

Uncensored written remarks by former employees of John Edwards

Warning: This is an uncensored selection of the vile anti-Christian writings of John Edwards's staffers Amanda Marcotte and Melissa McEwan. The remarks contained at this link are graphic, vulgar and obscene.

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Report on Newsday (NY) and the Church

(1/2004)

Part 1: General Catholic Church Coverage

January 2002-December 2003

Columnists

- *Dick Ryan*: "The laity must begin to convince those Catholics who seem asleep that their church is in a terminal crisis that involves everybody. It can no longer be enough to 'hit the rail' on Sunday and piously say the rosary, while the abuse of authority and position continues to be a blemish on the face of the church." ("Bishop's Response to Questions Is More PR,"

11/18/03)

- *Paul Vitello:* "The Diocese of Rockville Centre, like many dioceses all over the United States, would walk through hell itself rather than tell. ... If you were a person with a sexual appetite for child abuse and sadism, the priesthood was a good bet for you. ... Most priests are not sexual predators. And there are sexual predators in other lines of work besides the priesthood. But for many years, the hierarchy of the diocese of Rockville Centre knew the names of just about every sexual predator who wore the collar in its parishes—and never once turned one over to the law." ("Battle of the Legal Gladiators," 11/4/03)
- *Bob Keeler:* "My attitude is to rejoice in John Paul's breakthroughs on Jewish-Catholic relations (accomplishment enough for any pope), to forgive him his flaws, and to pray that future popes will heal the hurts that his sometimes tyrannical papacy has caused women, theologians, sexual-abuse victims, gay folks and others." ("The Legacy of a Great Pope Is a Mixed Blessing," 10/20/03)
- *Jimmy Breslin:* On Pope John Paul II: "As he sits in a wheelchair, tilted over, these minions scurry about and announce that his mind is more brilliant than ever, his judgments swift and sound—when the last years of this pope have come down to five issues: Poland, Poland, Poland, abortion and contraception." ("Mystery That Can't Be Divined," 10/19/03)
- *Ellis Henican:* On Mother Teresa's beatification: "I hate to ruin a good party, especially with all the bad news the church has had. But I just hope we don't have another Christopher on our hands." ("Too Swift to Sainthood," 10/15/03)
- *Dennis Duggan:* "The St. Patrick's Day Parade...is run by old, beefy men who have rules for everyone, and God help

you if you don't abide by them. They are the Magdalene sisters of parades." ("Old Parades, Give Way," 10/14/03)

- *Bob Keeler:* "Among other things, critics believe John Paul's centralization of the church has smothered the collegial relationship between the bishop of Rome and his brother bishops." ("A Quarter Century of John Paul II: A Giant Among Popes," 10/12/03)
- *Jimmy Breslin:* "The pope announced that gays are gravely immoral. They are put on earth by God, but this old man can put on a big pope's high hat and condemn them." ("Stranger Isn't Needed," 8/3/03)
- *Jimmy Breslin:* On Cardinal Edward Egan: "He acts as if he has done nothing to betray us with his arrogant covering up of pedophiles in Hartford [*sic*; Cardinal Egan was bishop of Bridgeport]; that he has not disgraced all Catholics." ("A Collection Conundrum," 5/12/02)
- *Paul Vitello:* "The issue...is a self-protecting silence at the core that permits children to be hurt. In the Catholic Church, it has meant sending predatory priests from one parish to another without warning because, on the advice of counsel, disclosure might lead to lawsuits." ("Playing the Legal Book," 9/28/03)
- *Dennis Duggan:* "The Catholic Church has gone the way of the big corporate honchos who cheated their stockholders, holding them in the same disdain that the church hierarchy holds its faithful." ("Few Tears Are Shed," 8/26/03)
- *Marie Cocco:* "New York is, after all, a state where kowtowing to the cardinal is a practiced political art. Where finding deep meaning in the seating of pols at the annual Al Smith benefit dinner for Catholic causes is a local Kremlinology." ("Anti-Catholic Slur on Schumer Has No Basis," 8/14/03)
- *Jimmy Breslin:* The bishops "strut around with these big

crosses hanging on chains around their necks. Also on that chain they might hang a photo, a new one every week, of a child molested by one of their priests." ("What a Church Should Be," 7/27/03)

- *Dick Ryan*: "Postpone, delay, stall and string along—the safe and sanctified side of silence in the Catholic Church." ("Murphy Needs to Respond to Laity Complaints," 6/26/03)
- *Jimmy Breslin*: On the clergy scandal, "Egan could care less. He only wants to protect the priests, but in reality he only wants to protect himself and his job now and the one he wants next, over in Rome." ("Royal Stench of Arrogance," 6/12/03)
- *Sheryl McCarthy*: "Hundreds, perhaps thousands of children, women, male seminarians, even nuns were sexually abused and had their lives ruined by priests, while the bishops looked the other way. They used the same tactics that are used by organized crime. ... Petty drug sellers languish in prison while the seedy bishops go free." ("Bishops, Drug Felons Show Fickleness of Justice," 6/5/03)
- *Dick Ryan*: The youth "must become actively involved with prophetic new groups such as Voice of the Faithful, which have been described as the first authentic religious order of the 21st century. ... But with the ban on Voice of the Faithful in many dioceses and the recent prohibition against priests meeting in Brooklyn, the young must be prepared to be criticized or perhaps even condemned by leaders in a church that has regressed from the Church Paralyzed of 2002 to the Church Paranoid of 2003." ("Catholic Church Needs to Hear from Its Young," 3/25/03)
- *Dennis Duggan*: Robert Rygor was the "first gay man to try to march with a banner in New York City's St. Patrick's Day parade, which is still mired in bigotry, run by dinosaurs, and tied to a church that has

disgraced itself by covering up for wayward priests who sexually abused those who trusted them the most.” (“Still Behind Barrier Son Fought to Break,” 3/18/03)

- *Bob Keeler:* In defense of Fr. Charles Papa, accused of perusing porn sites: “A tiny minority of right-wing zealots has been waging a tenacious guerrilla struggle in the Catholic Church for years. ... They’re always ready to spy, disrupt, and report to higher authority those they see as less than orthodox.” (“In Sad Times for Church, the Spies Have It,” 3/17/03)
- *Jimmy Breslin* telephoned the Catholic League making wild accusations. He charged that Bill Donohue was as bad as accused priest Msgr. Alan Placa. (2/12/03)
- *Jimmy Breslin:* “The district attorney of Nassau County, Denis Dillon, wrote a letter to *Newsday* saying that of course I was wrong about his bishop, Mansion Murphy. ... That is some public servant, Dillon; he goes around in place of doing the people’s work and backbites in the name of the church. Slips around in some strange fringe organization, Opus Dei, which sounds like soapsuds but is not nearly as useful. ... For the new year, I am buying him vestments, and they will be needed because I am going to Rome and I am going to have the name officially changed to the Divine Denis.” (“Fitting a DA For Divine Vestments,” 12/31/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin:* “The pope of Rome, on whose watch all of this has happened, has decreed that in January they will say a right-to-life Mass. This is what the pope, stubborn old pope, and the slip-and-slide schemers around him have decided to use as a distraction from the sex scandals. They have no idea that this is a tired subject with Americans, particularly women. It can only raise their fury at an old man in a wheelchair, surrounded by fawning white-haired men in dresses, demanding to control a woman’s body.” (“Spirit of Holiday Stolen by the Church,” 12/24/02)

- *Paul Vitello*: "What happened to turn an institution such as the Catholic Church into a virtual sanctuary for pedophiles? ... Bishops and cardinals have apologized for their failure to protect the young (after years of denial and dissembling) but they have never actually explained what happened, never held an extended news conference to answer questions and explain their views in simple language, never bought airtime on national TV to speak directly to the country's 61 million Catholics." ("Their Sanctuary of Silence," 12/8/02)
- *Bob Keeler*: "In the furor over the malfeasance of the nation's Catholic bishops in the sexual-abuse scandal, it is easy to forget their longer-term failings as teachers. Compared with the scandal, that scandal is much less sensational—almost invisible in the secular press. But it really matters." ("Catholic Bishops Fail in Their Teaching Roles," 11/18/02)
- *Sheryl McCarthy*: On Halloween costumes, "A Catholic priest's costume would also be a crowd pleaser this year, replete with clerical collar and lascivious grin." ("Scary Monsters Are So Passé This Halloween," (10/24/02)
- *Dick Ryan*: The "Vatican response is a sanctimonious sham, shielding and again hiding several of those in the hierarchy who not only allowed the scandal to fester but, far more criminal, gave license to a few ordained misfits to go out and molest little boys at will." ("The Vatican Should Honor Thy Laity," 10/22/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin*: "These people who protest the church are not against a religion based on Christ. They just don't want their children and grandchildren abused at choir practice." ("Faithful To Kids, Christ," 8/27/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin*: "That there have been no protests is because of the simple rule of this church: If you dare disagree you go to hell." ("Taking back Their Church," 7/21/02)

- *Bob Keeler:* "Many Catholics think that God is already answering the prayers for male, celibate priests, and the answer is: No!" ("Asides," 6/30/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin:* "The Catholic Church, led by unctuous, arrogant men, could easily wind up being half the size it is now." ("Principal Stands on Her Principles," 6/23/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin:* "I got on a flight in Dallas and I announced, 'Boy, what fat slobbs those bishops are.'" ("Get Serious About Battle of the Bulge," 6/20/02)
- *Dick Ryan:* The bishops "would presumably like the Catholic Church to return to business as usual while piously suggesting that Catholics put the entire scandal out of their minds like some dirty little impure thought." ("Bishops Can't Ignore Laity's Cries for Change," 6/20/02)
- *Marie Cocco:* "The nation's Roman Catholic bishops needed to end the agony they'd caused themselves. They did it the way corrupt politicians who wish to cling to power inevitably do, once the spinners convince them there is no choice. The churchmen came up with a quick fix that looks pretty good on paper and may, or may not, work in practice. ... [The victims] have been twice abused, once by the men who violated their bodies and twisted their psyches, and again by the institution that refused until now to treat life-altering horrors as anything but embarrassments to be covered up. ... The number of diocesan priests in the United States has been dropping since 1965.... Pick your explanation. But among those offered by church scholars is the aversion of today's young men to the vow of celibacy and the ban on marriage. Even if these were to remain pillars of the church, the shortage could be eased with the ordination of women. But the bar against women priests stands, another sex policy perpetuated no matter the consequence. " ("Zero Tolerance' Policy at Least Looks

Good," 6/18/02)

- *Paul Vitello*: "The bishops were guilty of protecting their boys, the priests—and sacrificing children on the altar of good appearances. ... The bishops...issued no new policy regarding themselves. ... They addressed the sins of others. And then, after voting to adopt their new rules, they stood up and applauded themselves. That apparently is the style of the church." ("Odd Notion Of Whom to Protect," 6/18/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin*: "The Vatican could not start the day without the money from America. And yet those in the Vatican dislike America and demand that the Catholics here live under laws that were originally written with a quill pen or on parchment, if they ever were written. Rome makes mistakes. Rome is less than forthcoming. Rome doesn't tell the truth. Yet Rome rules." ("Will Rome Ignore Dallas?" 6/16/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin*: "The meeting was conducted by Call to Action, a coalition of Catholics who are irritated, angered, disgusted by the way the church hierarchy has maimed their faith. ... A couple of weeks ago, [Bishop Wilton Gregory] was viewed on a stage at the Vatican. On that occasion he failed his magic class when he tried to say that the American Bishops have accomplished much when they did absolutely nothing. ... Later, the thick green wall of New York's Irish church hierarchy came out with the startling statement that priests should not abuse infants." ("Dissenters Make Their Case," 6/14/02)
- *Carol Richards*: Comparing the clergy scandal to teacher/student sex abuse: "What distinguishes this 1997 case from those that are haunting the Catholic Church today is that the wrongdoers were caught within months and punished. And therein lies a lesson for America's cardinals as they plan their June meeting in Dallas to decide how to deal with the scandal... Once teachers lose their certification, they can no longer teach in New

York. And – cardinals, please note – New York swaps names with the 49 other states in a national clearinghouse so that bad apples can't just move and keep on abusing kids." ("Cardinals Can Learn from the Schools," 5/5/02)

- *Paul Vitello:* On Nassau County DA Denis Dillon: "Dillon has a constitutionally guaranteed right to his attitude about priests and the Catholic Church. But he does not necessarily have a right to bring that attitude to work as a public official charged with protecting all citizens. ... This is a don't-ask-don't-tell approach to priestly abuse. ... [The letter written by Denis Dillon to State Senate Majority Leader Joe Bruno, stating accused priests are mostly homosexuals and not pedophiles] is an interesting letter, revealing interesting assumptions about sexuality and sexual abuse, which happens to mirror church doctrine, which is probably wrong on all counts. But let that go. He cites studies. He quotes Latin. It is very erudite. But in reality, it is the letter of a church apologist, which is Denis Dillon's every right as an American to be. But he should not be in charge of investigating allegations against priests." ("The Wrong Man For This Job," 4/30/02)
- *Paul Vitello:* "To hire a PR firm usually requires of a client three basic conditions: to be caught dead to rights in scandal, to have lots of money and to be determined against all odds to live in denial. The church qualifies." ("The Church's PR Nightmare," 4/28/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin:* "And if they start getting rid of homosexuals, as they seem bent on doing, what with all these attacks by men in red hats, there will be mornings around New York when your aunt is going to have to say mass. ... In the Vatican at this hour, a room full of old men, the supposed shepherds, were plotting how to present a large lie of omission to the American people.

