

Distortions and Lies About the Catholic Church

There is a great deal of distortion and outright lying going on about the Catholic Church these days, and the time has come to name names. I'll begin at home base.

Over the past several years, Father Andrew Greeley has made quite a spectacle of himself hawking his sex novels. But usually Father Greeley can be counted on to have command of the teachings of the Church. Not so when I recently debated him on TV. It seems that Father Greeley is so excited about the results of his survey – you know, the one that says Catholics win the gold medal for sex – that he believes that sex is a sacrament in the Catholic Church. He said it over and over so it can't be ruled a slip of the tongue. Funny thing, the last time I checked it was matrimony, not sex, that was a sacrament.

Much worse is Father David Trosch. He's the one who says shoot all the abortionists, receptionists included. Though he's been suspended from the priesthood and will no doubt exit before too long, he still goes on TV presenting himself as a priest in good standing. He did so with me, all the while distorting the Church's teachings on a host of issues. Never once did he admit to his limbo status, or that he spoke only for himself. I informed the viewers otherwise, and even though Trosch never took issue with me on this, he still caused damage to the Church.

Fortunately, Rabbi Avi Weiss is about as representative of rabbis as Greeley and Trosch are of priests. Weiss is a demagogue. It is not enough for him to gag in public every time he sees a Christian symbol near a World War II death camp site, he tries to make a quick buck exploiting anti-Catholic prejudice. In a recent appeal he made for the Coalition for

Jewish Concerns – AMCHA, Rabbi Weiss wrote that the Vatican “is engaged in blatant Holocaust revisionism to obscure its own complicity in the killings.” He further noted that the Vatican is systematically working to “obscure the truth of the Holocaust and the Catholic church’s [sic] abandonment of the Jews.”

I wrote to Weiss quoting all the prominent Jews who after the war praised the Catholic Church’s response to the Holocaust. He wrote back saying that he read my letter “with deep pain and disappointment,” adding that the Vatican “turned its back on the Jews 50 years ago.” I sent him a copy of the Catholic League volume *Pius XII and the Holocaust* and have yet to hear from him again.

Alexander Sanger, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood, has lots of money but no guts. He spent \$60,000 smearing Cardinal O’Connor and Cardinal Law in a *New York Times* ad, has attacked the Catholic League in public, but won’t debate me on radio or TV. If I were pro-abortion, I’d be ashamed to have a coward like him at the helm.

Christopher Hitchens is a veteran writer for the left-wing’s favorite journal, the *Nation*. To the unacquainted, Hitchens’ fondness for Catholics is on a par with his fondness for Jews, which is to say that he isn’t very fond of either. A bitter atheist, Hitchens is unique: he is the only person I have ever heard of who hates Mother Teresa.

It was in 1992 that Hitchens first expressed his hatred of Mother Teresa, doing so in the *Nation*. A socialist who is not ashamed to accept unearned income, Hitchens recycled his *Nation* piece in the February 1995 edition of *Vanity Fair*. This article comes on the heels of a British TV documentary, *Hell’s Angel*, a show that tries hard to discredit Mother Teresa.

So what’s Hitchens’ beef? He questions Mother Teresa’s virginity (“how do we know for sure?” is the full extent of

his charge); he doesn't like the fact that her ministry takes her to dictatorships (this is an odd criticism, given Hitchens' affection for left-wing dictatorships); and he complains that she takes money from rich people (precisely whom she should take money from in order to service the poor he does not say).

I wrote a letter to *Vanity Fair* registering my thoughts on Hitchens' article and, lo and behold, guess who calls me? Hitchens told me that he never defended any left-wing dictatorship and that I should "put up or shut up," inviting me to either produce the evidence or stop with the accusation. I gladly accepted the bid.

That evening I went to a local college library and randomly chose copies of the *Nation* from 1983. The next day I mailed Hitchens a letter citing my sources. For Hitchens, the despotic regime of Salvador Allende in Chile was "a democracy" and the repression of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua was nothing more than "a problem" for the left, one that he clearly was prepared to live with.

Perhaps most telling was my discovery that in 1983 a *Nation* reader and fellow leftist wrote that "Hitchens's straightforward hatred of Catholics is offensive and ugly prejudice." I passed on the good news to Mr. Hitchens and trust that since I put up, he will now shut up.

Finally, there is the matter of "60 Minutes." Mike Wallace interviews two of the nation's leading Catholic scholars for two straight hours and can't find two minutes worth airing. But he has plenty of time for the crackpots at Call to Action. And he has plenty of time to show four nuns protesting at St. Peter's Square, raising the question just how few protesting nuns would it take for "60 Minutes" not to put them on the air?

In a letter Wallace told reporters that he wrote to the

Catholic League on January 27, he explains that he didn't put Mary Ann Glendon and George Weigel on the air because "the interview we did with them just didn't work out." There are a few problems with this account.

First of all, Wallace lied when he told reporters that he sent us a letter. We never got one until we called five days later to find out why we hadn't received it. When Catholic League employee Cynthia Jessup called Wallace on February 1 inquiring about the status of the letter, he admitted that he never sent it. Cynthia then asked Wallace to send us a copy and he said that he would. A few minutes later the letter was faxed to us. But there was one problem: it wasn't addressed to us. It was addressed "Dear Sirs," and though it was clearly a response to our news release, the letter was strewn with cross-outs, suggesting that this sloppy draft was about as far as Wallace was about to go.

There is another problem. When Wallace says that the interview with Glendon and Weigel "just didn't work out," what he really means is that their reasoned responses didn't fit his agenda. Did he really expect that two first-class intellectuals would mimic the antics of the buffoons from Call to Action by jumping up and down on the set? Glendon and Weigel thought that they were appearing on a serious program, not the "Gong Show."

One last comment. Was it a matter of coincidence that the Call to Action piece aired on January 22, the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, a day when many Americans focus on the social teachings of the Catholic Church? And is it just a fluke that virtually every show that "60 Minutes" does on Catholicism puts the Church in a bad light? Answer "yes" and I'll sell you the Brooklyn Bridge.