

# 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 heard 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?

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## **The Vatican and the Holocaust: Responses to "We Remember: A Reflection on the**

# Shoah”

*Catalyst 5/1998)*

On March 16, the Vatican issued a long-awaited document on the Holocaust, “We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah.” The document was not an apology, but it was a call for repentance. It stated the Church’s understanding of the causes of Hitlerism, the mixed response of Catholics to the Holocaust and the role which Pope Pius XII played in trying to alleviate the suffering of Jews and others.

The response to the document was anything but uniform. Comments ranged from high praise to high condemnation, and many of the remarks were decidedly mixed. There has already been much analysis of the document, as well as commentary on the reactions to it. The Catholic League’s position has been to respond to those editorials, articles and cartoons that it found unfair.

What follows is a select sampling of the varied response to “We Remember” that surfaced from the Jewish community.

**“I believe that the Vatican statement is correct in asserting that Nazi antisemitism ‘had its roots outside of Christianity,’ that it was not derived from anti-Jewish doctrines of the church but rather from an ‘exacerbated nationalism’ and a secular ‘pseudo-scientific’ racism. Nazi texts provide no evidence that the antisemitism of Hitler or Himmler was informed by the Christian characterization of the Jews as Christ-killers, condemned by God because they refused to recognize the messiah. Nazi rhetoric is drawn from different realms.”**

*Marc Saperstein, professor of Jewish history and director of the program in Judaic studies at George Washington University. Source: Washington Post, April 1, 1998.*

**"It is highly optimistic of the document to say that the anti-Semitism of Nazi ideology has its roots outside of Christianity. It denies centuries of Christian contempt and persecution of Jews and Judaism. It should be remembered that anti-Judaism created the atmosphere for the possibility of pagan anti-Semitism."**

*Rabbi Leon Klenicki, director of Interfaith Affairs, Anti-Defamation League. Source: Quoted in Chicago Tribune, March 17, 1998.*

**"I am sad, sad and deeply disappointed. Tomorrow morning when my Jewish neighbors in my building read the paper, they'll come to me and say, 'Didn't I tell you, they ain't going to change?' And they may be right."**

*Rabbi Leon Klenicki, director of Interfaith Affairs, Anti-Defamation League. Source: Rabbi Klenicki's published "Reading" on the document.*

**"We [Jews] should understand that, if we were in their [Catholic's] shoes, we might wonder if the dialogue is a bank from which Jews only make withdrawals."**

**"The organized Jewish community has to educate our people about the tremendous positive changes in the Catholic Church since Vatican II, three decades ago, and especially under the present Pope. I suspect most Jews do not fully understand, if at all, what progress has been made.**

**"As we desire more study and expression from the Church on sensitive matters, we too should be forthcoming on issues of concern for them. For example, we might at least discuss, if not re-evaluate, our present positions on school vouchers and partial-birth abortion. Most of all, we should be sensitive to what Catholics perceive as a widespread tendency towards 'Catholic-bashing' in American society.**

**"The Roman Catholic Church is the Jewish people's best partner**



**in interreligious affairs. It is time for our laity to realize that fact and for our leaders to respond accordingly."**

*Rabbi Moses A. Birnbaum, spiritual leader of Plainview Jewish Center in Long Island, and a veteran of interreligious dialogue. Source: Jewish Week, March 27, 1998.*

**"There are elements in there [the document] that are positive, that hopefully will be picked up and used and made part of Catholic life. And there are some disappointing areas where I think it could have been strengthened greatly."**

*Rabbi A. James Rudin, director of interreligious affairs, American Jewish Committee. Source: Quoted in Newsday, March 17, 1998.*

**"To take 10 years and find absolutely no fault in the role of Pope Pius XII calls into question the seriousness of this document."**

*Rabbi Marvin Hier, Simon Wiesenthal Center. Source: Quoted by Richard Z. Chesnoff, Daily News, March 18, 1998.*

**"They [American Jews] did next to nothing to save the Jews of Europe, and worse, they demonized the Jews and Christians who gave their all to turn FDR. Ben Hecht and Peter Bergson were the Jews who led the fight to save the Jews of Europe. They went after FDR with great advertisements in the press in an effort to awaken the nation to the conspiracy of silence that was burying the Jews.**

**"The court Jews, led by Rabbi Stephen Wise, FDR's great buddy, went after Hecht and Bergson, told the Jews of America that 'these guys' were the enemies of Jews.... Wise was aided in this endeavor by The New York Times and The Washington Post, both papers owned by Jews. And by one of the top Jews in Congress, Sol Bloom.**

**"What bothers me as a Jew is the chutzpah of the Jewish**

**leaders. Let them look into their own archives, let them examine what their ancestors didn't do to save the Jews of Europe. And the same for the Israelis, who have plenty to answer for."**