... The papers the cardinals worked on all day and then would try to shove down Catholic throats should be their last." ("They Need a Lesson in Proper Confession," 4/25/02)

- *Marie Cocco*: According to a CBS News poll, "About half of the nation's Catholics said they believe the church today is 'out of touch' with their needs. It is not clear what that means. Out of touch on birth control? On divorce? On Women? On celibacy? Or just pedophilia?" ("Cardinals are missing a talk with their most faithful; Alas, they look inward," 4/25/02)
- *Sheryl McCarthy*: "The celibacy requirement is unique to Catholicism, and in no other religious group has there been a sexual abuse problem of these dimensions. Celibacy requires priests to fight powerful natural urges, and those who can't or won't do that, at the risk of facing public disgrace, prey on the people over whom they have control, which means minors." ("The Church Stumbles to Lay Blame on Gays," 4/25/02)
- *Paul Vitello*: "The pope says nothing about the role of his cardinals and his bishops...in allowing 'the abuse of the young' to flourish throughout the world." ("Holy See Still Has Its Blinders On," 4/25/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin*: "These cardinals will say anything, cling to any piece of driftwood and hide anywhere, but never mention that the problem is in their lying, covering up their people as they do so. ... Rather than accountability, the cardinals yesterday seemed to spend much time on the 'one strike' rule for priests involved in sex abuse. Fourteen or 16 or so white-haired unmarried men defining sex and the family for us. Wonderful." ("Cardinals Strike Out At Vatican Meeting," 4/24/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin*: On Pope John Paul II: "Age and illness have left him with an instinctive dislike of anything to

do with women." ("Pain of Abused Lost in Wisps of Vatican Fog," 4/23/02)

- *Dennis Duggan*: "The mob is not the Catholic Church, and no one wants to suggest that. But there is a lesson to be learned here. The similarities are inescapable when you look at two ancient, far-flung organizations historically controlled by local bosses who report only to a distant leader. ... The pope has been far more concerned with what he regards as the evil of abortion, so far directing much of his passion toward children yet to be born and not those being victimized by the fathers of their churches." ("This Thing of Theirs Has Gone Too Far," 4/17/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin*: Pope John Paul II "called the cardinals to Rome because on his best days I don't think he ever knew where America was. ... The pope dislikes this country, as do all the bitter little old Italian men surrounding him. The pope and his lackeys see New York as sinful." ("Bishop Breslin Seizes the Day," 4/16/02)
- *Sheryl McCarthy*: "All the old, self-serving men in the Catholic Church who, while sparks of sexual abuse by the priests in their charge were flickering all around them, bobbed and weaved and hid the evidence, and fiddled until now the whole church is going up in flames. ... [The bishops] run a huge bureaucracy that's more concerned with protecting its reputation and hiding ugly secrets than with the pain of the children and teenagers who were picked off by these priests, and of their families." ("Church Needs to Do Some Serious Spring Cleaning," 4/15/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin*: "This is the largest institution on earth, and it is in the most trouble in its modern history. A few women could have saved them, but it is an all-male institution that hates and fears women."

("Of Mortality And Morality," 4/11/02)

- *Paul Vitello*: "To date, no bishop, no cardinal and no pope has made a real address to the victims of the untold number of criminal Catholic priests who were shuffled around the country—for decades—to new fields of criminal opportunity. All to spare the church the serious work of self-examination." ("Unbelievable Noise in Church," 3/26/02)
- *Ellis Henican*: On the actions of Church leaders: "Hide. Avoid. Stay Quiet. Issue the flattest possible platitudes. 'Mysterium iniquitatis!' Pope John Paul II finally roared from Rome yesterday." ("Doleful Book Of Revelation," 3/22/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin*: "I qualify as the next bishop because I am not a pedophile. ... The loyal parishioners will not have to worry about Bishop Breslin chasing little boys. He hates them and they hate him. Nor will he stalk women." ("You can just kiss my ring," 3/21/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin*: "[Cardinal] Egan was in the cathedral pulpit at the annual St. Patrick's Day Mass. His homily suggested that he was numb. He cloaked himself in the firefighters and cops and everybody else in the World Trade Center catastrophe to keep the word pedophile out of all minds. ... The man betrayed Catholics, and the Irish, and he puts on his red hat. ... [Nell McCafferty, a friend of Breslin's] called to say, 'I wanted to give [Cardinal Egan] a kiss and tell him I'm gay and marching right along and how are you with the pedophiles? Oh, and we just passed an abortion bill in Ireland. You are losing the whole thing.'" ("A Betrayal of Catholics, Irish," 3/17/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin*: "This is the church that has the confessional box as one of its core beliefs, and yet the bishops and cardinals stand out on the steps and defend, deny, dispute, lie, hide, bury and omit. ... Either the

pedophiles were this way before they entered the priesthood, finding it a good place to hide their faults, or they were twisted by the doctrine of celibacy. " ("Celibacy Doesn't Stand a Prayer," 3/14/02)

- *Sheryl McCarthy*: "Because the church hierarchy, from the pope on down to the bishops, has conspired to cover up these scandals and keep the offending priests in circulation, the church's credibility has been badly damaged." ("Catholics Must Examine Crisis in Priesthood," 3/14/02)
- *Carol Richards*: On voucher schools: "They're Catholic schools, not Muslim, and the girls wear cute plaid skirts, not graceful head scarves—but the gimmick that advocates cite for their supposed constitutionality is that vouchers can be used at any nonpublic school and so don't violate the First Amendment ban on establishment of a religion. It is ironic that the pitch for vouchers has reached the nation's highest court just as Americans have been made forcefully aware by the September 11 terrorist attacks that the religious indoctrination of school children can breed poisonous hatred." ("State Shouldn't Subsidize Religious Schools," 3/10/02)
- *Paul Vitello*: On Nassau County DA Denis Dillon's Catholicism, "This is Enron asking Arthur Andersen to investigate its books." ("A Crime Hardly on the Record," 3/10/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin*: "The priests and bishops around here form a white conservative church that speaks in whispers against capital punishment, if at all, because they really want it. Then they roar against abortion and even birth control. ... But the speed and ease with which you bring the cardinal and his associates out when the matter is about women is an indictment of a church of men who are either bald or white-haired and who either don't know or don't care a wit about women." ("They've Lost Touch with Jesus' Ways," 2/7/02)

Contributors:

- *Seth Armus, professor of history, St. Joseph's College:* "As a historian, I am wary of proclaiming about the legacy of a still-ruling pope. One need only remember Pius XII, a hero at the time of his death in 1958 who today is held in rather lower esteem. One wonders, in particular, about how history will regard preaching against condoms in AIDS-ravaged Africa." ("A Global Champion of All of Humanity," 10/15/03)
- *Jacqueline Burt Wang, freelance writer:* "I left the faith myself. Part of me wanted to shake some sense into the reverent folks around me, list every misdeed of the Catholic Church in chronological order and stop them from turning a blind eye to the flaws of their creed." ("This Believer Reached Her Statute of Limitations," 9/23/03)
- *Fenton Johnson, author and visiting professor, University of California:* "The struggles of...gays and lesbians everywhere are less religious than political, which is both troubling and inspiring. Troubling because the far right has so successfully appropriated Jesus' story and the label 'Christian' that these are in danger of losing altogether their connections to their roots. But inspiring because they present us with the challenge to reclaim Jesus and his message." ("On Gay Issues, 'Right' Has Stolen Christianity," 8/4/03)
- *Caitlin Marinelli, High School student:* "I know the church hierarchy protected pedophile priests with the same fervor that they protected Nazi war criminals... Church history is replete with anti-Semitism." ("It's Ignorance," 7/7/03)
- *Bill Nemitz, columnist, Portland Press Herald:* On Cardinal Law's resignation: "Did the prospect of financial ruin push Rome's well-insulated panic button in a way the litany of unspeakable sins—beasts,

disguised as priests, preying on the most vulnerable among their flocks—somehow could not? Was it the criminal justice system? Did the vision of Law sitting before a Massachusetts grand jury (or, even worse, a trial jury) persuade his superiors that earthly justice has at last trumped papal infallibility?” (“After Cardinal Law, The Church Quakes,” 12/15/02)

- *Jack Miles, author and senior advisor to president of J. Paul Getty Trust:* “In October 1962, when Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council, millions of Catholics hoped for a change in the teaching that holds abortion as a crime equivalent to murder and artificial birth control a crime equivalent to abortion.” (“The Church Needs New Direction,” 5/6/02)
- *Kevin Farrell, freelance writer:* “The good priests of your youth are forgotten, and all you’re left with is a revulsion, a nausea, over self-righteous hypocrites who never opted for women priests in the rectory (which almost anybody would forgive compared to the felonies of pedophilia) but who chose to attack children.” (“School Days of Scowling Nuns, Smiling Priests,” 5/1/02)
- *Mark D. Jordan, professor in the Religion Department of Emory University:* “The Catholic Church is and has long been both loudly homophobic and intensely homoerotic. Our public discussions of priestly sexuality won’t make any progress until we can begin to talk about the homoeroticism written into Catholic imagination and its institutions.” (“The Forbidden Question,” 4/28/02)
- *Nell Merlino, representative from the Ms. Foundation:* “And when it comes to women and girls being heard, some very powerful men are still not listening. The Catholic Church, which bars women from leadership, is spinning out of control with multi-million dollar sex scandals across the United States and around the globe.” (“Ten Years Later, Girls Still Need Their Own Day,” 4/18/02)

- *Laura Ahearn, author and executive director of Parents For Megan's Law:* "In this century, we have the Catholic Church being resistant to the reporting of child abuse. It claims that such reporting might compromise the sacramental seal of confession. Just as physicians were previously resistant to putting children's safety first, the Catholic Church is doing the same. And Nassau County District Attorney Denis Dillon is in the church's corner. ... The Catholic Church and any other clergy cannot be exempt because that leaves children too vulnerable and puts the church above the law. Mandated reporting for clergy doesn't go far enough. If we really want to put children first, we will require any people in pastoral roles in any places of worship to be licensed by the state so they can be carefully monitored in their roles with children—as other professionals are." ("Society Must Put Children's Safety First," 4/16/02)

Part II: Long Island Bishop William F. Murphy

January 2002-December 2003

Columnists

- *Dick Ryan:* "The bishop's response to three long evenings of troubling questions about agonizing issues are at best bland and disingenuous and at worst condescending and coldly hypocritical. ... And that is also why his 8,000-word exercise should be the last straw for outraged Catholics who are now officially leaderless and who, along with the priests and the national hierarchy, must begin to take it to another level if the church is to survive the scandal of countless priest predators and the shenanigans of a few bitter old men. ... Unless [Bishop Murphy] has the grace,

and good sense, to step down and walk away from all of it, the only way he can do any true shepherding is to come down from the tower, drop the innocuous PR statements and talk openly and honestly, face to face, with all of the people." ("Bishop's Response to Questions Is More PR," 11/18/03)

