who says: "Now if Plato's theory is a form of communism, perhaps Aristotle could be called fascist." Why not? And perhaps Robbins could be called a scholar.

Given the Church's love for fascism, it is not surprising to learn that Robbins blames the Vatican for collaborating with the Nazis. He says that this is "one of those topics rarely discussed in polite society," which tells me he doesn't read the *New York Times*, listen to NPR or watch PBS.

"The spirit of the Antichrist has been working relentlessly for two thousand years to achieve a worldwide consolidation of ecclesiastical and political power." With all this overtime, I would have thought that the Church's dream of a world government would finally be at hand. Robbins concedes that it hasn't happened yet, but if the Catholic Church "fails to reach her goal within the next hundred years, she will not quit." Good girl. "She will continue to work tirelessly for world power, even if it should take another two millennia." We do take the long view, don't we.

After perusing Robbins' paper (to read it carefully would be

to subject myself to a penance that even I haven't earned), I couldn't wait to get to the conclusion. It was worth the wait. "The Roman State-Church," he declares, "is a monster of ecclesiastical and political power." "Her political thought is totalitarian, and whenever she has had the opportunity to apply her principles, the result has been blood repression."

Then, in words that would chill the spine (or at least give it a tickle) of any True Believer, Robbins states that "if and when" the Church recovers from a mortal wound, "she will impose the most murderous regime that the planet has yet seen." Move over, Hitler, Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot, HERE COMES THE POPE.

Anti-Catholic Bias in Children's Literature

by Inez Fitzgerald Storck

(Catalyst 11/1998)

Good parents have always known that it is necessary to watch over their children's reading. But Catholic parents today and even Catholic educators may not be aware of the extent of the negative elements in contemporary children's literature. Many if not most books for preteens and teens attack Christian values. Examples of violence, unchastity, and New Age paganism abound, with a few books favorable to homosexuality and abortion. Many children's and young adult books are also informed by gender feminism, which denies the very basis for masculinity and femininity.

One of the most pernicious trends is blatant anti-Catholicism.

A review of more than 100 mainstream children's and young adult books published or reprinted in the last two decades has yielded numerous examples of negative portrayals of Catholicism. Not a single positive description of the Catholic faith has surfaced, even though other groups such as blacks, Jews, Buddhists, and American Indians receive favorable treatment consistently. A few examples of antagonistic treatment of Catholicism appear below.

In *Year of Impossible Goodbyes* by Sook Nyul Choi, a girl raised in the religion of her Catholic mother turns to the Buddhism of her grandfather in time of need. She ends up rejecting her faith: "I didn't even like Mother's God." The preteens to whom the novel is targeted will end up with a very positive picture of Buddhism and a quite negative impression of Catholicism. One cannot but think that this was the author's intent.

Cynthia Voight's *Jackaroo* is set in what is ostensibly the Middle Ages, or rather a parody of medieval times, with poverty, enforced ignorance (common people are forbidden to learn to read), and cruelty of the lords toward underlings. Nowhere is there mention of the Christian culture which informed every aspect of society, save for a few scattered reference to priests. The few comments that are made suggest that priests are more interested in making a profit than in caring for those in need.

Queen Eleanor, Independent Spirit of the Medieval World by Polly Schoyer Brooks depicts Catholicism in a biased manner, with mixed reviews of St. Bernard of Clairvaux. Eleanor of Aquitaine rejects both the counsels of St. Bernard and the piety of Louis VII of France, her first husband, and is seen as a strong, dynamic woman for having done so. In fact, she is cast more as a modern feminist heroine than a medieval queen, particularly in her stance toward civil and ecclesiastic authority. Middle school students, on whose level the book is written, are left with an image of a Church that is weak and

ineffectual.

A girl who has been abducted and later adopted returns to her birth family in *Whatever Happened to Janie?* by Caroline B. Cooney. She is exposed to the strong Catholic faith of her birth parents: "Janie felt a little cautious around the church part of their lives. She had been to Mass with them every week and found it a strange way to spend an hour." There is no positive statement about Catholicism. The young adult who reads the novel is likely to come away with the notion that it is a peculiar religion.

In Robert Cormier's *Other Bells for Us to Ring*, a Catholic girl tells her Unitarian friend Darcy about "the strange practices of Catholics," including bribing God by buying a Mass to get souls out of purgatory, "a terrible waiting room between heaven and hell where you might get stuck forever" without these bribes. Catholic notions of sin are satirized in the Catholic girls's enumeration of the categories of sin: venial, mortal, and cardinal ("really big ones"). Understandably confused by her friend's exposition of sin, Darcy queries her own mother on the subject. The mother presents an alternative explanation of sin that seems much more reasonable, and of course makes the role of the priest appear superfluous. When Darcy asks a nun for information on the Church, the nun replies, "God comes first....Not whether you are this or that, Protestant or Catholic, young or old. Loving God is the first thing." Thus the nun communicates religious indifferentism, misusing the greatest commandment to justify this stance. And the effect in the book is that Darcy does not have to trouble herself with clearing up her confused ideas about the Church. Catholic doctrine and religious practices appear to obscure the reality of God and His love.