*Sidney Zion, columnist for the Daily News. Source: Daily News, March 30, 1998.*

**"What's lacking is taking moral and historical responsibility for Christian anti-Semitism. It [the document] fails to identify the direct link between the church's historic teachings of contempt toward the Jews and the cultural environment that facilitated the Holocaust."**

*Abraham Foxman, director of the Anti-Defamation League. Source: Quoted in New York Post, March 17, 1998.*

**"It is too little, too late. I have no doubt that the church did not do everything it could have to save people... [Pius XII's] silence cost millions of human lives."**

*Meir Lau, Israel's chief rabbi. Source: Quoted in Los Angeles Times, March 17, 1998.*

**"I expected much more from the Vatican and much more from this Pope. The document took long in coming, and it does not contain what I believe to be the full story of the Church's role during the Holocaust years."**

*Seymour Reich, former president of B'nai B'rith. Source: Jewish Week, March 20, 1998.*

**"Spectacular. They are repudiating anti-Semitism."**

*Rabbi Jack Bemporad, director of the Center for Interfaith Understanding, Ramapo College. Source: Quoted in New York Times, March 17, 1998.*

**"Those of us who have engaged in dialogue have not yet succeeded."**

*Elan Steinberg, director of the World Jewish Congress. Source: Jewish Week, March 20, 1998.*

**“What this document demonstrates is that those of us who are engaged in this dialogue have not yet succeeded and there is a need to strengthen the dialogue.”**

*Rabbi Marc Schneier, Hampton Synagogue, Westhampton Beach, Long Island. Source: Newsday, March 23, 1998.*

**“It should never be said that Christians were responsible for the Holocaust—Nazis were. Blaming Christians would be as unjustified as holding Jews accountable for the death of Jesus. Individuals were responsible in both situations.”**

*Ed Koch, former mayor of New York. Source: Daily News, March 27, 1998.*

**“The butchers were all baptised. The truth is that the majority of Christians did not lift a finger because in their parishes they heard repeated every day that Jews are the perfidious Christ-killers.”**

*Elie Wiesel, Nobel Prize winner. Source: Quoted in Reuters news story, March 17, 1998.*

**“The Jewish response now needs to be cautious and devoid of needless hyperbole. Dialogue is our objective, not diatribe.”**

*Rabbi Mark L. Shook, Congregation Temple Israel, St. Louis. Source: St. Louis Post-Dispatch, March 25, 1998.*

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# Why Catholics Put Up With Catholic Bashing

*by Deal Hudson, Crisis Magazine Editor & Publisher*

*(Catalyst 5/1999)*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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# **Jews, Catholics, and Pope Pius XII: Are the Media Expressing Prejudice toward Christianity?**

*by Sr. Margherita Marchione, M.P.F.*

*(Catalyst 4/1999)*

Members of the media seem to deliberately falsify historical facts about the Holocaust, periodically renewing their attacks on Pope Pius XII. Unfortunately these false statements can engender the same hateful feelings that in the past have led to both anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism.

In the words of the Jewish-Hungarian scholar, Jeno Levai, it is a "particularly regrettable irony that the one person [Pope Pius XII] in all of occupied Europe who did more than anyone else to halt the dreadful crime and alleviate its consequences is today made the scapegoat for the failures of others."

On October 15, 1944, John W. Pehle, executive director of the United States War Refugee Board, paid tribute to many non-Jewish groups and individuals who had shown a true Christian spirit in support of the persecuted during World War II. He stated: "The record of the Catholic Church in this regard has been inspiring. All over Europe, Catholic priests have furnished hiding places and protection to the persecuted. His Holiness, Pope Pius XII, has interceded on many occasions in behalf of refugees in danger."

Pehle's words, in a speech delivered in Boston, to "move forward onto a world of peace, where human dignity and the brotherhood of man may once more prevail," re-echo the sentiments of the "Architect for Peace" during this period, Pope Pius XII, whose contribution toward peace and justice cannot be denied.

Indeed, Pius XII was the personification of faith in a terror-torn world and a bulwark of peace. His words may well be applied to present-day media: "That which seems to us not only the greatest evil but the root of all evil is this—often the lie is substituted for the truth and is then used as an instrument of dispute."

The Holocaust was both anti-Jewish and anti-Christian. Far from Christian in origin, Nazism was pagan and racist.

On May 8, 1945, Germany surrendered unconditionally to the Allies. More than 11 million civilians had been murdered since the German invasion of Poland. In the Introduction to Atlas of the Holocaust, Martin Gilbert states that "in addition to the six million Jewish men, women, and children who were murdered,

at least an equal number of non-Jews was also killed, not in the heat of the battle, not by military siege, aerial bombardment or the harsh conditions of modern war, but by deliberate, planned murder.”