- *Jimmy Breslin:* Pope John Paul II "has ignored the monstrous scandals of priests attacking children in thousands of cases in America. Only rotting at the top can explain, locally, William Mansion Murphy in Long Island. The Vatican doesn't care. The faithful here believe silence is the easiest way. Meanwhile, Murphy is going to be infamous forever as the man who came down from Boston, the home of pedophiles he was supposed to supervise, and threw nuns out of a building and set up a castle for himself. He lives forever as Mansion Murphy through a book that has been written, a stage play under way and a probable movie about him." ("Mystery That Can't be Divined," 10/19/03)
- *Dick Ryan:* "When he's not silencing his priests or distancing himself from his parishioners, Bishop William Murphy occasionally indulges in some classic church speak." ("Let's Not Misinterpret What Catholics Desire," 9/30/03)
- *Jimmy Breslin:* "[Bishop Thomas] Daily came down here from Boston with William 'Mansion' Murphy, both hideous failures in the sex scandals. ... And Mansion Murphy is the outgoing bishop of Rockville Centre. If he had any shame, he would be out of here by nightfall." ("Stranger Isn't Needed," 8/3/03)
- *Jimmy Breslin:* "How do you like it if you're a Catholic and they make your bishop the central figure in a report on pedophiles? ... I cannot understand why, today, right now Mansion Murphy of Rockville Centre dares to remain on church grounds after all he has done to place

children in jeopardy." ("What A Church Should Be," 7/27/03)

- *Jimmy Breslin*: On Bishop Murphy's residence: "The kitchen cost something like \$220,000, the money for which came from such collections of the faithful in the parishes of the diocese as the Bishop's Appeal. 'Send money to keep Mansion Murphy eating big thick roast beef!'" *Newsday* made two corrections to this article. Breslin reported that the luncheon took place at "Mansion Murphy's dining room," when in fact it did not. He said there was a Franciscan in attendance, and that it occurred on Ascension Thursday. It was a Dominican in attendance, and it occurred on a Saturday. " ("Royal Stench of Arrogance," 6/12/03)
- *Dick Ryan*: "If Catholics and their priests are to be truly 'catholic' and 'church' in the profoundly honest meaning of those two words, they must first avoid the two extremes of being obsessed with Bishop Murphy and his behavior or ignoring him as just another statue in church or part of the furniture. Instead, they must forgive him for some of his stubborn truculence in the face of so much pain." ("Needs Priest-Parishioner Partnership," 5/15/03)
- *Jimmy Breslin*: "His career in his church consists of being a central figure in the largest scandal the American Catholic Church has had, with priests as pedophiles and bishops as pimps..." ("Betrayed by a Family Friend," 2/13/03)
- *Dick Ryan*: "I'll say this for the 2003 Bishop's Annual Appeal that arrived in the mail last week from Bishop William Murphy of the Diocese of Rockville Centre: The timing is all wrong. Mailed out one year after the first revelations of rampant child abuse in the priesthood, the timing has all the sensitivity of an ant. ... I will be sending my 'appeal' money to my pastor...because pastors and their priests shouldn't have

to be penalized for the evasiveness or shoddy bookkeeping of a few bishops. ... Perhaps if Bishop Murphy converted his residence into a homeless shelter or a hospice for AIDS patients, some of that old trust might be restored." ("Diocese Money Appeal Doesn't Merit Support," 1/14/03)

- *Jimmy Breslin:* Murphy "threw nuns out and the diocese spent—what, \$5 million?—to make over the place, including creating personal living quarters out of the top floor of the huge, great former convent. He could have put about three dozen apartments in there for people to live, but he wants to be alone. ... Mansion Murphy told somebody I know who works for him that there was a big shipment of china and glasses for his dinner parties coming and he didn't want it delivered directly to his mansion. He said this was because Breslin goes through his garbage." ("Fitting a DA for Divine Vestments," 12/31/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin:* Bishop Murphy "has just spent \$5 million and more to rebuild his surroundings, including a full floor of a building that once was a convent but now is the place where he keeps a \$210,000 kitchen and a wine cooler of red and white at different temperatures, the better to entertain. ... The bishop is one of those who stole the spirit out of all of this and all other days of a Catholic's life. Because of this, even on this holiday, the name of the bishop is Mansion Murphy" ("Spirit of Holiday Stolen by Church," 12/24/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin:* "While Mansion Murphy's mansion is extraordinarily expensive, the Diocese of Rockville Centre spent untold amounts on secret payments to victims of sexual abuse by priests. ... Just about all of this came from the collection basket, the money of people who get up in the morning and earn it." ("Out In The Cold As Wine Chills," 11/24/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin:* "In honor of Christ, Mansion Murphy has a mansion that has room for 36 apartments. ... The

building was once a convent. He threw out the nuns to make room for himself. ... Christ walked on foot. Mansion Murphy likes cars. Rather than have one bishop's car, he has several cars so that he can have auto relay races with himself. Sensational! ... He was at the bishops conference in Washington. The usual 400 white-haired old men in black dresses tried making rules about child molestation. Mansion Murphy was heard. He asked if any new guidelines would mean that he was legally and financially responsible for sexual molestation cases out of his diocese. That is exactly what he cared about. There are a lot of poor people who were hurt by priests under his direction here and in Boston but the last thing on his mind is a victim." ("At Home In His Greed," 11/17/02)

- *Jimmy Breslin*: "The bishop in Rockville Centre, Murphy, makes a high art of foolishness. He is rebuilding a great former convent, a place that could hold 36 apartments, into his residence. He spends fortunes of parishioners' money to rebuild the place. He is criticized for greed, and meets this with a remarkable lack of shame." ("Church Gets It Wrong Again," 10/1/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin*: "The bishop of the diocese, William Murphy, refused to allow this group of Catholics [Voice of the Faithful] to use a Catholic church...Murphy is one of the three Irish bishops down from New England who run the New York area. All arrived with questionable backgrounds in handling the sex cases. ... Murphy has grabbed the huge convent building, chasing the nuns out to anywhere they can find." ("An Appeal to the Bishop," 9/15/02)
- *Dick Ryan*: "Whether its next meeting is held at Shea Stadium or the roof of a Home Depot, the Voice of the Faithful on Long Island is not about to be shut up or shut out. But it would be sad indeed if the only things shut were the minds of some bishops who still cling feverishly to the waning glory days of pomp and power

within the hierarchy. And sadder still if Bishop William Francis Murphy, ordained shepherd, truly believes that his flock is the enemy." ("Bishop's Meeting Ban Can't Silence LI Flock," 8/14/02)

- *Bob Keeler:* On Bishop Murphy's plan to invite Nigerian nuns to New York to pray for vocations: "Now the bishop has chosen to fly to Nigeria to pursue his vision, instead of attending this weekend's celebration by Catholic Charities: people living out the Gospel by serving the poor. His priorities seem misplaced." ("Asides," 6/30/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin:* "As for Bishop Murphy of Long Island, the new garage behind his castle at St. Agnes Cathedral in Rockville Centre is almost done. Soon, a fleet of cars will have a roof. His name forever shall be Mansion Murphy." ("Dissenters Make Their Case," 6/14/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin:* "With Law going, the three men around here, Cardinal Egan in Manhattan, Bishop Daily in Brooklyn and Bishop Murphy in Rockville Centre, should get plane tickets. Daily and Murphy were in Boston with Law at the time that pedophiles were transferred from one parish to another." ("The Hierarchy of Decency," 5/19/02)
- *Dick Ryan:* On Bishop Murphy's hiring of a PR spokesman: "Bishop Murphy has shunted his public relations staff aside and gone for the glamour name. So it is obvious that he is trying to manipulate, instead of communicate, in fixing the enormous credibility gap that now exists in the church." ("Diocese Should Tell Truth, Without PR Spin," 5/15/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin:* On pedophile John Geoghan: "Each time there was a complaint about him, the bosses of the Boston archdiocese, Law and Bishop Thomas Daily and Bishop William Murphy...moved Geoghan to another parish." The following day *Newsday* issued a correction noting Bishop Murphy has said he was not aware of church

leaders shifting Geoghan from parish to parish. ("Bishop Breslin: Time to Step In," 5/9/02)

- *Jimmy Breslin:* "Straight east, out in Rockville Centre, the bishop, Murphy, has hired a public relations man, Howard Rubenstein, for what I'm told is at least \$250,000 for a couple of months to make him look good after all the bad he's done. That figure is not as high as what Murphy has them spending on his new residence, an entire four-story building that could be used for 36 apartments, and a four-car garage to go with it." ("Close to God in Bushwick," 4/30/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin:* "The bishop, Murphy, was just here from Boston, where he has been in charge of assigning priests. The major part of that work appears to have been the shifting of pedophiles around as if they were substitutes in a game." ("Greed That Can Move Mountains," 4/18/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin:* "Thomas V. Daily and William Murphy, two of our bishops, got into hideous trouble over covering up pedophiles. Daily and Murphy transferred a priest named Geoghan each time he drew sex abuse charges in a parish. They transferred him four times, the last to a parish where he was in charge of altar boys and two other youth groups." ("A Betrayal of Catholics, Irish," 3/17/02)
- *Jimmy Breslin:* The "Rev. John Geoghan...seemed to be the personal charge of Bishop Murphy. Geoghan was transferred from parish to parish in order to cover up his crimes..." ("Celibacy Doesn't Stand a Prayer," 3/14/02)

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Anti-Catholicism on the Internet

by Robert P. Lockwood

(3/2001)

When Joseph Lieberman was nominated as the Democratic vice-presidential candidate in the summer of 2000, commentators feared an upsurge in anti-Semitism in reaction to the Jewish senator from Connecticut. Reporters scanned the Internet to look for anti-Semitic sites and searching for anti-Semitic hate speech. For the most part, they found, other than the usual suspects, no outburst of such sentiments. After the election, Jewish organizations praised the fact that the senator's national campaign evidenced little or nothing of traditional anti-Semitic activities in the United States.

It goes without saying that this tolerance toward Mr. Lieberman's Jewish faith is an admirable sign. Yet, it is questionable if the results of that initial Internet search

would have been the same if either party had nominated a Catholic for president or vice president. It is also questionable whether a reporter in that event would have even considered combing the Internet for anti-Catholic rhetoric. More likely, that reporter would have been raising questions about the candidate's Catholic faith, seeing that faith as a threat rather than an opportunity for tolerance. If the reporter did comb the Internet, it would have been to find material to buttress that alleged Catholic threat, rather than to warn about an underbelly of anti-Catholic prejudice. And the reporter would not have to look very far or "surf" very long. The Internet is inundated with anti-Catholic websites and anti-Catholic rhetoric.

We are all well aware that there are anti-Semitic sites on the Internet and sites that engage in other forms of racism. That has been well documented. Virtually ignored, however, is the abundance of anti-Catholicism that exists on the Internet. The existence of anti-Catholicism is simply not a story that generates much interest in the secular press. Yet, anti-Catholicism on the Internet is neither hidden nor difficult to find. Logon to any of the popular search engines for the Internet and type in "Roman Catholicism" or "Roman Catholic." More than likely, you will find in one of your first 10 options for websites to explore an Internet site dedicated to anti-Catholicism. Using Alta Vista, for example, six of the first 20 websites that appear are specifically anti-Catholic; using "Go To," seven of the first 20 cites listed were anti-Catholic. The pervasiveness of anti-Catholicism on the Internet reflects how deeply entrenched, obsessive and normative this prejudice is within contemporary culture. If the Internet is our most contemporary means of communication and information gathering, then anti-Catholicism is entering the new Millenium in a powerful fashion.

Anti-Catholicism has been carried along by new technologies since its inception. The birth of anti-Catholicism in Western

Civilization was strongly tied to the invention of moveable type that created the printing press. Johann Gutenberg of Strasbourg is generally credited with the “invention” of printing from moveable metal type. Born in 1400, the first printed work he produced may have been a letter of indulgence issued by Pope Nicholas V in 1451. In 1456 he produced his first type-printed book, the famous “Gutenberg Bible” which is popularly considered the birth of modern publishing.¹ Within a matter of just two decades, printing presses spread throughout Europe and “a passion for books became one of the effervescent ingredients of the Reformation age.”²

By the time that Martin Luther posted his 95 “theses” on the door of the castle church of Wittenberg on Halloween 1517³ published works – meaning works meant for the public – were widely popular. In a sense, “news” had been created and the printed word would spread the Reformation throughout England and Europe by the use of books and popular tracts. Anti-Catholic literature became a part of the popular polemics of the time.