Small-Town Girl by Ellen Cooney is one of the worst offenders. The protagonist of the novel, a Catholic high school girl, has incorrect notions about indulgences and works to gain them in a mechanical way that appears to satirize Church teaching:

"...she bought herself fourteen years of grace each day." Devout Catholic women are mockingly described as "a pewful of old women muttering into their rosary beads." The religious teaching sisters appear as benighted, bumbling souls fixated on purity. When the girl goes to confession, the priest asks her an inappropriate question about purity. She is afraid he will assault her sexually. Needless to say, he comes across as an uneducated lecher. (This priest actually makes Father Ray of "Nothing Sacred" look good!)

Perhaps the most significant evidence of anti-Catholic bias in young people's literature is the portrayal of Catholics in two books awarded the American Library Association's Newbery Medal, the most prestigious national award for children's literature. Jerry Spinelli's *Maniac Magee* received the 1991 Newbery Medal. In the novel an orphaned boy, Jeffrey, lives with his uncle and aunt: "Aunt Dot and Uncle Dan hated each other, but because they were strict Catholics, they wouldn't get a divorce. Around the time Jeffrey arrived, they stopped talking to each other. Then they stopped sharing"—to the point where they had two of everything, including toasters and refrigerators. Jeffrey has the reader's complete sympathy when he runs away from that travesty of a family. A similarly negative parody of Jews or blacks would undoubtedly disqualify a book from consideration for the Newbery laurels, and rightly so.

The 1996 Newbery Medal winner, *The Midwife's Apprentice* by Karen Cushman, takes place in the Middle Ages. The midwife of the story is a Catholic who goes to Mass on Sunday, yet she is hard-hearted to the point of cruelty, doing her job "without care, compassion, or joy." An adulterous relationship thrown in for good measure intensifies the degradation of her character. One asks if it could be mere coincidence that the midwife is the only person in the story depicted as an observant Catholic. What is worse, the author, in a postscript note characterizing the medieval midwife's repertory as a

blend of herbal medicine and magic, states, "Superstitions included the use of relics, water from holy wells, charms, and magic words." It is highly insulting to Catholics to have the use of sacramentals equated with superstitious practices, which are condemned by the Church. The many other honors bestowed on *The Midwife's Apprentice* show that there is considerable support in the library and publishing fields for anti-Catholic bias.

It is evident that parents must more than ever watch over the moral education and spiritual formation of their young in order to be faithful to the Church's injunction to "teach children to avoid the comprising and degrading influences which threaten human societies."

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Atheism, Anti-Catholicism, and Paranoia

by William A. Donohue

(Catalyst 4/1998)

At the conclusion of John M. Swomley's article in the January/February edition of *The Humanist*, the credits read that he is "emeritus professor of social ethics at St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Missouri, and president of Americans for Religious Liberty." It would be more accurate to say that Swomley is one of the most prominent atheists in the United States, a long-time ACLU extremist whose understanding of social ethics is on a par with Father Ray's appreciation for the Magisterium. It should also be said that Americans for

Religious Liberty represents religious liberty in the same way that the People's Republic of China represents the Chinese people.

If these conclusions seem harsh, it is only because the evidence that supports them is overwhelming. The very title of Swomley's piece on the Catholic League, "A League of the Pope's Own," gives the reader a clear indication of what animates this atheist: the league is not an independent lay Catholic civil rights organization, it is a lackey of the papacy.

Swomley begins his article with boilerplate. "One of the least known and most dangerous of the far-right organizations," he writes, "is the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights." Sounds like Swomley is drinking from the same cup that allowed Hillary to imagine about a "vast right-wing conspiracy." In any event, all along I thought we were just a bunch of Catholics who were tired of being kicked around. Now I know better.

Swomley thinks the league is "little known" because "it masquerades as a civil rights organization," and is dangerous because "it redefines religious and civil rights as opposites to those normally understood as constitutional rights." Now this sounds like a job for the FBI, not a professor of social ethics. But Swomley is up to the task, convincing his fellow believers in nothing that he has uncovered the hidden agenda of this nefarious band of KKKatholics.

Want to know what the league does for a living? "Chiefly, its mission is to censor or suppress any activity, language, speech, publication, or media presentation that it considers offensive to the papacy, the Vatican or the Catholic Church in America." Never mind that the league persistently forswears any appetite for censorship, and never mind that Swomley can't cite a single instance to buttress his case, the point he wants to make is that the league must be stopped before

America is overrun by those papal loyalists. Here are the ground rules: when Jewish and black civil rights organizations protest bigotry, that's free speech; when Catholics do so, it's censorship.

I did not know it until I read it, but Swomley says that when I took over the league in 1993, I did so with "the assistance of Robert Destra [sic] as general counsel." For the record, Bob was never my general counsel and he has no "a" in his surname. Robert Destro, a very bright law school professor, moved from the league's board of directors to the board of advisors shortly after I joined the organization.

More important, Swomley argues that I have "worked hard to redefine civil liberties away from individual rights so as to oppose affirmative action, gay rights, women's rights, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press." Once again, no evidence is forthcoming. As readers of *Catalyst* know, the league never comments on affirmative action anymore than it takes a position on global warming. As for gay rights and women's rights, the league is agnostic, taking no stand save for those instances when militant gays and feminists start bashing the Church. Moreover, freedom of speech and freedom of the press are integral to the First Amendment, and the league is supportive of such constitutional rights.