The Vatican document, “We remember: A Reflection on the Shoah” issued on March 18, 1998, received mixed reviews in the media. On May 15, 1998, Edward Cardinal Cassidy, chairman of the Pontifical Commission that issued this document responded to the reactions of Jewish leaders at the 92<sup>nd</sup> annual meeting of the American Jewish Committee taking place in Washington, D.C. He condemned as myth the accusation that Pope Pius XII did not do enough to stop the Holocaust: “It is our conviction that in recent years his memory has been unjustly denigrated... Monstrous calumnies... have gradually become accepted facts especially within the Jewish community.” He reiterated that the “anti-Semitism of the Nazis was the fruit of a thoroughly neo-pagan regime with its roots outside of Christianity, and in pursuing its aims it did not hesitate to oppose the Church and persecute its members also.”

Examples abound to document Cardinal Cassidy’s contention. In 1940, in a letter to be read in all churches entitled Opere et Caritate (“By Work and by Love”), Pope Pius XII instructed the Catholic bishops of Europe to assist all people suffering from racial discrimination at the hands of the Nazis.

Two years later, on July 26, 1942, the day after the Dutch bishops ordered – in all Catholic churches – a strong denunciation of the Nazi deportation of Jews, the Nazi occupation officers met in The Hague. The record of the meeting clearly states that because the Catholic bishops interfered in something that did not concern them, deportation of all Catholic Jews would be completed within that week and no appeals for clemency would be considered.

Among those sent to the Auschwitz gas chamber at that time was Edith Stein, a distinguished intellectual who, after her



conversion from Judaism to Catholicism, became a Carmelite nun. On October 11, 1998, Edith Stein, known as Sister Benedicta of the Cross (1891-1942), was canonized by Pope John Paul II. Edith Stein was killed because she was Jewish, but it is also true that the Nazis sent her and other converts to Auschwitz in retaliation for the Dutch Catholic bishops' pastoral letter condemning Nazi atrocities.

Today there seems to be a great deal of space devoted to Pope Pius XII. Incredibly, despite the documentation available, countless inaccuracies and accusations continue to dominate the media. It is difficult to understand the criticism and false statements of contemporary "experts," who undoubtedly fail to consult the 12 volumes of Vatican documents printed between 1965-1981, four of which deal exclusively with the humanitarian efforts of Pope Pius XII.

Indeed, it is time to right the injustice toward Pope Pius XII who saved more Jews than any other person, including Oscar Schindler and Raoul Wallenberg. Vatican records indicate that Pope Pius XII operated an underground railroad that rescued European Jews from the Holocaust. He used all possible diplomatic means to condemn Nazi atrocities and aid the persecuted Jews.

It is a known fact that both the International Red Cross and the World Council of Churches agreed with the Vatican that relief efforts for the Jews would be more effective if the agencies remained quiet. When the Catholic hierarchy of Amsterdam spoke out vigorously against the Nazi treatment of the Jews, the Nazi response was redoubling of deportations. Ninety percent of the Jews in Amsterdam were deported to the concentration camps.

On the morning of October 16, 1943, the Nazis started a roundup of Rome's eight thousand Jews who were marked for elimination: one thousand were captured. The Jews of Rome disappeared into Rome's monasteries and convents, where they

were safe until the war was over. There is documentation about an official, personal protest through the papal secretary of state. He delivered it on Pope Pius XII's orders that same fateful morning. The operation was suspended, no doubt because of the Pope's intervention. This gave the remaining eight thousand Jews the opportunity to hide from the Nazis.

If Pope Pius XII had protested, not only would he have been unsuccessful in halting the destruction, but he would have endangered the lives of thousands of Jews hidden in the Vatican, convents, and monasteries.

One story of compassion and love appeared in the November 1, 1943, issue of Life magazine. It began in 1941, when 150 German Jews fled from Germany armed with visas for the United States. In order to obtain transportation, they sought refuge in Italy. But soon, the war had become a World War. The Jews were immediately chained and arrested.

For three years they were interned in the town of Campagna, near the Bay of Salerno, living in a monastery and enjoying the loving care of the local residents. When the Allies bombed the monastery, the Jews fled to the mountains. Within days the Nazis took control of the town and they began shooting the Italians.

When the Jews learned that the Italians were without medical assistance, four Jewish surgeons, returned to the town to care for the many casualties. These Jews knew the Nazis were searching for them; if caught, they would have been shot or deported. Yet, they did not hesitate. Without medical equipment, they performed 40 major operations in two days and saved the Italians.

