

HOLLYWOOD'S BELIEVERS

From the work of Robert Lichter and Stanley Rothman in the 1980s, we know that the majority of those who make our movies are agnostics or atheists (55% believe in nothing, compared to 6% in the general population). What we know less about is the thinking of those in Hollywood who are believers. Recent interviews with Martha Williamson and Martin Scorsese give us some idea, and it is not one that most Catholics will be pleased to hear.

Martha Williamson is the creator of the CBS hit, "Touched by an Angel." Since its debut in 1994, it has been one of the most popular shows on TV. Williamson, who is a born-again Christian, was asked by the *Los Angeles Times* "How accepting is Hollywood of devout Christians?" Williamson answered by saying, "It has to do with how Christians behave. I don't make a big deal about being a Christian. I don't impose my Christianity on anybody."

Now that is strange. Imagine if Williamson were gay and she said that how Hollywood receives gays has to do with the way they behave. Imagine if she said that she doesn't make a big deal out of being gay and doesn't try to impose her sexual preference on anyone. Keep imagining because that's as close to reality as you're likely to get. It simply wouldn't happen. Only Christians would adopt such a defensive posture.

Here's another revealing comment on Williamson's thinking. "Nothing Sacred," she was asked, "has been attacked by some Catholics who feel it's anti-Catholic. Do you feel any kinship with this show?" She replied, "Yes. I think it's a very well-done show. I just couldn't connect with the character [the indubitable Father Ray]."

Isn't it nice to know that Williamson feels kinship with a show that some Catholics have labeled anti-Catholic? What

would really be nice to know is whether she feels any kinship with a show that African-Americans feel is racist (Buckwheat's role in the "Little Rascals" comes to mind). Or how about a show that gays feel is homophobic?

Just as incredible is Martin Scorsese. When interviewed by *USA Today*, he admitted that "My whole life has been movies and religion. That's it. Nothing else." This is the same Martin Scorsese that made the blasphemous movie, "The Last Temptation of Christ," and has now given us the pro-Buddhist film, "Kundun."

When Scorsese says that his whole life has been movies and religion, he elides: it would be more accurate to say that his whole life has been animated by a hostility to Western religions and an embrace of Eastern religions. But to admit that would be to admit prejudice, and that is not something the ever-sensitive types in Hollywood want to do.

If Williamson and Scorsese are any indication of what the minority in Hollywood who believe in religion think about Catholicism, perhaps we'd be better off looking to the atheists for a fair shake.