The post-Reformation period of the mid 16th and 17th Seventeenth centuries saw a wealth of anti-Catholic published material that would establish the foundation for anti-Catholic historical and cultural assumptions that are now moving to the Internet. John Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* (1563) created the English legend of “Bloody Mary” and became the most popular book next to the Bible in the Protestant world with its tales of Protestant suffering at the hands of the Catholic queen of England. (It would come to the New World as a favorite work among the Puritans.) In Germany in 1567, two Spanish Protestants under the pseudonym Reginaldus Gonzalvus Montanus published *Sanctae Inquisitionis Hispanicae Artes*. Though a basic propaganda tract, it would be reprinted throughout Europe and be considered the definitive source on the Inquisition for over 200 years. Most inquisition “histories”

written thereafter, virtually until the late 19th Century, would rely on Montanus, which became a primary source, though written by anything but an unbiased eye. It was from Montanus that the gruesome legends of demonic torture machines were invented. In 1581, the *Apologie* of William of Orange was published. Written by a French Huguenot, the *Apologie* utilized anti-Inquisition theatrics to validate the Dutch revolt against Spain and would be a source book for anti-Catholicism in the English-speaking world. The *Apologie* and Montanus created the myth of the Inquisition that still feeds the popular imagination.⁴

In the United States, anti-Catholic books and literature blossomed in the early 19th Century. Rebecca Reed's *Six Months in a Convent* sold 200,000 copies within a month of its publication in 1835. Reed claimed to have been a "captive" Sister in an Ursuline convent in just outside Boston, though the Mother Superior stated that Reed had been an employee of the convent who was dismissed. An angry mob burned the convent to the ground. In 1836 the most popular and famous book of anti-Catholic literature, the *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* was published in New York. It became one of the most widely distributed "religious" book in the United States in the 19th century.⁵ In the 20th century, anti-Catholic newspapers were widespread, particularly in the United States. They popularized centuries of anti-Catholic literature and legends. A study by the Knights of Columbus in 1914 found over 60 national anti-Catholic weekly newspapers reaching millions of readers.⁶

The advent of movies and television as a source of information and entertainment in some ways toned-down the more overt elements of anti-Catholicism because of the widespread and public nature of the medium. The violence and sexuality of anti-Catholic literature (which gave it the name "Puritan Pornography") did not translate well to both movies and

television in their early days. The crude sexual descriptions of life in a convent as contained in the *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* would be unacceptable to a mass audience that movies hoped to attract. Television, funded primarily by paid advertising, could hardly hope to offend nearly a quarter of its audience by anti-Catholic presentations.

However, in recent years, with the advent of cable television and a change in the culture of movie making, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of anti-Catholic imagery and rhetoric in popular media. The short-lived television program *That's Life* on ABC and movies such as *Dogma* and *Quills* evidenced a new willingness to engage in anti-Catholicism in entertainment aimed at a general audience.⁷

It should come as no surprise that the newest form of communication through the Internet should absorb this anti-Catholic heritage in an environment of increasing acceptance of anti-Catholicism in popular media. Every book title mentioned above is available in some form on the Internet. Hundreds of anti-Catholic titles and tracts, some many years old, others the creation of contemporary bigots, can be accessed. The Internet has also expanded on accessibility to this anti-Catholic heritage. No reputable publisher would be interested – except as a historical curiosity – in publishing Rebecca Reed's book today.⁸ On the Internet, however, excerpts abound and the book can be easily viewed.

By its nature, the Internet is unregulated. In addition to its benefits, it is the dumping ground for the effluvia of Western culture. There is no editing for truth, objectivity, reliability or responsibility on the Internet. With its millions of websites, personal home pages and search portals, it is impossible to monitor or respond in any consistent fashion to its content. It would take a lifetime to even begin to visit every anti-Catholic website on the Internet.

The nature of the Internet also leads to a generally more coarse standards even with so-called "legitimate" Internet sites. Profanity, obscenity and nudity are commonplace while they remain less so in newspapers that are still viewed as "family reading." Of course, that bar has been lowered in recent years in newspapers but it is a standard far higher than mainstream sites on the Internet. *Salon.com*, the Internet "magazine," routinely publishes descriptive obscene material and nudity. In a Halloween, 2000 offering, Salon excerpts a story with a graphic sex scene involving a mysterious Catholic girl destined for the convent.⁹ *MensJournal.com* in July 2000 featured a piece about a British comedian who refers to Pope Pius XII with a vulgarity and plays a scene in which Jesus hosts the Last Breakfast and his disciples are served Rice Krispies ("These are my corpuscles") and "orange juice doubles as plasma."¹⁰

Anti-Catholicism persists today in two primary forms. Traditional anti-Catholicism – fundamentalist attacks on the Church as the Scriptural "whore of Babylon" – bubbles just below the surface in many areas of our society. This traditional anti-Catholicism created many of the myths of anti-Catholicism that linger within the culture: the church as solely interested in power; Catholicism as an "alien" religion in America; Catholicism as the enemy of separation of Church and State (as well as the public school system); the Catholic Church as oppressor. This traditional anti-Catholicism sees the Church as unchristian and derived from paganism. Catholic ritual is portrayed as medieval superstition masquerading as belief. This is a Church portrayed as the enemy of the Bible, as well as the enemy of freedom.

This traditional anti-Catholicism laid the foundation for the common secular anti-Catholicism of contemporary culture. Stripped of its theological foundation, this is the bigotry of the so-called enlightened. It portrays the Church as a medieval relic, the enemy of science and individual freedom.

Born in the pseudo-scientism of the 19th Century – with its mix of nationalism, racism and class warfare – it focused on the Church as the enemy of modern thought and progress. Developed during the eugenics, birth control and pro-abortion crusades of the 20th century, it reached its contemporary culmination in various theories of sexual liberation. It is widespread in contemporary thought and sees anti-Catholicism not as a prejudice, but as a legitimate tool to be utilized to denigrate Church teaching in the public arena.

Both these forms of anti-Catholicism thrive on the Internet. In the confusing world of the Internet, however, these two expressions of anti-Catholicism mix together. The aptly-named *morons.org* is an obscenity-laced screed that accuses the Church of ongoing campaigns that “slaughtered millions.” The website is primarily based on an agenda of sexual liberation, though it’s focus is wider in attacking any traditional expression of values or beliefs. Yet, it provides “anti-Catholic links” which are essentially traditional old-Protestant attacks on the Catholic Church. Most of the links listed would be horrified to be associated with the gutter language and anti-Christian commentary on *morons.org*.

The number of such sophomoric sites spewing anti-Catholicism and generally anti-Christian views is legion. Run either as one-man shows on personal websites or organized more professionally for profit, these sites are generally witless attempts at satire. At The Onion,¹¹ a site for an allegedly humorous weekly newspaper published out of Wisconsin, pseudo news stories are run that lack either wit and satire. In the “religious archives” in a recent posting¹² headlines read: “Christ announces associate Christ”; “Aging Pope ‘Just Blessing Everything in Sight’ Say Concerned handlers’”; “Christ Converts to Islam.” The Onion website is filled with the expected scatological references and obscenities. One story – “Pope Calls for Greater Understanding Between

Catholics, Hellbound” had the Pope say: “During the Holocaust, the Church stood silently by while six million fellow human beings, guilty of nothing but the murder of Christ Our Lord, descended to the depths of brimstone at the hands of Protestants. Our intervention in that affair could have averted a monumental tragedy, and, more important, might have converted the souls of untold multitudes of evil heretics to the Holy Word of God.”¹³

At The Catholic Page¹⁴ which is part of the “Anti-Religion Web Ring,” there is “The Top 10 Reasons Why t Sucks To Be A Catholic.” Authored by “Prince Wally,” among the reasons listed are “Communion – the wine sucks and the wafers are dry”; and “Being an Altar Boy – Read a newspaper...” The attempt at humor is as sophomoric as The Onion Page, but the author is straightforward that “my page is Anti-Catholic but I don’t have any problems with specific Catholics, it’s Catholicism in general that irritates me... They have too many rules and too much hypocrisy for my taste. That makes them fun to bash.” At Ask Sister Rosseta¹⁵ the so-called “Lavender Nun” engages in double-entendres and sexual buffoonery. Particularly tasteless is a cartoonish rendition of Jesus on the cross that a person can “dress” in top hat and tails, rabbit slippers or other blasphemous outfits.

Pornography is ubiquitous on the Internet and sites that use Catholic imagery are commonplace. Models in various stages of undress garbed as clergy, bishops, priests, nuns and the pope engaged in sexual activity seems to feed in literally to the heritage of anti-Catholicism as Puritan pornography. The use of Catholic settings and sacred images on these sites only increases the nature of this peculiar fetish.

That fetish nature of these sites is even more enhanced by the use of female models dressed in Catholic school uniforms. This “virgin\harlot” fetish of Catholic schoolgirl imagery is common throughout the pornographic sites. Even more repulsive,

however, are certain sites selling images of alleged Catholic girls. One such site, based in Canada, promises pornographic photos of "Catholic teens." (There appears to be no pornographic "Baptist teens" or "Jewish teens" sites.) In a particularly repulsive fashion, this site advertises virtual pedophilia – boys and girls – while a special emphasis on the Catholicity of the young models\ victims of this pornography.

In mind-numbing detail are a host of traditional anti-Catholic sites. From rural churches and personal websites, to sites for fundamentalist publishing houses, the traditional anti-Catholicism that was said to have died with the election of John F. Kennedy in 1960 thrives on the Internet. A major website is for the Jack Chick Company.¹⁶ Jack Chick was one of the first to realize in the post-Kennedy years that old-fashioned anti-Catholicism could still make a buck. He released a series of traditional anti-Catholic "comic books" in the 1970s, the most popular being *Alberto*. *Alberto* is the story of a man who claims to have been a Jesuit priest who worked under assignment from the Vatican. Murder and assassination – as well as the usual priestly licentiousness – are common tools for the Holy See, according to the Chick comic book. Chick followed this up with a few other comics, though none as successful as the original *Alberto*. Chick, who publishes today out of California, also produces a range of small black-and-white tracts that viciously attack Catholic practices and beliefs. Perhaps the most tasteless among the tasteless is the "Death Cookie," that portrays the Eucharist as a Satanic-inspired ritual rooted in pagan beliefs. Chick also has reproduced classic anti-Catholic works such as "Father" Chiniquy's "Fifty Years in the Church of Rome."¹⁷

Chick's website is primarily a tool for selling his materials. As his advertising is routinely rejected as offensive in mainstream Christian periodicals, he has limited vehicles in which to reach an audience. He proclaims – as do most of the church-based anti-Catholic Internet sites – that his only goal

is the conversion of Catholics to “bible-based” beliefs. But Chick does not bother to engage in honest dialogue, or honest argument, over Catholic beliefs. Rather, the Chick website, like so many others, peddles bombastic charges against the Church as knowingly teaching false doctrine and purposely sending souls to hell. This is ugly stuff.

At [jesus-is-lord website](#)¹⁸ vicious anti-Catholicism flourishes. Convents are referred to as “torture chambers” and 19th-century anti-Catholic polemics are excerpted. “Ex-priest” William Hogan, who claims to have been ordained in Ireland, writes of an abortion and the murder of the young nun-mother by “lascivious, beastly priests of the Whore.” Alleged ex-priests like Hogan made a good living after the Civil War in the United States. They were usually tent preachers who came to town under the sponsorship of a local Protestant congregation. A few, like Chiniquy, might have actually been priests, usually with a bumpy past with Church authorities, rather than the sincere converts they claimed to be. It was a good way to make a living, as these “revivals” would draw good-sized crowds and the “free will offerings” were usually generous. Like pornographic websites today that use Catholic imagery (sacramentals, or women dressed as nuns or in Catholic school girl uniforms), the promise to the crowd was usually a touch of scandal and sex as they promised to reveal what goes on in the confessional or behind the doors of convents. Even as late as the first quarter of the 20th Century, revivals by “ex-priests” were common in the Midwest and the South.¹⁹

Jesus-is-lord reproduces “The Priest, the Woman, and the Confessional” by Chiniquy as well as “Thirty Years in Hell” by ex-priest Bernard Fresenberg (1904 date of publication) “who today stands at the Vatican’s door, with the torch of Protestant wisdom, and denounces Popery with a tongue livid with the power of a living God.” Jesus-is-lord provides the “Anti-Christ Slideshow” that stars “the popes of Rome and the

great whore of revelation XVII the Roman Catholic Religion." The slideshow promises "blasphemy, torture, licentiousness, damnation, whoredom" and "the power of the devil." Also included on the website is a *Washington Post* wire story on the debunked *Kansas City Star* story of an alleged epidemic of AIDS in the priesthood proving, according to the website, that the Catholic priesthood is the "repository of perverts." The *Kansas City Star* should be happy that someone has treated their stories seriously. The counter for hits on Jesus-is-lord for about a two-year period shows that 1,172,583 visitors have logged onto the website.²⁰

As most parents understand, virtually any child can access pornographic images with two or three clicks of a mouse on the Internet. It is just as simple to access anti-Catholic pages. Internet Websites such as Jack Chick's rarely have a positive presentation of their own faith. Primarily, these sites castigate other believers, particularly Catholics. At Harbor Lighthouse²¹ produced by the Ankerberg Theological Institute in Nashville, Tennessee, a wealth of anti-Catholic material is readily available. In a posted article entitled "The Spiritual Battle for Truth" – which can be downloaded for \$2 – Michael Grendon, who claims to be a former Catholic, writes: "Satan has been profoundly successful in deceiving multitudes in the name of Christ because his servants appear as ministers of righteousness. They wear high priestly garments and religious collars and carry boastful titles such as 'most reverend,' 'right reverend,' 'his excellency' and 'Holy Father.'"²²

Catholicism is not the enemy alone, though anti-Catholic articles appear to be the highest in number at Harbor Lighthouse. Catholicism is attacked along with Jehovah Witnesses, the Islamic faith, Mormonism, New Age cults and rock music. Throughout the Harbor Lighthouse site articles appear in Spanish, particularly those attacking Marian devotion. As in the above quote, this is not, for the most

part, an attempt to theologically engage Catholicism, a perfectly legitimate and sadly necessary discussion in a divided Christianity. This is simply old-time anti-Catholic nativism that has a primary form of argument that refers to Catholicism as a conscious, knowing Satanic plot to undermine Scripture. Such leaves little room for healthy and honest exchanges.