At the end of World War II, Dr. Joseph Nathan, representing the Hebrew Commission, addressed the Jewish Community and expressed heartfelt gratitude to those who protected and saved Jews during the Nazi-Fascist persecutions. "Above all," he

stated, "we acknowledge the Supreme Pontiff and the religious men and women who, executing the directives of the Holy Father, recognized the persecuted as their brother and, with great abnegation, hastened to help them, disregarding the terrible dangers to which they were exposed."

It is a sad but indisputable fact that the official publications of the Holy See, documents of the Nuremberg Trial Proceedings, state papers of the warring countries, and published Vatican War Documents have been largely ignored by those who would impugn the Pope's integrity. The twelve volumes of The Acts and Documents of the Holy See demonstrate the close collaboration between the Holy See, Jewish representative bodies, the international Red Cross, and allied governments. No one can deny that numerous protests were made by Pius XII. Despite the wealth of documentary evidence proving Pius XII's heroism, one of the biggest lies of our times – that the Pope was "silent" about Hitler's efforts to exterminate the Jewish people – continues.

In an effort to rectify the calumnies that the media continue to print about the role of Pius XII, the Vatican Press Office Director Joaquin Navarro-Valls responded to accusations that the Holy See has not opened its archives from the period of the Holocaust.

Navarro-Valls repeated that documents covering the period from March 1939 to May 1945 have been published and there is nothing to add to the five thousand documents already published in twelve volumes. On December 3, 1998, the Vatican Press Officer stated: "The exhaustive scrutiny of documents of the Vatican Archives allows us to state that there is nothing – I repeat, nothing – to add to what has already been published... Whoever makes insinuations contrary to what the Holy See has repeatedly stated, should produce concrete evidence. This has, naturally, never happened."

The media have covered the accusations; what about covering

the responses? Few, if any, have been printed.

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# Catholicism and the Greatest Generation

*by William A. Donohue*

*(Catalyst 3/1999)*

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

Brokaw is right to say that “This generation was united not only by common purpose, but also by common values—duty, honor, economy, courage, service, love of family and country, and above all, responsibility for oneself.” Sounds remarkably like my Uncle Johnny, the Fordham graduate who fought in World War II. Happily, he still epitomizes the virtues Brokaw cited.

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

Catholics.

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

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

If it is true that the cultural ascendancy of Catholicism allowed for considerable social solidarity, it is also true that social cohesion was abetted by both the Depression and the Second World War: the war helped unite the country in a way we haven't witnessed since, and it came on the heels of the Depression, which, despite its heartache, also provided for a communitarian spirit. These were tough times, but they were also times of social bonding.

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

projecting the very values that so impress Brokaw.

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

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

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

Life and death issues also saw the impact of Catholic values

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

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

In 1938, radio owners were asked if they had heard any vulgar broadcast that offended them in the last year. Remarkably, 85 percent said no. This is even more incredible when one thinks what passed for vulgarity back then. Today, it is virtually impossible not to have one's sensibilities assaulted while simply driving to work: if it's not the commentary of radio talk-show hosts that offends, or the lyrics of pop music, it's a highway billboard or the bumper sticker in front of you that comes on like gang-busters.

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

that they felt “threatened” with Catholic domination.

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

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

To recapture the culture, Catholicism will have to first awaken from its defensive posture. Internal divisions, scandal in the priesthood and financial woes have chastened the leadership, giving way to a mentality that plays not to lose, instead of playing to win. This will have to change, not only for the betterment of the Church, but for the betterment of society.

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



quite another to be without principle.

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

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## Does “Pro-Choice” Also Mean “Anti-Catholic”?

*by Kenneth D. Whitehead*

*(Catalyst 1/1999)*

A well-known contemporary American playwright publicly claimed that Pope John Paul II “endorses murder” and accused him and other religious leaders of being “homicidal liars” after the brutal murder of an admitted gay man in Wyoming. Merely by continuing to champion the Catholic Church’s teachings, apparently, the pontiff can get branded as himself virtually a murderer, and most people apparently find little or nothing amiss about the use of such language; at any rate, few are found to protest when it is gratuitously applied to the pope.

A pro-abortion activist in New York similarly declared that New York archbishop Cardinal John O’Connor was responsible (along with Protestant minister James Dobson) for the murder of an abortion doctor in upstate New York, who was shot with a high-powered rifle by an unknown assailant.

“Without these [religious] leaders spewing hate,” the pro-abortion activist said, “there would be no anti-abortion movement...Cardinal O’Connor is accountable for those religious followers who do pull the trigger.”

A *Washington Post* cartoonist saw nothing untoward in depicting an armed killer standing behind an anti-abortion protester holding an “abortion is murder” sign; the whole scene was captioned “What, me, an accomplice?” The assumption, again, was that protesting legalized abortion makes one an accomplice in the murder of abortion doctors.