Swomley quotes the league's by-laws but fails to mention that the ones he cites are from 1973. In another sleight of hand, he quotes a phrase from Canon Law 1369 about just punishment for blasphemy, and then claims, without warrant, that the league "exists in response" to this Canon (where he dreamed this one up, I do not know).

After the pope came to the United States in 1995, the league commented that the media had generally been fair. This unexceptional observation is read by Swomley as proof that the Catholic League "intimidated the press." Furthermore, when I wrote that "The relatively few cheap shots that were taken at

the Pope by the media in October is testimony to a change in the culture," Swomley put the following spin on this sentence: "In other words, the 'change in the culture' is the elevation of the pope and church hierarchy to a position above criticism." He seems to prefer a world where anti-Catholicism is accepted to a world where tolerance is achieved, because in his mind, tolerance for Catholicism is equivalent to the establishment of a privileged position for the pope.

When I complain about a news story that gratuitously cites the Roman Catholic affiliation of a judge who rules against the legality of assisted suicide, Swomley reads this as a "threat to the American press." This is another example of his ethics: Swomley would never think of applying his "principle" to blacks when they justifiably complain about news reports that unnecessarily cite the African American heritage of a defendant.

Over and over again, Swomley associates league criticism of Catholic bashing with an attempt to censor (the thrust of this charge, which is increasingly being made, is actually to quash the league's speech). He even objects to the league's right to call for a boycott of the sponsors of "Nothing Sacred." Yet, whenever anyone else calls for a boycott, that's free speech; when we do so, it's tantamount to fascism. This isn't Situation Ethics, it's Ethics for Some and None for Others.

A while back, the Catholic League was upset with the ADL for reneging on an award it promised author Richard Lukas for his splendid book, *Did the Children Cry? Hitler's War Against Jewish and Polish Children*. The ADL reneged because it thought the book wasn't sufficiently appreciative of the anti-Semitic strain in Polish history (after a protest, mounted in part by the league, Lukas got the award). In an amazing twist of facts, Swomley accuses the league of criticizing the ADL for presenting the award to Lukas! Not without significance, he says that the league "even" attacked the ADL, as if "the Jewish organization" (as he calls it) was somehow off-limits.

The conspiratorial mind of Professor Swomley is perhaps best revealed in his statement that "the Catholic League's main office is listed as 1011 First Avenue, which is the headquarters of Cardinal John O'Connor's archdiocese"; he says he picked up this inside information from "a directory of right-wing Catholic organizations" published by Catholics for a Free Choice (wait till he finds out that our office is adjacent to the Cardinal's!).

So what does Swomley make of all this? "In short," he concludes, "that address increasingly has been the target for censorship of any critique of the Catholic church and for the establishment of a Catholic culture as the norm in American public relations." These are the guns of war: our ethicist is taking aim at those subversives working out of the New York Catholic Command Center.

Swomley ends his creative diatribe by exclaiming, "There is a serious danger to any society or government when the leaders of any church or secret organization under its control can intimidate and suppress information and opinion." This has me confused. If the Catholic League is a secret organization, then why is it housed in "the headquarters of Cardinal John O'Connor's archdiocese"? Why wouldn't it take up quarters in a tunnel below Penn Station?

It is impossible to separate Swomley's paranoia from his anti-Catholicism. Indeed, the latter partly explains the former. But because not all anti-Catholics are paranoid, there is something else at work here. And that something else is called atheism. Yes, there are atheists who are not anti-Catholic, just as there are anti-Catholics who are not paranoid. But when there is a blend of atheism and anti-Catholicism, a strain of paranoia is almost always detectable.

Professor Swomley sports graduate degrees and prefers the pen to the sword. Klansmen sport white sheets and prefer the sword to the pen. Aside from that, there isn't much that separates

them, and on the scale of bigotry and paranoia, they're twin cousins. Indeed, they have so much in common that they are likely to meet again in the next life (sorry for the bad news, professor). Exactly where I really can't say. I just hope I don't run into them.

Apologies in the Age of Spin Control

by Mary Ann Glendon

(Catalyst 6/1997)

The Catholic Church is preparing to celebrate the Jubilee year 2000 and I am proud to have input into this event. After recently attending a meeting in Rome of the Central Committee that is handling the affair, I came away with certain anxieties about one aspect of the Jubilee preparation. They concern what one might call "apologies in the age of spin control."

As you may have noticed, there has been a good deal of public repentance lately concerning things that representatives of the Church did in the past. This is pursuant to Pope John Paul II's call for a "broad act of contrition" as part of the Church's celebration of the Jubilee. In his 1994 encyclical on preparing for the Third Millennium, he says that, "it is appropriate, as the Second Millennium of Christianity draws to a close, that the Church should become more fully conscious of the sinfulness of her children, recalling all those times in history when they departed from the spirit of Christ and his

Gospel, and, instead of offering the world witness of a life inspired by values of faith, indulged in ways of thinking and acting that were truly forms of counterwitness and scandal.”