Login to Excite search engine for Roman Catholicism and one quickly will encounter the website for Cutting Edge Ministry.²³ With advertising sponsors such as Hickory Farms, Cutting Edge claims to “love you all” and wants Catholics to simply know the truth. Cutting Edge then proceeds to offer a series of articles that, among other things, claims that the Mass is witchcraft, the Holy Father is the Antichrist, the crucifix in Catholic churches is a Satanic symbol, and that “Roman Catholic teachings are blatant frauds upon the faithful people.”

At Alpha and Omega Ministries²⁴ one can read detailed explanations on how Pope Honorius I (625-638) in a letter to the patriarch of Constantinople on the nature of Christ may have been in error, thereby disputing the teaching of papal infallibility in matters of doctrinal definition.²⁵ Almost the entire website is dedicated to attacking Catholic beliefs with endlessly tiresome apologetics. While self-promotion and sales of materials seem to be a major motivation, the conscious loathing of all things Catholic seems more psychologically compulsive than faith-based.

A particularly vicious traditionalist site is The Reformation Online²⁶ which makes the Alpha and Omega ministry seem tame in comparison. This page spends most of its space dwelling on 19th Century anti-Catholic invective concerning Pope Pius IX and the fall of the Papal States. Vatican and Jesuit “one world” plots dominate the conversation. In a charge that is

unique to all the traditional anti-Catholic Internet sites, Reformation Online claims that the Great Famine in Ireland was a plot concocted by Pope Pius IX. The only redeeming grace of the page is the audio of bagpipes playing "Amazing Grace" and other traditional tunes. Another anti-Catholic Internet site, Balaam's Ass²⁷ has great piano and harpsichord music while informing the reader about the Catholic Whore of Babylon, the Church's lustful art and the Masonic domination of the Holy See.

Lamb and Lion Ministries²⁸ states that it was founded in 1980 as a "non-denominational, independent ministry." Run by a board of 24 trustees "from a variety of Christian fellowships," it is based in McKinney, Texas. Though its mission statement claims that the ministry "does not seek to convert people to any Church"²⁹ it makes clear its purpose toward Catholics. As Dr. David Reagan writes on the website under "Religious issues": "(Catholics) should do exactly what any believer should do who is caught up in an apostate religious organization, whether it be a Catholic parish or a Protestant church. They should leave!"

While Lamb and Lion Ministries eschew talk of money and finances by stating that "we do not charge fees for any of our services," the website seems dedicated to peddling tapes, videos, books and tracts from Dr. Reagan. Dr. Reagan writes on the "Whore of Babylon" that, "I believe that the harlot church of revelation 17 will most likely be an amalgamation of the world's pagan religions, including apostate Protestants, under the leadership of the Catholic Church." That might be quite a concession, as most of these anti-Catholic websites consider the Catholic Church alone to represent the Whore of Babylon. He writes on the website that the "apostasies of the Catholic Church are great in number and profound in their implications for the Christian faith...(Catholicism) is the ancient Babylonian mystery religion parading in new clothes,

worshipping Mary as the 'Queen of Heaven.'"³⁰

White Horse Publications³¹ is the website for a "Christian publishing company devoted to exposing the errors and trappings of a sacramental system of salvation." Based in Huntsville, AL, White Horse believes that "the most prominent manifestation of that error is Roman Catholicism, or Romanism." They publish seven books, all of which attack various aspects of Catholicism, including "Graven Bread," a book that calls the Eucharist "a centuries-old practice that amounts to nothing less than idolatry."³² At Bible Believers³³ an alleged ex-nun gives a testimony right out of 19th Century anti-Catholic tracts. There are the usual sexually-deviant priests, vicious penances and Roman "blasphemies."

An army of individual pastors and their local churches have put up sites dedicated to tradition anti-Catholicism. One of the most loathsome is from Pastor Fred Phelps' Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas. Phelps has made a name for himself for decidedly homophobic hate speech. Its Internet address is godhatesfags.org. Phelps refers to the Catholic Church as a "fag" church and claims that a third of Catholic priests are actively homosexual, seducing young boys and women. (The logic is his, not mine.) He reproduces an alleged "Diary of Another Fag Catholic Priest" and asserts that, "fag priests and dyke nuns is the order of the day for Kansas Catholics. They deserve the sick, perverted leadership that now dooms and damns them."

At Just for Catholics website³⁴ Catholics are advised to "reckon yourself an unworthy sinner and a rebel against the sovereign God. Plead guilty before the Judge of the earth, admit that you deserve the everlasting fire of hell...Do not rely on a church, Mary, the saints, a human priest, the sacrifice of the Mass, or an imaginary Purgatory." Just for Catholics is operated by a minister who claims to have been

raised a Catholic but found the truth at age 14.

There are numerous websites by alleged ex-Catholics that engage in evangelization aimed specifically at Catholics. Most use anti-Catholicism as their primary means of attack. Very few rely on a positive presentation of a faith to which they hope to convert Catholics. For the most part, they simply – very simply – attack Catholic beliefs, present a distorted view of Catholic practices, and re-write history from an anti-Catholic perspective. At Pro-Gospel³⁵ they “untangle Roman Catholics from the dogmatic jungle in which they are held captive.” So-called “born again” Catholics – those who have left the Church – are told to contact their Catholic friends to “rescue those who have never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They – Catholics – have been in submission to the controlling, irrefutable dogmas of the Catholic clergy.” The site has registered 898,128 hits.³⁶

Reaching Catholics for Christ³⁷ comes from Bend, Oregon and has a series of articles attacking Catholicism as an “apostate” Church. Good News for Catholics³⁸ is dedicated to the proposition that the “Roman Catholic Church has led its people astray.” The organization itself began in 1981 by a very public distribution of anti-Catholic booklets at the consecration of Bishop Pierre DuMaine at San Jose, CA. On the website, they describe the Catholic Church as an “unbiblical form of Christianity which has deceived the Catholic people. It cannot be reformed or revived.” At Former Catholics for Christ³⁹ Catholics are told that the Church is “proven to be a practice of white witchcraft.”

Mission to Catholics International⁴⁰ is a long-time anti-Catholic group founded by Bart Brewer, a former priest. Brewer has made a living on anti-Catholicism. Like the tent preachers from the late 19th and early 20th Century, Brewer does the

traveling circuit with a group of alleged ex-priests. Though supposedly aimed at rescuing Catholics from their false faith, the audience he serves is primarily fundamentalists who want to hear that "old-time religion" of anti-Catholicism.

Brewer's website – which peddles Brewer tracts and books – states that the "authority claimed by the Catholic Church is blasphemous and unchristian." In another article it is stated that "the autocratic domineering of the Catholic Church over its members dishonors Christ and the Bible." With tangled rhetoric, the author proclaims: "But not only the Catholic who is domineered and ruled and bossed suffers. The Catholic must eat fish on Fridays and during Lent (or macaroni and cheese)."

Brewer claims that there "were no Roman Catholics until Christianity was merged with paganism into a state religion around 315 AD. The true Christians obeyed God's word, they never joined in the pagan corruption...There are more than 100,000 masses said all over the world every day. Jesus suffers the terrible agony of Calvary at least 1000,000 times every 24 hours instead of 'once and for all' as Scripture teaches." He concludes that the "dogma of transubstantiation is the most wicked and Satanic."

The common thread running through these "conversion" sites is the viciousness of the attacks on Catholic beliefs and practices. These sites are not content to legitimately argue theology or make a positive presentation of their own faith. Instead, they create an image of Catholic beliefs as essentially pagan. They constantly present the Catholic priesthood as corrupted by sexual deviancy and the Church as a conscious effort to deceive people in order to oppress them. Old historical canards are resurrected, long-debunked anti-Catholic tracts reproduced. Reading this material, one is left not with a positive impression of faith, but rather with a picture of an evil, satanic Catholic Church.

Anti-Catholicism also finds its way into the Internet's crazy

world of militia groups and radical right-wing zealots. Though much time is spent on these pages with anti-Semitism and racism, Catholicism shares in their vicious attacks. One particularly odious page is the website of *Free American newsmagazine*⁴¹ Run by Clayton Douglas out of New Mexico, that features material on Jesuit "control" of the CIA and the old Soviet KGB and attributes to the Jesuits all kinds of political mayhem.

There are also websites from traditionalist Catholic groups, and disenchanted Catholic organizations from the left, that often borrow the language and approach of traditional anti-Catholic sites. Some of these sites represent followers of the late Archbishop Lefebvre and are formally schismatic. Their primary aim is to attack the Church today as being heretical and the Mass as celebrated contrary to traditional Catholic teaching. Their attacks on the Church and its members are vehement, and often raise accusations of "Masonic conspiracies" or satanic infiltration, not unlike sites such as *jesus-is-lord* noted above. From the ex-Catholic left, the attacks are mostly from a secular perspective, and usually driven by pro-abortion or a gay agenda. Sites for "recovering Catholics" simply assume that any thinking person will have left the Church, and offer advice often centered on a supposed sexual liberation.

The amount of anti-Catholic sites on the Internet is overwhelming and shocks any serious researcher. In a paper presented to The Fifth Biennial Conference on Christianity and the Holocaust in October 1998, Mark Weitzman of The Simon Wiesenthal Center outlined anti-Semitism and Anti-Catholicism on the Internet.⁴² He explained that any search for extremism on the Internet will turn out the usual victims. He noted, however, that "one group that was conspicuously present in the list of traditional American targets is conspicuously absent when we think of targets. I am referring, of course, to Catholics, particularly Catholics in the U.S."

Weitzman acknowledges the long history of anti-Catholicism in America and he states that "the Internet has not been investigated or analyzed by researchers for its anti-Catholic propaganda. It would almost seem that no one expects to find vestiges of classical bigotry in this new medium. My own research demonstrates quite a different story. Along with other forms of extremism...one can find anti-Catholicism to be visible as well."

Weitzman reviews a number of these anti-Catholic websites, many of which have already been noted here. He found in his research that the "papacy is a common target of many of these sites. The pope, according to one, 'purposely misinterprets scripture,' according to another he is a hypocrite, who 'parades around the world as the champion of freedom and truth for everyone, that is everyone except for those in his Romish system.' Another asks the question, 'has the Pope apologized for his persecutions?' and answers 'Don't be deceived by the clever manipulations of false teachers. The Pope has not repented, and the Roman Catholic Church has not substantially changed' for if he had, 'a repentant Pope would cast aside his blasphemous title' and 'would acknowledge that the papacy, through its blasphemous claims and the sacramental gospel, has led multitudes to eternal hell.'"

Weitzman quotes from a number of sites that identify the pope with the Antichrist then concludes that "it should come as no surprise that we can find sites that link Catholicism with Satanism...Many other categories of anti-Catholic extremism can be found, such as anti-Jesuit and anti-Marian." Weitzman is especially concerned with "the amalgamation of antisemitism and anti-Catholicism." He notes the homepage of Michael Hoffman's Campaign for Radical Truth in History.⁴³ Describing Hoffman's site as "one of the most virulently antisemitic on the Internet," Weitzman cites an article, "John Paul II: Judas Iscariot of our Time." "The Pope is accused of 'preaching a false gospel,' of 'negating and betraying...sacred scripture.'