Just before the recent November elections, the *New York Times* featured a story quoting the president of Planned Parenthood calmly taxing Cardinal O’Connor with attempting to send “an electoral message” merely because he wondered aloud in a sermon at St. Patrick’s Cathedral whether the accusation of murder that had been leveled against him was really aimed at him personally, or had reference to pro-life political candidates generally.

How is it that accusations labeling innocent people “murderers” are apparently considered acceptable in our public discourse when they are aimed at religious leaders opposing homosexual acts or abortion, but are suddenly found to be unacceptably “extremist” if spontaneously applied by average people reacting to the undeniable fact that every abortion performed actually does involve the killing of a baby? How can the violence and, yes, sadly, killing, always involved in an abortion ever be brought out if it can never be mentioned?

A question that may be more frequently asked as our current “culture wars” intensify is this: are Catholics even going to be allowed any longer by public opinion to express their opinions *as Catholics* on such public policy questions as legalized abortion? According to a widespread contemporary viewpoint which gets strong emphasis (and often virtual endorsement) in much of today’s media, Catholics should not be allowed to oppose legalized abortion precisely because their opposition to it is presumably based on the Church’s moral teachings, and hence must be considered an inadmissible “Church” interference in “state” affairs!

In view of the enormity of the evil of legalized abortion in America today—it claims more victims every year than have been killed in all the wars of American history (1.3 to 1.5 million abortions per year over the past quarter of a century, compared to 1.2 million total American deaths in all of our wars)—it is a tribute to the Church that the pro-life movement in the United States was begun primarily by Catholics. Since then, thanks be to God, many Protestants and Evangelicals, Jews, Muslims, and others have joined the pro-life ranks.

Nevertheless, it remains true that no other political position except a pro-life position is even logically possible for a Catholic who properly understands and practices his faith. Moreover, the pro-life position is regularly articulated and re-enforced by such outstanding Catholic Church leaders as Pope John Paul II and Cardinal John O'Connor—rightly. No doubt this is exactly what the pro-abortionists find so galling and intolerable; these religious leaders thus become fair game to be branded as themselves “murderers.” “Pro-choice” does apparently also mean “anti-Catholic.”

The present writer has been proudly involved in the pro-life movement since around 1970, when I was one of the founders of the Maryland Human Life Committee, formed at that time to fight liberalized abortion in the Maryland General Assembly. In recent years, especially since my retirement from the federal government, I have been actively involved in the political campaigns of a number of pro-life political candidates.

In addition, since 1993, I have been regularly writing and publishing articles and commentary on the political aspects of legalized abortion and on the progress of the pro-life movement; these writings have been based in part on my knowledge of the Washington scene and of how Washington works—knowledge which came from many years as a federal official engaged in public policy questions, in testifying before congressional committees, and in monitoring and promoting legislation.

In October, 1998, New Hope Publications brought out as a quality paperback book a collection of my articles published between 1993 and 1998 dealing with the political aspects of legalized abortion and related topics. Entitled *Political Orphan? The Pro-life Movement after 25 Years of*

*Roe v. Wade*, this book contains chapters dealing with the abortion holocaust, Title X and other government-subsidized family planning and population control programs, U.S. government machinations against the pope and the Church in the international arena, the pope's encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, the president's choices for surgeon general, partial-birth abortion, non-violence, and other topics—including especially the continuing efforts of the pro-life movement to deal with the enormous problem of legalized abortion in a climate in which even many declared “pro-life” politicians too often continue to try to run away from the issue.

The book also deals more seriously than almost any other current book with the volatile issue of the now well-established “linkage” between the abortion issue and the issue of government subsidized birth control. Anyone who has followed this knows how hard the pundits in the media have attempted to turn this into a purely “Catholic” issue, simply because of the Church's well-known teaching on the subject.

In general, *Political Orphan?* chronicles the fortunes of the pro-life movement during the Clinton years and lays out clearly where the pro-life movement needs to be going from here. In particular, the book makes a case—and a plea—for greater organized Catholic participation in the pro-life movement, this in spite of the opposition of bigots who would apparently deny Catholics any political voice on the most important political and moral questions of the day precisely because we *are* Catholics.

*Kenneth D. Whitehead is a former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education, who now works as a writer, editor, and translator. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Catholic League.*

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# The Trinity Foundation Looks at Catholicism

by William A. Donohue

(Catalyst 12/1998)

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

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

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

top). Organizational charts of the "Roman Catholic State-Church" were thoughtfully provided.