According to the monthly magazine *Inside the Vatican*, the Pope presented this plan for a public mea culpa to the Cardinals at a meeting held several months before the encyclical was issued. Supposedly, he told them that this apology should cover the mistakes and sins of the past thousand years, and in conjunction with, among other things, the Inquisition, the wars of religion, and the slave trade. That magazine also reported (still on hearsay evidence) that “the majority of the College of Cardinals was opposed to that kind of public act of repentance,” though few, apart from Cardinals Biffi and Ratzinger, were said “to have raised their voices in opposition.”

Whether or not that rumor of discord was well-founded, the Pope did address possible criticisms of his plan in *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* itself, pointing out that while the Church “is holy because of her incorporation into Christ, she is always in need of being purified.” It would be hard to argue with that proposition—or with the Pope’s observation that “Acknowledging the weakness of the past is an act of honesty and courage . . . which alerts us to face today’s temptations and challenges.”

So why do I feel some lingering anxiety about the public repentance aspect of the Church’s celebration of the Jubilee? My nervousness has nothing to do with what the Pope has said, and everything to do with the way in which the acts of contrition he calls for may be distorted by interpreters who are no friends of the Church; by spin doctors who have never seen any need to apologize for anti-Catholicism or for persecution of Christians; in short, by persons for whom no apology will ever be enough until we Catholics apologize for our very existence.

My anxiety level escalates when I think of these apologies for past sins in light of Gertrude Himmelfarb's chilling account of the current state of historical scholarship. History is always an amalgam of fact and myth. But in recent years, historians have increasingly turned from the search for fact, to free-wheeling imaginative reconstructions of events. All too many have become spin doctors of the past, in the service of various agendas. As an elderly Boston lawyer recently remarked to me, "It's tough times for the dead."

Related to this concern about manipulation of apologies by the Church's detractors, is the likelihood of misunderstandings among the faithful. When the popular image of the Church in history owes so much to the likes of Monty Python and Mel Brooks, not to mention more scholarly myth manufacturers, its only to be expected that some Catholics will begin to believe that their Church holds a special niche in some historical hall of shame.

Misunderstandings are also apt to arise from the fact that most people hear of official expressions of regret as filtered through the press, rather than from primary sources. Thus, though the Pope is always careful to speak of sin and error on the part of *representatives* of the Church, rather than the Church itself, that all-important distinction is often lost in the transmission. Why be surprised, then, if the faithful begin to wonder: "If the Church was wrong about so many things in the past, maybe she's wrong about what she's teaching now."

All these concerns do not lead me to think that the Church should adopt Henry Ford's policy of "Never complain, never explain." What they do suggest to my mind, however, is the need for us laypeople to be alert for, and to counter as best we can, the misunderstandings that may arise as this aspect of the Jubilee preparation goes forward. To put it another way, we need to make clear that when we Catholics apologize for something, we are not taking responsibility for crimes Catholics didn't commit; we are not abasing ourselves before

persons and groups whose records compare unfavorably with our own; and we are not in any way denigrating the role of the Catholic Church in history as an overwhelmingly positive force for peace and justice.

Which brings me back to the general problem of how we are to understand expressions of contrition in the age of spin control.

Of course the Holy Father is right to emphasize the importance of confessing our sins, doing penance, and amending our lives. But I would like to suggest that we laypeople have a certain responsibility to help keep these penitential activities in proper perspective. Often it is the laity who will be in the best position to see when sincere apologies are being opportunistically exploited. Often it will be the laity who are in the best position to set the record straight.

Flannery O'Connor, it seems to me, showed us how to do this over forty years ago. When a friend wrote her to complain about the Church's shortcomings, O'Connor shot back, "[W]hat you actually seem to demand is that the Church put the kingdom of heaven on earth right here now." She continued:

Christ was crucified on earth and the Church is crucified by all of us, by her members most particularly, because she is a church of sinners. Christ never said that the Church would be operated in a sinless or intelligent way, but that it would not teach error. This does not mean that each and every priest won't teach error, but that the whole Church speaking through the Pope will not teach error in matters of faith. The Church is founded on Peter who denied Christ three times and couldn't walk on the water by himself. You are expecting his successors to walk on the water.

So, in the spirit of Blessed Flannery, I would suggest we bear in mind that an apology for the shortcomings of representatives of the Church is, first and foremost, an apology to God. "I am heartily sorry," as we say in the Act of Contrition, "because I dread the loss of Heaven and the pains

of Hell, but most of all because I have offended thee, my God, who art all good and deserving of all my love.”

When we Catholics repent during this “new Advent” preceding the Jubilee, it is not because our sins are more shameful than those of others, but because we and our pilgrim Church are on a trajectory—we are climbing Jacob’s ladder, striving to “put on the new man,” trying to be better Christians today than we were yesterday.

So far as the *public* face of the new Advent is concerned, I would suggest that the best way to show that we are moving forward on our trajectory is *not* by abasing ourselves in front of those who are only too eager to help the Church rend her garments and to pour more ashes on her head. Our best course is simply to demonstrate in concrete ways that the members of the mystical body of Christ are constantly growing in love and service to God and neighbor.

Finally, and most importantly—let us remember what these millennial apologies are not: they are not apologies for being Catholic! That we need never do. That we must never do.