Of 'fraud,' Why is the pontiff thus excoriated? Because he is in 'obedience to the Talmudic Pharisees of today...the direct spiritual heirs of the assassins of Jesus Christ.' He 'is completely smitten with...the Jewish world leadership. He caters to and pimps for them.' More specifically, Hoffman is reacting to the Vatican statement of November 2, 1997, that 'Christians who yield to anti-Judaism offend God and the Church itself.' According to Hoffman, by 'discarding the traditional Christian (view), John Paul II has virtually admitted, by his actions, that the Pharisees were right to crucify Christ.'"

The question is always asked: why is anti-Catholicism so persistent? Why are we finding it so prevalent today on the Internet? The primary reason is that anti-Catholicism is a part of our cultural inheritance. William Bradford's famous "Of the Plymouth Plantation" – the history of the Plymouth Colony from 1620-1647 by its governor – is considered a seminal document of American thought and culture, giving tremendous insight into the ideas that helped to create America. It describes the voyage of the Pilgrims on the Mayflower, and the trials of the establishment of the colony. Yet, in its very first sentence, it refers to "the gross darkness of popery which had covered and overspread the Christian world."⁴⁴ this anti-Catholic mentality has never disappeared from American thinking and it remains an intransigent part of American thought. Most of all, however, it is so persistent because it is not merely the perspective of the uneducated or the ill informed. Anti-Catholicism remains an effective tool of America's elite. In that sense, it is allowed to persist because it remains acceptable. The anti-Catholic bigotry of a Jack Chick and a Michael Hoffman are easier to condemn.

However, anti-Catholicism is not confined solely to those fringes on the Internet. There are any number of strictly secular websites with particular secular agendas that routinely engage in anti-Catholic rhetoric. Public activist

organizations such as the National Abortion Rights Action League or the National Education Association routinely employ anti-Catholicism in their public positions. The website for the gay newspaper *The Advocate*⁴⁵ reproduced a recent commentary from the newspaper by Michael Signorille. Called "benevolent hatemongers,"⁴⁶ the author attacked Pope John Paul II for his comments on the gay pride march in Rome during the Jubilee Year. While decrying alleged "hate speech," Signorille engages in rhetoric not dissimilar to Hoffman, saying that Pope John Paul II "revealed before the whole world that he is a hateful man...(his hatred is) no different from Stalin's or even Hitler's...But the fact that the pope is a virulent hatemonger is something that religious and political leaders don't dare admit – though they may privately agree – lest they be labeled attackers of the all-powerful Catholic Church."⁴⁷ This is not taking issue. This is not disagreement. This is simply anti-Catholic hate speech.

SUMMARY POINTS

There are anti-Semitic sites on the Internet and sites that engage in other forms of racism. That has been well documented. Virtually ignored, however, is the abundance of anti-Catholicism that exists on the Internet.

The pervasiveness of anti-Catholicism on the Internet reflects how deeply entrenched, obsessive and normative this prejudice is within contemporary culture. If the Internet is our most contemporary means of communication and information gathering, then anti-Catholicism is entering the new Millenium in a powerful fashion.

The post-Reformation period of the mid 16th and 17th Seventeenth centuries saw a wealth of anti-Catholic published material that would establish the foundation for anti-Catholic historical and cultural assumptions that are now moving to the Internet.

In recent years, with the advent of cable television and a change in the culture of movie making, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of anti-Catholic imagery and rhetoric in popular media. The short-lived television program *That's Life* on ABC and movies such as *Dogma* and *Quills* evidenced a new willingness to engage in anti-Catholicism in entertainment aimed at a general audience.

By its nature, the Internet is unregulated. It is the dumping ground for the effluvia of Western culture. There is no editing for truth, objectivity, reliability or responsibility on the Internet. With its millions of websites, personal home pages and search portals, it is impossible to monitor or respond in any consistent fashion to its content.

Traditional anti-Catholicism – fundamentalist attacks on the Church as the scriptural “whore of Babylon” – bubbles just below the surface in many areas of our society. This traditional anti-Catholicism created many of the myths of anti-Catholicism that linger within the culture: the Church as solely interested in power; Catholicism as an “alien” religion in America; Catholicism as the enemy of separation of Church and State (as well as the public school system); the Catholic Church as oppressor.

The nature of the Internet leads to a generally more coarse standard even with so-called mainstream Internet sites. Profanity, obscenity and nudity are commonplace while they remain less so in newspapers that are still viewed as “family reading.” Of course, that bar has been lowered in recent years in newspapers but it is a standard far higher than “legitimate” sites on the Internet.

Traditional anti-Catholicism laid the foundation for the common secular anti-Catholicism of contemporary culture. Stripped of its theological foundation, it portrays the Church as a medieval relic, the enemy of science and individual freedom. Born in the pseudo-scientism of the 19th Century – with its mix of nationalism, racism and class warfare – it focused on the Church as the enemy of modern thought and progress. Developed during the eugenics, birth control and pro-abortion crusades of the 20th century, it reached its contemporary culmination in various theories of sexual liberation. It is widespread in contemporary thought and sees anti-Catholicism not as a prejudice, but as a tool to be utilized to denigrate Church teaching in the public arena.

The number of sophomoric sites spewing anti-Catholicism and generally anti-Christian views is legion. Run either as one-man shows on personal websites or organized more professionally for profit, these sites are generally witless attempts at satire.

In mind-numbing detail are a host of traditional anti-Catholic cites. From rural churches and personal websites, to sites for fundamentalist publishing houses, the traditional anti-Catholicism that was said to have died with the election of John F. Kennedy in 1960 thrives on the Internet. A major website is for the Jack Chick Company. Chick does not bother to engage in honest dialogue, or honest argument, over Catholic beliefs. The Chick website, like so many others, peddles bombastic charges against the Church as knowingly teaching false doctrine and purposely sending souls to hell.

Much of the anti-Catholicism on the traditionalist Internet sites is not, for the most part, an attempt to theologically engage Catholicism, a perfectly legitimate and sadly necessary discussion in a divided Christianity. This is simply old-time anti-Catholic nativism that has a primary form of argument that refers to Catholicism as a conscious, knowing Satanic

plot to undermine Scripture. Such leaves little room for healthy and honest exchanges.

An army of individual pastors and their local churches have put up sites dedicated to tradition anti-Catholicism. One of the most loathsome is from Pastor Fred Phelps' Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas. Phelps has made a name for himself for decidedly homophobic hate speech. Its Internet address is godhatesfags.org. Phelps refers to the Catholic Church as a "fag" church and claims that a third of Catholic priests are actively homosexual, seducing young boys and women.

There are numerous websites by alleged ex-Catholics that engage in evangelization aimed specifically at Catholics. Most use anti-Catholicism as their primary means of attack. Very few rely on a positive presentation of a faith to which they hope to convert Catholics. For the most part, they simply – very simply – attack Catholic beliefs, present a distorted view of Catholic practices, and re-write history from an anti-Catholic perspective.

The common thread running through these "conversion" sites is the viciousness of the attacks on Catholic beliefs and practices. These sites present an image of Catholic beliefs as essentially pagan. They constantly portray the Catholic priesthood as corrupted by sexual deviancy and the Church as a conscious effort to deceive people in order to oppress them.

Anti-Catholicism also finds its way into the Internet's crazy world of militia groups and radical right-wing zealots. Though much time is spent on these pages with anti-Semitism and racism, Catholicism shares in their vicious attacks.

There are websites from traditionalist Catholic groups that often borrow the language and approach of traditional anti-Catholic sites. Some of these sites represent followers of the late Archbishop Lefebvre and are formally schismatic. Their

primary aim is to attack the Church today as being heretical and the Mass as celebrated contrary to traditional Catholic teaching. Their attacks on the Church and its members are vehement, and often raise accusations of "Masonic conspiracies" or satanic infiltration.

From the ex-Catholic left, the attacks on the Internet are mostly from a secular perspective, and usually driven by pro-abortion or a gay agenda. Sites for "recovering Catholics" simply assume that any thinking person will have left the Church, and offer advice often centered on a supposed sexual liberation.

Anti-Catholicism remains an effective tool of America's elite. In that sense, it is allowed to persist because it remains acceptable. The anti-Catholic bigotry of a Jack Chick is easy to condemn. But anti-Catholicism is not confined solely to those fringes on the Internet. There are any number of strictly secular websites with particular secular agendas that routinely engage in anti-Catholic rhetoric.

FOOTNOTES

¹ See *The Reformation*, Will Durant (Simon & Schuster, 1957, 1985) pp. 156-158

² *ibid.* p. 159

³ On the following All Saints Day, November 1, the collection

of relics of the Elector of Wittenberg would be displayed and Luther believed he could attract a wide immediate audience for his views.

⁴ See *Inquisition*, by Edward Peters (University of California Press, 1987) pp. 144-154

⁵ The *Awful Disclosures* was second in sales only to "Uncle Tom's Cabin" prior to the Civil War.

⁶ For an overview of anti-Catholic publishing in the United States see *Anti-Catholicism in American Culture*, ed. Robert P. Lockwood (Our Sunday Visitor, 2000) pp. 30-45)

⁷ See The Annual Report of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, 1998 and 1999 for descriptions of *Dogma* and *That's Life*, and additional examples.

⁸ Reed's book is available through Ayer Publications which produces a number of historical studies on anti-Catholicism, such as Ray Allen Billington's original study of the origins of anti-Catholic Nativism in the early 19th Century.

⁹ *The Virgin Spring*, by Lorelei Shannon

¹⁰ July 17, 2000 MensJournal, portrait of British comedian Eddie Izzard

¹¹ theonion.com

¹² *The Onion*, November 15, 2000

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ angelfire.com/mn/psychospeak/catholic.html

¹⁵ **rossetta.com**

¹⁶ **chick.com**

¹⁷ Chiniquy was a renegade priest who left after arguing with his bishop over parish assignments. He wrote “Fifty Years in the Church of Rome” after the Civil War. It was the source of the infamous – and fabricated – prophecy of Abraham Lincoln of a “dark cloud” coming over America from Rome. Chiniquy was still on the anti-Catholic preaching circuit in the early 19th century under the auspices of the American Protective Association (APA), a short-lived anti-Catholic populist movement.

¹⁸ **jesus-is-lord.com**

¹⁹ A biography of Bishop John F. Noll, bishop of the Fort Wayne, IN diocese and founder of Our Sunday Visitor (With Ink and Crosier, Our Sunday Visitor 1952), by Richard Ginder contains a series of stories of the young Father Noll dealing with “ex-priests” in rural Indiana.

²⁰ **jesus-is-lord** homepage counter as of November 17, 2000 over a two-year period

²¹ **harborlighthouse.org**

²² **Ibid.**

²³ **cuttingedge.org**

²⁴ **aomin.org**

²⁵ Pope Honorius is raised in numerous anti-Catholic websites of an apologetic nature. His pontificate was dominated by the Monophysite heresy over the dual nature of Christ. Traditional

Catholic teaching is that Christ has a dual nature, human and divine. The Monophysite heresy claimed His nature was solely divine. In a letter to Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople Honorius referred to Christ's nature as indivisible and as having "one will." His views were later condemned. This was hardly a papal pronouncement under the conditions required for infallible papal statements, but it is held to be such by those attacking the doctrine.

²⁶ reformation.org

²⁷ balaamsass.org

²⁸ lamblion.com

²⁹ [ibid. Mission Statement](#)

³⁰ [Ibid.](#)

³¹ whpub.com

³² [ibid. Publications](#)

³³ biblebelievers.com/falsedoctrine.html

³⁴ stas.net/goodnews

³⁵ pro-gospel.org

³⁶ [ibid. Homepage counter as of November 17, 2000](#)

³⁷ excatholicsforchrist.org

³⁸ gnfc.org

³⁹ geocities.com/heartland/plains2594/

⁴⁰ sd.znet.com/-bart

⁴¹ freeamerican.com

⁴² wiesenthal.com/watch/inveetedimage.html

⁴³ hoffman-info.com/christian1/html

⁴⁴ *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647*, by William Bradford (Alfred A. Knopf, April 2000. Twelfth edition)

⁴⁵ advocate.com

⁴⁶ *The Advocate*, September 12, 2000

⁴⁷ Signorille based his comments on papal remarks on July 9, 2000. The full text of the statement by Pope John Paul II that led Signorille to engage in this viscous hate speech, comparing the pope to Hitler and Stalin, was: "I feel obliged now to mention the well-known demonstrations held in Rome in the past few days. In the name of the Church of Rome I can only express my deep sadness at the affront of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 and the offence to the Christian values of a city that is so dear to the hearts of Catholics throughout the world. The Church cannot be silent about the truth, because she would fail in her fidelity to God the Creator and would not help to distinguish good from evil. In this regard, I wish merely to read what is said in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which, after noting that homosexual acts are contrary to the natural law, then states: 'The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfill

God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition."