John W. Robbins opened the meeting with a lecture called, "Bleating Wolves: The Meaning of Evangelicals and Catholics Together." Suffice it to say that he is opposed to any such embrace. Robbins has a particular vendetta against Charles Colson, the Evangelical who is leading a serious dialogue with Catholics like Father Richard John Neuhaus. So angered is he (and speaker James E. Bordwine) by the good relations that Colson and Neuhaus have forged, that Robbins blasts today's Protestant churches as being "almost as corrupt and apostate as the Roman State-Church herself." Almost. But we're still number one.

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

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

What I don't quite get is Robbins' fixation on this business of "justification by faith alone." Even he doesn't believe it. On page 3 of his paper, he thanks the supporters of the

Trinity Foundation for hanging in there, acknowledging that there is almost no support for what he's doing in the Protestant community. Of his backers, he says, "They will receive a great reward in Heaven for the help they have given us." So acts count after all.

Robbins saved his big guns for the last day of the conference. That was when he took aim at "The Political Thought of the Roman State-Church." His one-hour talk was an historical overview of what is wrong with Catholicism (how would you like to listen to that at 8:00 on a Saturday morning?). No doubt he could fill a library with his thoughts.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"The spirit of the Antichrist has been working relentlessly for two thousand years to achieve a worldwide consolidation of ecclesiastical and political power." With all this overtime, I would have thought that the Church's dream of a world



government would finally be at hand. Robbins concedes that it hasn't happened yet, but if the Catholic Church "fails to reach her goal within the next hundred years, she will not quit." Good girl. "She will continue to work tirelessly for world power, even if it should take another two millennia." We do take the long view, don't we.

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

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

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# Anti-Catholic Bias in Children's Literature

*by Inez Fitzgerald Storck*

*(Catalyst 11/1998)*

Good parents have always known that it is necessary to watch over their children's reading. But Catholic parents today and even Catholic educators may not be aware of the extent of the negative elements in contemporary children's literature. Many

if not most books for preteens and teens attack Christian values. Examples of violence, unchastity, and New Age paganism abound, with a few books favorable to homosexuality and abortion. Many children's and young adult books are also informed by gender feminism, which denies the very basis for masculinity and femininity.

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

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

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

*Queen Eleanor, Independent Spirit of the Medieval World* by Polly Schoyer Brooks depicts Catholicism in a biased manner,

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

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

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

this stance. And the effect in the book is that Darcy does not have to trouble herself with clearing up her confused ideas about the Church. Catholic doctrine and religious practices appear to obscure the reality of God and His love.

*Small-Town Girl* by Ellen Cooney is one of the worst offenders. The protagonist of the novel, a Catholic high school girl, has incorrect notions about indulgences and works to gain them in a mechanical way that appears to satirize Church teaching: "...she bought herself fourteen years of grace each day." Devout Catholic women are mockingly described as "a pewful of old women muttering into their rosary beads." The religious teaching sisters appear as benighted, bumbling souls fixated on purity. When the girl goes to confession, the priest asks her an inappropriate question about purity. She is afraid he will assault her sexually. Needless to say, he comes across as an uneducated lecher. (This priest actually makes Father Ray of "Nothing Sacred" look good!)

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

The 1996 Newbery Medal winner, *The Midwife's Apprentice* by Karen Cushman, takes place in the Middle Ages. The midwife of

the story is a Catholic who goes to Mass on Sunday, yet she is hard-hearted to the point of cruelty, doing her job “without care, compassion, or joy.” An adulterous relationship thrown in for good measure intensifies the degradation of her character. One asks if it could be mere coincidence that the midwife is the only person in the story depicted as an observant Catholic. What is worse, the author, in a postscript note characterizing the medieval midwife’s repertory as a blend of herbal medicine and magic, states, “Superstitions included the use of relics, water from holy wells, charms, and magic words.” It is highly insulting to Catholics to have the use of sacramentals equated with superstitious practices, which are condemned by the Church. The many other honors bestowed on *The Midwife’s Apprentice* show that there is considerable support in the library and publishing fields for anti-Catholic bias.

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

*Inez Fitzgerald is a freelance writer.*

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## Momentum Building for School Choice

\* by Rick Hinshaw

(Catalyst 9/1998)

“Courts no longer see religion as an allergen in the body

politic.” That’s how Kevin Hasson, president of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, viewed the June 10 ruling by the Wisconsin Supreme Court upholding inclusion of religious schools in Milwaukee’s school voucher program. Some might see such exuberance as a bit premature. The ruling will surely be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, and the powerful opponents of school choice—led by entrenched public school interest groups and self-appointed guardians of separation of church and state—are not going to give in without a fight.