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Can There Be “Common Ground”?

by William A. Donohue

(Catalyst 10/1996)

In August, Cardinal Bernardin along with eight bishops and 17

other Catholic leaders met to discuss the possibility of reaching common ground between various factions within the Church. On August 12 the Chicago Sun-Times published an exchange between Call to Action president Linda Pleczynski and William Donohue, president of the Catholic League. Here is the full text of Donohue's remarks.

Most observers of the Catholic Church will agree that there is considerable infighting among various factions within the Church. But paralysis? No. What we have is a determined minority of elites who are profoundly alienated from traditional Church teachings pitted against those who, by and large, are relatively content with the Church the way it is.

The elites never tire of citing polls that suggest that most Catholics want a married clergy, women priests and a host of other reforms. What they don't say is that, except for them, most Catholics are infinitely more concerned about the vibrancy of their parish programs, schools and Sunday homilies than they are about the politics of reform.

Just last year, the Catholic League commissioned a survey of American Catholics. The results were startling: among those who profess a belief in reforms, 83 percent of all Catholics and 90 percent of those who regularly attend Mass said that they would be as committed to the Church, if not more so, if the Church *did not* make the changes they wanted. How can this be so?

There is a dramatic difference between preferences and demands. Catholics may prefer the Church to make certain changes, but only a small minority are so intense in their convictions that they demand reforms. Not so for the elites: what motivates them is power and that is why they press so hard for changes. They have a vested interest, then, in seeing all preferences as demands, though the reality is that most Catholics are more troubled by second collections at Mass than they are by the issues that exercise Call to Action.

Infighting is constructive when both sides agree to the central tenets of Church teachings. But when either side takes it upon itself to rewrite liturgies and openly defy the teachings of the Magisterium, then that kind of infighting is destructive to the mission of the Church. In short, there are some aspects of the Church that are non-negotiable, and the sooner this is acknowledged, the better off everyone will be.

To take a different approach, if a reporter for the *Chicago Sun-Times* were to go on a popular local radio show and start blasting the editorial positions of his newspaper, just how long would he last? Would it make sense to label the newspaper intolerant if he were summarily fired? The point is that there is more tolerance in the Catholic Church for dissent than exists in most institutions in society. Up to a point, that is healthy. But it is downright destructive—not to say foolhardy—if dissent knows no boundaries.

The elites trumpet pluralism as a virtue, but pluralism is predicated on limits, lest it descend to anarchy. The elites who demand reforms seem not to care about this verity, and some have actually said that their agenda is to destroy the Church as we know it. Now it matters not a whit whether this segment of the Church comes from the left or the right, what matters is that they lose.

What is most right about the Catholic Church today is that it holds to moral absolutes in a culture drowning in relativism. To be sure, the role of conscience must be respected, but it must be, as the Church teaches, a well-formed conscience. Jeffrey Dahmer followed his conscience, but precisely because it was a free-floating conscience grounded in nothing but his passions, his actions proved diabolical. Freedom, as the Catholic Church teaches and as Dahmer denied, is the right to do as we ought, not the right to do as we want.

A Survey of Chick Publications

by William A. Donohue

(Catalyst 10/1996)

Perhaps the most invidious form of anti-Catholicism is that which emanates from elite circles. When men and women of power and influence engage in Catholic bashing, the effects can be devastating, which is why the Catholic League responds so quickly and decisively. But there is also a brand of anti-Catholicism that comes from less urbane quarters, from places that target the undereducated. And no one is better at doing this than Chick Publications.

Founded by Jack Chick, his company publishes books, magazines, small tracts and comic books, and now releases videos, all of which are designed to convince Protestants that Roman Catholicism is a false religion; Chick also distributes anti-Catholic works published by other sources. Perhaps best known for its release of 3x5 cartoon-like tracts, Chick has operations all over the world. Headquartered in Chino, California, Chick has outlets in Scotland, Germany, Canada, New Zealand and Australia.

Chick's booklets are available in Afrikaans, Albanian, Bulgarian, Burmese, Cambodian, Chichewa, Chinese, Creole, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Haitian, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Lithuanian, New Guinea, Norwegian, Pidgin, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Tagalog, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese and Zulu. Priced to sell at just 13 cents each,

Chick has done a masterful job marketing its hatred. Titles include "Are Roman Catholics Christians?"; "Why is Mary Crying?"; and "The Death Cookie," which by that is meant the Host.

The *Alberto* series of comic books are also quite popular. Aimed primarily at teenagers, this series is based on the work of Alberto Rivera, a man who claims to be an ex-Jesuit from the Diocese of Madrid. Past research by the Catholic League, however, shows no record of Rivera ever being a priest. Vintage Chick in content, the comic books are strewn with vile anti-Catholicism.

Catholicism's Errors

Chick specializes in attempting to debunk Catholic teachings, thereby preparing the confused for eventual conversion to Protestantism. For example, in his book *Answers to My Catholic Friends*, Thomas F. Heinze writes that "There is no real salvation in the Roman Catholic Church." From William C. Standridge in *Born-Again Catholics and the Mass*, we learn that Catholics cannot be "born again." Ralph Edward Woodrow, in his book *Babylon Mystery Religion*, goes further by arguing that Mary is the "goddess of paganism" and that "a mixture of paganism and Christianity produced the Roman Catholic Church."