Dishonesty Marks the Entertainment Industry

by William A. Donohue

(Catalyst 9/1999)

Over the summer, Hollywood treated us to some pretty slimy stuff, much of it aimed at kids. Austin Powers was back, this time drinking diarrhea daiquiris in "The Spy Who Shagged Me" (in England, the term "shagged" is an obscene word for sex). Newspaper advertisements for "Big Daddy" showed a father and son urinating in public and a film version of "South Park" featured Saddam Hussein's penis and a giant clitoris. And let's not forget the adolescent boy who was shown masturbating into a hot apple pie in "American Pie."

When I express my opposition to such trash—or to anti-Catholic movies like "Dogma"—a reporter invariably asks me why I get so exercised. After all, it's only a movie—it's not real. Besides, no one has to see it anyway.

My answer generally goes like this: if nothing that is shown matters, then why isn't everyone smoking on TV and in the movies? Why don't we bring back the reruns of "Amos 'n Andy"? Why don't we reintroduce Tonto as a role model for Native Americans? Why don't we make a movie that pokes fun at the

Holocaust? After all, it's not real and no one has to watch.

That shuts them up every time. And so it should: those who voice this line are either singularly stupid or downright dishonest. Either way, their selective indignation is disgusting.

If what we see on TV and in the movies has no effect, then why did everyone go into a panic after the shootings at Columbine High School? Here's what happened.

The Bravo cable network said that following Columbine it would not air a satire about a "teen sniper school." CBS cited the high school massacre as the reason why it pulled an episode of "Promised Land" (the show featured a shooting in front of a Denver school). Similarly, CBS has delayed the debut of "Falcone" (a Mafia-themed drama), this despite the fact that it was touted as one of the network's new hits. "It's not the right time to have people being whacked on the streets of New York," said CBS Television President Leslie Moonves. His decision to release the show later in the season suggests that there is a right time to continue the whacking.

Over at WB, it postponed the two-part season finale of "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" because it depicted heavily armed high-school kids at a graduation ceremony. WB chief Jamie Kellner confessed that "Given the current climate, depicting acts of violence at a high school graduation ceremony, even fantasy acts, we believe is inappropriate..." Maybe when the climate changes Jamie will bring back the violence. But in the meantime, it's only fantasy. So why is Jamie so uptight?

Fox announced that it was toning down the violence in a new drama, "Harsh Realm," and even Vince McMahon, head honcho of professional wrestling, said he would pare back the violence and vulgarity for UPN. And believe it or not, Studios USA, the owner of "The Jerry Springer Show," promised it was going to edit out violence, profanity and physical confrontation

from future shows. But I'm skeptical: what exactly do they expect Jerry's going to do now—sing?

The TV and Hollywood gang got so sensitive about violence following Columbine that even jokes about the shooting were deemed to be off-limits. That's why the producers of the "MTV 1999 Movie Awards" didn't laugh when they heard film director Bobby Farrelly ("There's Something About Mary") make a joking reference to the Colorado high school shootings at the show's taping on June 5. When the show aired on June 10, the joke was cut. It was deemed "inappropriate" by MTV executives.

Now anyone who has watched more than three minutes of MTV knows that it likes to push the envelope. Indeed, it is the foremost carrier of sexually-explicit videos on TV. Complain to them about this and they will tell you to lighten up. So why didn't they air that joke about Columbine if nothing matters?

All this is to prove that it is dishonesty, not stupidity, that drives the entertainment industry. Dishonesty also marks many TV and film critics, those tube and screen mavens who sanction filth and anti-Catholicism while writhing in pain over smoking and violence. Take, for example, their reaction to "Eyes Wide Shut."

Stanley Kubrick last's movie, "Eyes Wide Shut," opened with mostly raving reviews and a less-than enthusiastic box office reception. Starring Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman, the film features lots of full-frontal female nudity, as well as an orgy scene. The movie had to be digitally altered (to cover the genitals of the orgy participants) so that the dreaded NC-17 rating could be avoided. It was this that drove the critics mad.

To be more exact, it was the fact that it was a Kubrick movie that had to be altered that drove them mad. Kubrick is held up as some kind of god by many in the film industry, with movies

like "Dr. Strangelove," "A Clockwork Orange" and "2001: A Space Odyssey" to his credit. That the famed director was also a self-hating Jew (he once remarked that "Hitler was right about almost everything") seemed not to matter.

In July, 35 members of the Los Angeles Film Critics Association took aim at the movie rating system of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA). Upset that Kubrick's last movie had to be digitally altered to get an R rating, the group argued that the time had come to reconsider the entire MPAA rating system. This group was quickly followed by their friends on the east coast when the 28 members of the New York Film Critics Circle issued a statement declaring the MPAA "out of control."

The New York group claimed that the ratings board had "become a punitive and restrictive force, effectively trampling the freedom of American filmmakers." It even said that the board "had created its own zone of kneejerk Puritanism." All this was said about a ratings system that is entirely voluntary and is appreciated by almost every parent in the nation.

The critics, of course, want no limits on anything. What they desperately want—and make no mistake about this—is to demolish all ratings systems so that children can be subjected to adult entertainment. Shamelessly elitist, they seriously believe that there is a fundamental difference between a Stanley Kubrick-scripted orgy and a teen-age boy who masturbates into an apple pie.

Janet Maslin of the *New York Times* wrote that "As the R is allowed to disintegrate into an outright goal for teen-agers, the system has left itself no way to differentiate between crude frat-boy jokes about having sex with dessert and this intricately nuanced exploration of the nature of sexual bonds." In other words, Janet objects that the MPAA treats all skin movies alike. She also complains that "The NC-17 rating has degenerated into a sigma," which, of course, is the

purpose of having such a rating (I still prefer the more stigmatized X designation).

If Maslin is unhappy with the MPAA, film critic Roger Ebert is livid. He likes his skin flicks without digital alteration, especially when the skin-maker is someone like Kubrick. "Why couldn't the studio have distributed this movie NC-17," Ebert screamed at producer Jan Harlan, "instead of sending out this 'Austin Powers' version?!"

Ebert even let Tom Cruise have it. Ebert pressed the actor to explain why a Kubrick picture with him in it wouldn't have been the grand opportunity to overturn the ratings system. Take the NC-17 rating, Ebert urged, and then when the public isn't deterred from seeing the movie, the system will self-destruct. Cruise answered, "You're preaching to the converted here. But Stanley made the decision [to accept digital alteration], you know."

It is amazing that the very same gang of film critics in L.A. and New York who oppose any restraint on what the public can see, throw themselves prostrate on the floor when tyrants like Cruise tell them what they can and cannot say about him as a condition for granting an interview. To be specific, before the movie was released, Cruise's public relations firm required reporters to sign a contract giving it the right to view—and veto—any TV segments on the actor before it aired.

Cruise's publicist, PMK, got what it wanted, thus assuring "Eyes Wide Shut" nothing but good press before it hit the screen. The PMK contract actually stipulated that "the interview and the program will not show the artist in a negative or derogatory manner." That this gag rule wasn't protested by the opponents of the ratings system tells us what they're made of. Just imagine, for one moment, what the reaction would be if I insisted on such a speech code as a condition for an interview.

What these people refuse to recognize is that every free society is governed by limits. Limits on our appetites, limits on our behavior, limits on what we do to ourselves, limits on what we do to others. A society without limits is no society at all—it is an aggregation of individuals who exist in a state of moral chaos. The end result of such a state is not more liberty, but less.

Yet this is what many seem to want—a free-for-all. Accessing the internet these days, viewers can gawk at college girls who have, quite intentionally, developed their own web page that allows voyeurs to watch them through strategically-placed cameras: they can be seen going to the bathroom, showering, having sex, etc. The fee is \$30 per month.

This fall Fox will air “Manchester Prep,” a show that, according to one reviewer, features “sex-and-power games that include intimations of brother-sister incest.” Joey Buttafuoco, of Amy Fisher fame (the Long Island Lolita), is not in the porn movie business. He described his new film this way: “There’s a scene in the movie...with a woman in a wheelchair coming down one of the hills in California and there’s a guy with a baseball bat and he wacks her, knocks the head off. It goes a hundred feet and some dogs eat the head.” Buttafuoco told a stunned Howard Stern that he would like to do this to Fisher.

But none of this really bothers the entertainment industry. Smoking bothers them. Violence bothers some of them, especially when suburban high school kids go on a killing spree. But filth, that’s okay. Catholic bashing, that’s perfectly fine.

Once the rules to this game are learned, it isn’t too hard to figure it out. But just remember that the rules are grounded in deceit and thus can be changed, without notice, at any time. So if Willy is slick, what do we call these people?

Religion on TV Doesn't Have a Prayer

by Evan Gahr

(Catalyst 12/1997)

Whether it's news shows that ignore religion or entertainment programs that regularly depict clergymen as buffoons, hypocrites, or outright perverts, television remains ground zero for the culture of disbelief.

Rabbi Marc Gellman, one of the first clergymen to appear regularly on network television in some 40 years, says that "there's an anti-religious perspective in the media. News has created life without religion. That has created a distorted version of the world." Adding insult to injury, he contends, are the entertainment programs that offer "demeaning and libelous" portrayals of clergymen. Crazy rabbis betray confidences, priests are pedophiles, others are just plain simpletons. Few men of the cloth receive much sympathy unless they're outright heretics or rabble-rousers.

Television executives wouldn't dare depict representatives of other groups in such a manner, lest they be charged with "insensitivity" and other cardinal liberal sins. But there's a special absolution for such transgressions if you mock religious folks. Despite improvements on both the news and entertainment side, the general picture remains bleak. For all their purported marketing savvy and sophistication, most television executives seem oblivious to many viewers' craving for programs that give religious devotion serious, fair-minded treatment.

According to *TV Guide*, 61 percent of television viewers polled want “references to God, churchgoing, and other religious observances in prime time.” Although 90 percent of Americans believe in God and more than 50 percent attend church or synagogue regularly, religion is accorded relatively scant attention. Television executives invariably justify the sewage they dump on the cultural landscape—such as *Murphy Brown*’s ode to Fatherless America—by claiming that these shows merely reflect social realities. Yet television consistently overlooks the centrality of religion in American life. So much for sociological accuracy.

A recent study by the Media Research Center reveals the skewed portrait of religion that television offers. Last year, there were 436 religious depictions—everything from one-liners to thematic treatments—in 1800 prime-time hours on the broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC, UPN, and WB). “Religion is a scarce commodity on prime-time TV, appearing about once every four hours. Even though depictions of religion [were] overall positive, prime time has too often presented distorted unfair views of both clergy and laity.”

Television also seems fixated on religious-minded criminals: “*Law and Order*” featured a whole slew of religious psychos, including a crazed theology student who killed three persons while laboring under the impression that he was a biblical warrior. TV movies such as NBC’s “*Justice for Annie*”—in which a middle-aged couple kills a young woman for financial gain—offer similar fare. It’s a safe bet that religious people are disproportionately represented among television’s criminals.

Again, other groups would never receive such unflattering treatment. Indeed, “reality-based” television shows sometimes take “creative liberties” to insure that their fictional miscreants aren’t top heavy with minorities. Yet while religious criminals are over-represented on TV, religious do-gooders are few and far between. James Martin, who writes on

television for the liberal Catholic weekly *America*, notes that “ER” presents a wide array of representatives from the “helping professions”—everyone from teachers to Girl Scout leaders. But the only hospital chaplain he recalls is a nun who appeared in full habit, which most sisters haven’t worn for years.

Still, “ER” is par for the course. For example, the recently defunct series “Picket Fences” prominently featured a local parish priest consumed by a foot fetish, as well as a shyster lawyer considered by many an anti-Semitic stereotype. To be fair, “Picket Fences” won kudos for many positive religious portrayals. And executive producer David Kelley has treated criticism with considerable seriousness, rather than hiding behind supposed “sociological accuracy.” But television’s grotesque caricatures aren’t merely “insensitive”; they mock religious folks in a manner that network censors would red-flag if directed at anyone else. Says Rabbi Gellman, “the last acceptable prejudice in America is prejudice against religious people.”