Yet momentum is now clearly on the side of school choice. According to the Heritage Foundation, in 1997 “nearly 32 states considered a school choice program of some kind,” and “at least 45 governors stated their support for different degrees of school choice or charter schools.” Charter schools, public schools exempted from some of the regulations and union controls that can stifle innovation, offer parents a limited public school option. Vouchers offer a much wider latitude for parental choice, giving parents the right to designate which school—public or private—will receive the government funds allocated for their child’s education. Four other states—Arizona, Maine, Vermont and Ohio—currently have voucher cases pending before their state Supreme Courts.

Some voucher plans, however, pointedly exclude religious schools, fearful of raising constitutional church-state issues. That’s what makes the Wisconsin case so significant. “The robed justices in one of our more liberal states,” wrote Maggie Gallagher in the *New York Post*, “solemnly declared: Religion doesn’t have cooties, after all.”

Government resistance to vouchers—or their exclusion of religious schools—have spawned an outpouring of private grants for school choice. By the end of 1997, Heritage notes, there were over 35 privately sponsored programs providing vouchers for nearly 20,000 low-income children—and over 40,000 parents had put their names on waiting lists for these scholarships. Sol Stern and Bruno Manno report in the Manhattan Institute’s

Summer 1998 *City Journal* that a group of philanthropists led by venture capitalist Ted Forstmann and Wal-Mart heir John Walton have “announced a \$200 million national fund” to provide education vouchers for 50,000 low income children. The success of many of these private initiatives has subsequently spurred more state and local governments to action.

Emblematic of the surge in support for school choice was the conversion of Long Island’s *Newsday*, long an ardent foe of anything that even hinted at public support for religious education. In a June 21 editorial endorsing a trial for targeted vouchers in low-income communities, the paper embraced inclusion of religious schools. The editorial focused on some of the central issues cited by Heritage as fueling the drive for school choice: low test scores, level of safety, and lack of accountability among inner city public schools.

“Let’s face it,” *Newsday*’s editors wrote. “City public school systems around the nation have shown they are not up to the challenge. If you examine the performance of public schools in most older urban centers, you will find decades of disaster and precious few success stories. From New York to Chicago to East St. Louis, Ill., urban schools have fallen smack on their faces when confronted with the poorest children.”

In contrast, the paper cited St. Luke’s (Catholic) Elementary School in a South Bronx area “where the median income is \$8,644 a year, where scores of children live in foster care and shelters, where upheaval and violence are a common feature of daily life.” With a student body which is 77 percent Hispanic and 23 percent African American, “last year, 59 percent of St. Luke’s third graders tested at or above the state minimum in reading, and the story gets better in later grades,” *Newsday* noted. “Last year, 68 percent of its sixth graders were reading at or above the state minimum—compared with 40 percent at PS 65,” the neighboring public school.

Clearly, the failures of inner city public schools account in

great measure for the snowballing support for school choice among minority groups. A 1997 poll by Phi Delta Kappa, a professional education association, found that while 49 percent of the general population favor school choice, the figure is 62 percent among African Americans.

Yet a hunger for spiritual values is also evident—witness the outpouring of community support for the Bronx public school teacher fired for leading her class in a prayer. Profiled recently in the *Boston Globe*, theologian Thomas Groome, a foremost authority on Catholic education, cited such spiritual substance as the key to the popularity of Catholic schools among Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

“In general, as a system of education,” Groome stated, “there is probably no more successful system in the history of humankind.” While noting a wealth of empirical evidence that Catholic schools outperform public schools— particularly in educating children in low income communities—he says that the real strength of Catholic education is its emphasis on developing the student’s soul and character, as well as intellect.

While academic and spiritual concerns have thus forged a strong school choice coalition, opponents remain adamant and formidable. It is “unconscionable,” American Federation of Teachers president Sandra Feldman said of the Wisconsin ruling, “to give public funds to private religious schools for just a few students, when those same tax dollars could be put into proven, public school programs that would benefit every child in Milwaukee.”

*Newsday*, agreeing “on principle” with that sentiment, nevertheless concluded that “something must be done to jolt failing schools from their complacency; vouchers for the poorest are worth a try.” Rather than “destroy public education,” a targeted voucher program “if it’s done right...could force the public system to pull itself together.”



Milwaukee Mayor John Norquist recognized the value of competition in improving education, predicting that the city's voucher plan would improve the quality of its public schools because "the district won't be able to take kids for granted."

Ms. Feldman's suggestion that religious schools would serve "just a few students" hinted at the old canard that parochial schools are elitist. In fact, statistics consistently show that the demographics of most Catholic schools are consistent with those of the communities they serve—predominantly poor students in poor communities, middle income students in middle class areas, etc. And it is precisely the public school monopoly on tax dollars that prevents more poor families from choosing parochial schools. The Choice Scholarship program in New York City, columnist Cal Thomas noted, receives 22,000 applications each year for the 1,000 slots available, while there were 7,000 applicants last year for the 1,000 scholarships available through a similar program in the nation's capital.