Understanding Roman Catholicism, by Rick Jones, purports to explain "37 Roman Catholic Doctrines." The reader gets an idea of the author's explanations by reading the following conclusion: "Catholicism brings people into bondage." For those who prefer a video presentation of so-called Catholic mythology, there is *Catholicism: Crisis of Faith*, by Lumen Productions. The 54 minute video divides Catholic "errors" into four sections: the Mass; Statues; Mary; and Catholic salvation. As expected, the video attacks transubstantiation, misrepresents Catholic teachings on statues and Our Blessed Mother, and contends that faith alone is necessary for salvation.

Some of the assaults on Catholicism chose quite specific topics, such as Charles Chiniquy's *The Priest, the Women and the Confessional*. This book, written by a nineteenth century former priest, has had quite a run, covering the span of a century and a half. Confession, we are told, is the invention of Satan. In practice, "The confessor is the worm which is biting, polluting, and destroying the very roots of civil and religious society, by contaminating, debasing, and enslaving women."

Speaking of wives, Chiniquy writes that "As she becomes an adulteress the day that she gives her body to another man, is she any the less an adulteress the day that she gives her confidence and trusts her soul to a stranger?" Chiniquy writes like a contemporary reporter for *Enquirer* or *The Star* when he says that the "poor confessor" is "surrounded by attractive women and tempting girls, speaking to him from morning to night on things which a man cannot hear without falling." This is because the woman confesses "her constant temptations, her bad thoughts, [and] her most intimate secret desires and sins."

In a recent Chick listing, *Far From Rome: Near to God*, we have the alleged testimony of 50 converted Catholic priests. All have found the "errors in the Church" and have since seen the light. Most of the laments are quite dry, but there is one that deserves a comment.

Leo Lehmann was born in Dublin in 1895, and right from the beginning was saddled with despair. "I have no joyous memories of my boyhood years." None. He attributes his misery to the "fear" he experienced being raised Catholic. The fear he felt had dramatic consequences: "It was principally the fear connected with everything in the Roman Catholic religion that helped me with my decision to become a priest."

The day Lehmann was ordained, he noticed late at night that one of his companions "became affected in his mind, the strain

of mechanical routine, innumerable petty restrictions and formulas," a condition Lehmann describes as "a species of religious madness called `scrupulosity.'"

In another incident, Lehmann says he remembers the case of a fourteen year-old girl who suffered from insanity. He blames Catholicism for her insanity, stating that when he met her, she constantly recited the "Hail Mary." Obviously intending to persuade the reader, Lehmann maintains that "Her mind was deranged by the idea that she was obliged to say this prayer a hundred times each day, and in order to make sure of having them said on time, she was over a thousand ahead. Some priest, doubtless, had imposed the saying of these `Hail Mary's' as a penance in confession." Doubtless. Anyway, this was enough to have the fear-ridden Lehmann call it quits.

The "Secret Army" of the Jesuits

It will surprise no one to learn that Jack Chick thinks he's a regular guy. In his infamous book, *Smokescreens*, Chick says "There has been a multi-million dollar campaign made through the media to convince people that I am a bigoted, anti-Catholic hate literature publisher." But this is nonsense, as there has been no well-funded campaign of any sort. And to the extent that even a dollar has been spent trying to convince people that Chick is a bigot, it's a waste of money: just reading his hate-filled books is evidence enough.

Just two pages after Chick makes his remarkable protest that he is not an anti-Catholic bigot, he writes of the Eucharist that "I call it the little Jesus cookie." Anticipating criticism, Chick adds, "I know Catholics are going to be offended by this, but I can't help it. The Protestants have to realize where they stand on this thing."

It's a sure bet that most Catholics never knew that "The Jesuits had secretly prepared World War II, and Hitler's war machine was built and financed by the Vatican to conquer the

world for Roman Catholicism.” And how many knew that “Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco were to be the defenders of the faith”? It gets better: “They were set up to win and conquer the world, and set up a millennium for the pope. Behind the scenes, the Jesuits controlled the Gestapo.” Somehow every historian who has written on World War II seems to have missed these “facts” altogether, but not the world-renowned scholar, Jack Chick.

So pro-Nazi was the Catholic Church that Chick regrets that Pope Pius XII wasn’t killed. “Pope Pius XII should have stood before the judges in Nuremburg. His war crimes were worthy of death.” But if the Catholic Church was fascist, and the fascists fought the communists in World War II, then Mr. Chick needs to explain why he charges the Jesuits with not only running the Gestapo, but with founding the Communist Party as well. He also wants us to believe that the Jesuits aided the John Birch Society, thus adding confusion to confusion. But to Jack Chick, at least, it all makes sense.

Jack really doesn’t like the Jesuits. As he sees it, the Society of Jesus managed to come to America just as the second wave of Pilgrims was beginning. Ever sneaky, the Jesuits “used different names with I.D.’s. They were followed years later when the Vatican sent multitudes of Catholic families from England, Ireland and France posing as Protestants, into the colonies. These were plants.”