No wonder television news ignores them. In a study released this March, Brent Bozell’s Media Research Center (MRC) determined that only 268 of approximately 1,800 nightly news stories broadcast by ABC, CBS, CNN, NBC, and PBS last year concerned religion. The morning programs were even more dismal. Though the entertainment division showed some improvement since 1993, the figures for news broadcasts are roughly commensurate with past MRC studies. And last year, the MRC noted, reporters overlooked a number of newsworthy religious stories—such as the overseas persecution of Christians.

Meanwhile, normally astute journalists continue to ignore religious angles. When heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield was interviewed live after Mike Tyson lost their June fight on account of biting, Holyfield repeatedly praised Jesus—and suggested that his faith helped keep him calm when Tyson

turned his ear into an appetizer. But the subsequent—and otherwise exhaustive—news coverage virtually ignored Holyfield's religious pronouncements.

Still, not all is bleak. ABC News in particular shows signs of improvement. Peter Jennings overcame the strenuous objections of jittery colleagues to help Peggy Wehmeyer become the first network news religion correspondent in 1994. But other networks have failed to follow suit, even though producers strain to ensure representation of women and racial and ethnic minorities among reporters and on-air guests. "I find it hard to accept," says Wehmeyer, "that the major networks do not consider religion worthy enough to assign more people to this beat."

Wehmeyer, who has covered everything from Christian capitalists to a spiritual revival among Jews, stressed her gratitude to ABC and Peter Jennings for their commitment to religious news coverage—a commitment underscored when ABC signed her for another three-year contract this spring.

Despite her sound instincts and long experience, Wehmeyer is an oddity to some in the news business. Many people "assume I can't be objective because I'm a Christian." No wonder this self-described "moderate evangelical," who didn't learn until college that her mother is Jewish, is reluctant to discuss her own faith. She's not the only one. In a half-hour telephone interview, former NBC correspondent Bob Abernethy, who hosts this fall's PBS-distributed show, "Perspectives: The Newsweekly of Religion and Ethics," gladly talked at length about the program. But he was hesitant to discuss his own religious background as the grandson of a Baptist minister and current member of the United Church of Christ,

Most newsmen and commentators routinely insert details about themselves into their stories. But religion still gives the powers-that-be the willies. Rabbi Gellman, who along with Monsignor Thomas Hartman constitutes "Good Morning America's"

"God Squad," notes that "several people at ABC went way out on a limb" to bring the duo on the air. The resistance is rather bizarre. After all, clergymen have a proven track record. The Emmy award-winning Bishop Fulton J. Sheen proved a smash commercial success in the 1950s with his show, "Life Is Worth Living."

In their two years on the air, Gellman and Hartman have discussed all kinds of news stories, some with obvious religious dimensions, others not. (After Mickey Mantle died, they considered what lessons even imperfect biblical heroes can teach us.) Gellman has appeared in a giant pumpkin head on Halloween to show folks that clergymen aren't ogres. But the God Squad have their work cut out for them.

Just ask Martha Williamson, the born-again Christian who had to fight tooth and nail to get her show "Touched by an Angel" on the air. A well-informed TV producer tells me that CBS's head of programming hated the show and bent over backwards to sink it. Even after its test-marketing proved impressive, he tried to bury the program in an awful time slot. Panned by critics and shunned by CBS, the show nevertheless soon achieved immense popularity. (At that point, the hostile network executive decided to take credit for birthing the show.) With some 20 million viewers weekly, "Touched by an Angel" ranks among television's top three rated programs—and now has the coveted Sunday night time slot. CBS even has a spin-off, "Promised Land," which Williamson also produces.

Other networks, of course, have followed suit, but still seem rather clueless. ABC's fall line-up, for example, includes "Teen Angel" (Thomas Aquinas he ain't) and "Nothing Sacred." The latter, puffs ABC's promotional material, concerns an iconoclastic priest, Father Ray, who among other adventures almost gets "fired for advising a pregnant teenager to follow her own instincts."

There you have it. Priests aren't ready for prime time unless

they are “pro-choice”—and counsel teenage girls to just do their own thing. But would television glorify a priest who urged a teenage girl to “follow her own conscience” about whether to smoke cigarettes? Granted, saintly clerics could prove dull. “The Adventures of Mother Teresa” doesn’t sound like a cliffhanger. But why are only heretics heroes? And if television is keen on priests uneasy with the Catholic hierarchy, how about portraying priests who dissent from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops’ loud opposition to welfare reform?

Are the stirrings of renewed Hollywood interest in religion signs of a great awakening—or simply the latest fad to hit Lotus Land? *America’s* James Martin suspects that TV’s spiritual revival could be short-lived. Not long ago, television was giddy over the success of the sitcom “Friends” and couldn’t churn out clones fast enough. But they disappeared faster than a Big Mac on Bill Clinton’s plate. Hollywood fads “last one season,” Martin says. “Maybe Hollywood will lose interest.”

Given television’s offerings so far, that could prove a blessing in disguise.

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The Media War on the Catholic

Church

by William A. Donohue

(Catalyst 4/1996)

The coming of Spring traditionally signals a new beginning, a time for men and women of good will to examine their lives and work, and to resolve to do better in the future. In that vein, I ask our national news media to consider the job they are doing of covering religion in America. Any honest examination would show that the media's treatment of religion ranges from indifference to misunderstanding. And where coverage of the Roman Catholic Church is concerned, it is openly hostile.

A recent Gallup survey showed that 95 percent of Americans believe in God; another poll showed that nine out of ten of us pray on a regular basis. Clearly, matters of faith are of great importance to the vast majority of Americans.

Yet, despite their claims that they report the news objectively, our major television networks continue to ignore this important reality. In 1994, the "Big Four" new outlets—ABC, NBC, CBA and CNN—filed some 18,000 news reports among them. Of these, only 225 (barely 1%) dealt with religious institutions, movements, or ideas. Of the approximately 26,000 morning news segments, just 151 (about one half of one percent) touched on the subject of religion. Out of hundreds of hours of network magazine shows and Sunday morning interview broadcasts, only nine segments addressed matters of religious faith. Religion is simply not on the media's radar screen as a matter of importance in contemporary American life.

When reporters do cover matters of faith, no institution is more frequently reviled than the Roman Catholic Church. During 1994, it drew the most evening news stories (103), and the hostility communicated in these stories was obvious to

viewers. When the U.N. Population conference was convened in Cairo to promote worldwide contraception, abortion, and sexual liberties for adolescents, the news media openly attacked the Catholic Church for its justifiable opposition to this agenda. Typical of the media's disgust was this reports from ABC's Jim Bitterman: "Vatican representatives at the population conference were today being cast in the role of spoiler, their stubborn style angering fellow delegates...Thousands of activists who came here to push causes from the environment to women's rights have been ignored as the representatives from 182 nations spend their time and energy on the abortion issue."

To Mr. Bitterman, sexual morality – including the moral issues involved in marriage, abortion, homosexuality, and promiscuity – is an outdated issue in the modern age, akin to urging the use of chastity belts and hourglass corsets. It was of no consequence to him that the agenda for this important U.N. conference ran counter to the basic teachings of one of the world's great faiths, developed over nearly two thousand years of its existence. Those teachings may change over time, in the light of human experience and a more perfect understanding of the Divine Will, but they are not teachings that can be put on the bargaining table at an international meeting to reach a happy consensus among this year's assortment of conference goers.

The national news media delight in portraying the Catholic Church as an intolerant and anachronistic institution, out of touch with the times. On such issues as celibacy and the priesthood, or women in the priesthood, or premarital sex, or homosexuality, the teachings of the Church will rarely get a fair shake. The media seems to think that the teachings of the Church are arrived at through bargaining and negotiation among self-appointed interest groups. They are not, and it is inexcusable that so many journalists fail to grasp such a fundamental point.

It is easier, and apparently far more satisfying, for the media simply to dismiss the Church's teachings, along with Pope John Paul II. "There are 60 million Catholics in America," explained the *Washington Post* writer Henry Allen, "and for many of them the Pope also speaks with the voice of a conservative crank when he stonewalls on abortion, married priests, women priests, and so on." Never mind that for the vast majority of Catholics here and around the world, the Pope is an inspired religious leader who does not "stonewall" on any of these issues, but rather upholds the traditional teachings of the Church.

But when the "conservative crank" is thought to be promoting liberal causes, my how the coverage changes! Last Fall the Pope visited the United States in the midst of a rancorous debate over the federal budget. When the Pope spoke about our obligation to help the needy, many in the press found a closet endorsement of Bill Clinton and the Democratic party. "The Pope seemed to admonish the supporters of proposed laws to restrict immigration and dismantle many of the nation's programs for the poor," intoned *New York Times* Reporter Robert McFadden, "in doing so, he appeared to echo many of President Clinton's warnings." Timothy McNulty of the *Chicago Tribunes* saw it the same way: "At times the Pope even sounded like a Democrat. His heart is with the have-nots. And for that, at least, liberals appreciate his views on peace and social justice."

And yet, during more than a dozen speeches during his visit, the Pope never endorsed Clinton's position on any of these issues. The Pope, like his predecessors, has spoken frequently over the years about our obligations to the poor, but he has never said that these need to be carried out through government programs of the kind promoted by liberals. Indeed, in the Pope's recent encyclical, *Centesimus Annus* (1991), he criticized the welfare state for encouraging dependence and discouraging work on the part of the poor. Instead of relying

on bureaucratic programs sponsored by central governments, the Pope called on us to help the poor in more personal and neighborly ways in order to strengthen families and local institutions.

The Pope's position, and that of the Catholic Church over the centuries, is hardly the simplistic doctrine attributed to him by the reporters quoted above. It should not be all that difficult for journalists to give an honest and factual account of the Church's position on a subject like this or, indeed, to consult the documents of the Church before rendering an opinion about it.

The most important moral issue facing the Catholic Church is the plague of abortion. In the last two decades, some 30 million unborn babies have died. Thirty million souls who will never have the chance to love or laugh and cry, who will never have the chance to grow up and become doctors and musicians and architects and loving parents and bless our country in many and magnificent ways.

In 1994, there were a total of 247 network news stories that touched on this vital moral issue, but very few presented the pro-life position in an objective or fair-minded way. The violence of abortion, the moral anguish it produces, adoption and other alternatives to abortion – these aspects of the issue were all but ignored by the national news media.

What, then, was the focus of the news coverage? Fully two out of three of these networks stories dealt, not with the abortion issue itself, but rather with the different subject of pro-life violence against "abortion rights advocates." The insinuations in many of these stories were downright insulting to those who support the pro-life position. When Dr. David Gunn was murdered, CBS anchor Bob Schieffer reported that, "We've all noticed that there has been a link between crime and religion." ABC's Linda Pattillo was even more vitriolic, labeling the pro-life movement "an organized campaign of

domestic terrorism.”

To be sure, violence at abortion clinics was an important story deserving of coverage, though it was manifestly unfair for reporters to suggest that such violence is condoned or encouraged by the pro-life movement. When pro-life activists or the Catholic Church itself are attacked, however the national media conveniently look the other way. In 1994, for example, there were numerous documented cases of violence aimed at right-to-life activists, including the shooting of one such activist in Louisiana. Only CNN covered the story.

A few years ago, a group of protesters invaded St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City, and disrupted a mass that was being conducted by John Cardinal O’Connor. These “activists” blocked the aisles and prevented worshippers from receiving Holy Communion as a protest against the Church’s teaching on homosexuality. The mainstream news media sympathized with the protesters, and thus did not bother to condemn this naked act of religious bigotry. All of this simply underscores an ugly but inescapable reality in America today: prejudice is still condoned as part of our national conversation, as long as it is being directed against the Catholic Church.

How does one explain this ignorance on the subject of religion? William Cardinal Keeler has observed that on any given Sunday there are more people attending church services than all national sports events combined, and yet, while all networks have sports divisions, none has a religion division and only one has an official religion reporter. Several years ago, Professor Robert Lichter conducted a survey of the national news media and found that 50 percent of journalists do not believe in God, 86 percent seldom or never attend religious services, and only 2 percent are practicing Catholics. Ninety percent support abortion, 76 percent believe that adultery is permissible. Their hostility toward principles of the Catholic faith is not a reflection of public opinion but of their own beliefs.

The national news media need to come to terms with their ignorance of, and contempt for, matters of religious faith in general and of the Catholic Church in particular. Until they do, they make a mockery of the term "objectivity."