But that was only the beginning. “The next move by the Jesuits,” Chick informs, “was to destroy or control all the Christian schools across America.” They did this, of course, by “working undercover,” infiltrating school boards and the like. This venture would then be followed by taking control of the legislature and judiciary “in order to manipulate the Constitution in their favor until it could be changed.” Next was a plot “to capture the political parties.” After that, “Then the military and the newspapers.” And so on. “It is obvious,” Chick states, “that the whore of Revelation is the

Roman Catholic Institution, and God **hates** it!"

Michael de Semlyen, author of *All Roads Lead to Rome? The Ecumenical Movement*, is, like Jack Chick, sensitive to charges of bigotry. He says his book

"will be viewed by some as bigoted," never explaining why anyone who has read his volume might think otherwise. But never mind, de Semlyen feels the same way about the Jesuits as Chick does, blaming them for both Hitler and Marxism. The Church, of course, is the "*great whore of Revelation 17*."

Though similar to Chick, de Semlyen has a creative side to him as well. Readers learn, for example, that the "Roman Catholic hierarchy" played a role in the assassination of President Lincoln. Also newsworthy is the charge that the Vatican "has the most efficient and widespread spy network in the whole world" (de Semlyen is kind enough to attribute this finding to yet another careful student of Catholicism, Nino Lo Bello, in his book, *The_Vatican Papers*).

Treating readers to another revelation, de Semlyen tells us that "There is much in Roman Catholic tradition to contribute to New Age thinking"; he fingers Mother Teresa as a primary force for New Ageism. Even more ground-breaking is the news that Vatican opposition to abortion, birth control and homosexuality "has little to do with the sanctity of human life and Biblical ordinance," rather it stems from a need to add to the "Catholic army" and the financial resources of the Church.

The classic Jesuit-hating book was written by Edmond Paris. *The Secret History of the Jesuits* claims that the Jesuits constitute "a truly secret army" all over the world. According to Paris, the Jesuits have "kept alive" the Catholic Church's "mad aspiration to govern the world." "The public is practically unaware," writes Paris, "of the overwhelming responsibility carried by the Vatican and its Jesuits in the

start of the two world wars.” Indeed, “Catholics were the masters of Nazi Germany.”

Paris even blames the death camps on the Catholic Church: “The right the Church arrogates herself to exterminate slowly or speedily those who are in the way was ‘put into practice’ at Auschwitz, Dachau, Belsen, Buchenwald and other death camps.” As always, no documentation is ever presented to substantiate any of these outrageous claims. In conclusion, Paris says that the Jesuits are responsible for spreading “a kind of sclerosis, if not necrosis,” through the Church.

Catholic Cabals

Chick Publications loves to publish books that promote devil’s theories, but when it comes to conspiracy-minded plots that implicate the Vatican, few can top Avro Manhattan. In his best-selling work, *The Vatican Billions*, Manhattan sets the tone right from the start: “Christ was born, lived and died in poverty. His ‘church’ is a multi-, multi-billion concern.” In fact, the Catholic Church is “the wealthiest institution on earth.” But how did it get so rich? My favorite story is the one about the end of the first millennium.

It seems that as the year 1000 grew near, the people of Europe became nervous. Recalling tales about the end of the world, and remembering the Biblical injunction that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, Catholics began unloading their loot. The depository, of course, was the Church.

“When,” writes Manhattan, “following the long night of terror of the last day of December 999, the first dawn of the year 1000 lit the Eastern sky without anything happening,” many Catholics breathed a sigh of relief. “Those who had given away their property made for the ecclesiastical centers which had accepted their ‘offerings,’ only to be told that their money, houses, lands, were no longer theirs. It had been the most

spectacular give-away in history."

The result was predictable. "Since the Church returned nothing," opines Manhattan, "she embarked upon the second millennium with more wealth than ever, the result being that the monasteries, abbeys and bishoprics, with their inmates and incumbents, became richer, fatter and more corrupt than before."

Kind of reminds me of the Billie Holiday refrain, "Nice Work If You Can Get It."

According to Manhattan, at the end of the Middle Ages, the Vatican resorted to some rather bizarre means to extract money from the peasants. Various bishops, Manhattan contends, were busy excommunicating insects, the result of which was an outpouring of revenue from grateful peasants. To be specific, leeches were excommunicated in 1451, caterpillars in 1480 (and again in 1587), snails got the boot in 1481 (they were dumped again in 1487) and grasshoppers were shown the door in 1516. He says not a word about the praying mantis, but perhaps this was an oversight. Either that or the bishops thought they were too holy to excommunicate.

In the nineteenth century, Manhattan tells us that the dogma of infallibility was struck "to lay the foundations of a novel structure directed at amassing the riches of the world with more efficiency than ever before." In the twentieth century, the Church "secretly welcomed the Bolshevik Revolution," but then had second thoughts and turned against "Red Russia." Manhattan does not leave us in lurch, explaining this anomaly by stating that "Such double policies, conducted simultaneously at all levels during a period of years, were the result of the two most basic urges which have always bedeviled her [the Church's] conduct throughout her long experience: insatiable greed for ecclesiastical aggrandizement and an equally insatiable appetite for any prospect of potential earthly wealth."

Avro Manhattan's *The Vatican Moscow Washington Alliance* follows the same logic. When fascism emerged in Europe, Pope Pius XI "welcomed" it as a bulwark against communism, calling Mussolini "the man sent by Divine Providence." Not only does Manhattan fail to cite his sources for this charge, he cites not one source in his entire book. Be that as it may, we learn that Pius XI eventually turned against the fascists. That was a mistake: one of Mussolini's physicians gave the pope a lethal injection for doing so. Pius XII was spared such a fate because he "helped Hitler into power."

Manhattan credits Pope John XXIII with beginning the Vatican-Moscow alliance, but awards Paul VI the title of "the father" of this alliance. Essentially, Manhattan says that the Catholic Church was anti-Marxist from World War I to the death of Pius XII in 1958, and then turned left with the formation of the Vatican-Moscow alliance.

John Paul I, we learn, was "liquidated" because he was not anti-Russian; like Pius XI, he was drugged, only this time it was the United States government that did the job. The attempted assassination of John Paul II is credited to the Soviets, this a result of the Pontiff's creation of the Vatican-Washington alliance. If there is a moral here, it is that popes live longer when they don't get involved in alliances.

Manhattan is not optimistic. The "Curia-CIA Coalition," started by John Paul II, has already succeeded in doing what it set out to do: "America has willingly surrendered her political seniority as a superpower to that of the Vatican." He The Vatican, Manhattan declares, felt that "the whole of North America should by historical right, be Catholic." This is not a fantasy, he instructs, but the result of "well-calculated plans." The ultimate goal is to establish "the Catholic Church as a global religion."

How could all this come to pass? Manhattan is angry with Protestants for allowing the "Catholicization of America," by which he means the mass migration of Catholics into the U.S.; this is "destroying the traditional Protestant motivated America of the past." Guess it's fair to say that Latinos are not high on Manhattan's list.

The "enfeeblement of the major Protestant bodies," we are told, began with "ecumenism." This is not simply Manhattan's view, it's the position of William Standbridge in *What's Happening in the Roman Church*. Standridge pulls no punches, holding that "the present ecumenical campaign of the Roman church differs little from its purpose during the tortures and massacres of the inquisition: that is, to take control over all who call themselves Christians." In other words, ecumenical dialogue is a manipulative scheme designed to crush unsuspecting Protestants.

Dave Hunt is similarly distressed by ecumenism. In his book, *A Woman Rides the Beast*, Hunt expresses his outrage over the 1994 joint declaration, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together." For Hunt, this attempt at reaching a consensus on non-doctrinal matters, "overturned the Reformation and will unquestionably have far-reaching repercussions throughout the Christian world for years to come." As he sees it, the Evangelical-Catholic accord means that Catholics will be considered Christians. Nothing could be worse: "The millions who were martyred...for rejecting Catholicism as a false gospel have all died in vain."

In a section entitled "The Vatican and the New World Order," Hunt says that "Uncompromising Christians will be put to death for standing in the way of unity and peace." Our Blessed Mother, he argues, is to blame. "From current trends," Hunt writes, "it seems inevitable that a *woman* [his emphasis] must ride the beast. And of all the women in history, none rivals Roman Catholicism's omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent 'Mary.'"

Much of the same charges hurled by other Catholic bashers are found in Hunt's books. "The Roman Catholic Church is by far the wealthiest institution on earth." When the Church asks the faithful for donations, "such pleas are unconscionable ploys." For those dumb enough to think that Rio de Janeiro, with its seven hills, is the home of "spiritual fornication," think again. "Against only one other city in history could a charge of fornication be leveled. That city is Rome, and more specifically *Vatican City*."

Hunt goes further with this charge by saying that "The gross immorality of the Roman Catholic clergy is not confined to the past but continues on a grand scale to this day." To make sure we get his point, Hunt contends that "popes, cardinals, bishops and priests without number have been habitual fornicators, adulterers, homosexuals, and mass-murderers—ruthless and depraved villains who pursued their degenerate lifestyles immune from discipline." Nothing nuanced about that!

In his book, *A Cup of Trembling: Jerusalem and Bible Prophecy*, Hunt offers the standard line about Hitler and Himmler being good Catholics, and blames the Catholic Church for promoting Nazism. What drove the Church to do this? "The fanaticism that aroused Catholics to murder was often associated with the Eucharist and the wafer (Host)." Not to be outdone, Hunt brands recent statements by the Vatican condemning anti-Semitism as "hypocritical," saying they are nothing more than "deceptive declarations."

What Makes Chick Tick?

No serious student of religion or history would ever believe the absurd charges that Chick Publications specializes in, but that should hardly give us pause. There are millions of people all over the world who want to believe the worst about the Catholic Church, and unsophisticated though they may be, these men, women and children will never dislodge themselves of

their hatred for Catholicism as long as they are given a steady supply of Chick fodder. To be sure, the Church will survive this assault, but that doesn't relieve the objections that fair-minded people of every religion should have about Chick.

What makes Chick tick? In one four-letter word, it's called ENVY. Chick writers attribute fantastic powers to the Catholic Church precisely because they see in the Church a strength and resourcefulness that is absent in Protestantism. In the West, in particular, Chick authors believe that Protestantism should have eclipsed Catholicism long ago. But it hasn't, for reasons that reasonable people can debate. What can't be debated is that those driven by envy (with a little madness thrown in) will never cease their offensive against the Church. The one true Church, that is.