The real private school elitists, then, are those who use their affluence to send their children to private school, while imposing government policies which deny poor parents the opportunity to make that choice.

Anti-Catholicism is an undeniable element of opposition to school choice. A glaring example was the June 20 letters page of the *Wisconsin State Journal*. Most of the letters attacking the pro-voucher court ruling were tinged with anti-Catholic bias. The most egregious, under the headline, "Turning state Capitol into Catholic Church," found it "ominous" that the majority of members on the state Supreme Court are Catholic, and castigated "Wisconsin's Catholic governor, Tommy Thompson," for having "appointed so many Catholics to positions of power that the statehouse resembles a Catholic Club."

More subtle, but just as hostile to religious freedom in

education, are those who invoke church-state separation. "Taxpayers shouldn't be forced to pay for religious schools," said Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. "We are not throwing in the towel," he said. Phil Baum, executive director of the American Jewish Congress, saw a critical choice between preserving "the principle that the Constitution imposes stringent and special restrictions on government financing of religion," and "an uncharted course" which would "put at risk the religious liberty Americans enjoy."

Groome would differ. "When you look at the Constitution, at the Declaration of Independence, they presume great spiritual values" he told the *Boston Globe*. "The Founding Fathers presumed that the educational system would be grounded in great spiritual values."

It should be noted that American college students are already permitted to use government assistance for religious schools if they wish; and last time we checked, the Constitution was still intact. Beyond that, it is simply hard to fathom how allowing people to choose to educate their children according to their religious beliefs threatens their religious freedom. It would seem that the opposite is true: creating a public school monopoly on taxpayer funds for education deprives many people of modest means of the freedom to make religion an integral part of their children's formal education.

As the momentum for school choice grows, so do organizations working in each state to make it a reality. United New Yorkers for Choice in Education (PO Box 4096, Hempstead, NY 11551-4096; 516-292-1224) typifies such statewide efforts. UNYCE works to pull together a diverse school choice coalition—Catholic school parents, other religious groups, inner city parents and community activists, and those who see competition as essential to academic excellence. While trying to promote school choice through various educational projects, UNYCE has also drafted a proposed voucher pilot program,

similar to Milwaukee's, which would target several low-income communities.

A national organization of particular interest to Catholics is the Blum Center for Parental Freedom in Education (Marquette University, Brooks Hall, 209, PO Box 1881, Milwaukee, WI 53201-1881; 414-288-7040). The Blum Center is named for the late Father Virgil C. Blum, S.J., founder of the Catholic League, who was fervently devoted to the cause of parental choice in education.

Other national organizations who were instrumental in the Wisconsin victory were the Institute for Justice and the Landmark Legal Foundation.

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# **The Merchandising of the Holocaust**

*by Richard C. Lukas*

*(Catalyst 5/1998)*

On March 16, the Vatican issued a long-awaited document on the Holocaust, "We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah." The document was not an apology, but it was a call for repentance. It stated the Church's understanding of the causes of Hitlerism, the mixed response of Catholics to the Holocaust and the role which Pope Pius XII played in trying to alleviate the suffering of Jews and others.

The response to the document was anything but uniform. Comments ranged from high praise to high condemnation, and many of the remarks were decidedly mixed. There has already

been much analysis of the document, as well as commentary on the reactions to it. The Catholic League's position has been to respond to those editorials, articles and cartoons that it found unfair.

What follows is a select sampling of the varied response to "We Remember" that surfaced from the Jewish community.

**"I believe that the Vatican statement is correct in asserting that Nazi antisemitism 'had its roots outside of Christianity,' that it was not derived from anti-Jewish doctrines of the church but rather from an 'exacerbated nationalism' and a secular 'pseudo-scientific' racism. Nazi texts provide no evidence that the antisemitism of Hitler or Himmler was informed by the Christian characterization of the Jews as Christ-killers, condemned by God because they refused to recognize the messiah. Nazi rhetoric is drawn from different realms."**

*Marc Saperstein, professor of Jewish history and director of the program in Judaic studies at George Washington University. Source: Washington Post, April 1, 1998.*

**"It is highly optimistic of the document to say that the anti-Semitism of Nazi ideology has its roots outside of Christianity. It denies centuries of Christian contempt and persecution of Jews and Judaism. It should be remembered that anti-Judaism created the atmosphere for the possibility of pagan anti-Semitism."**

*Rabbi Leon Klenicki, director of Interfaith Affairs, Anti-Defamation League. Source: Quoted in Chicago Tribune, March 17, 1998.*

**"I am sad, sad and deeply disappointed. Tomorrow morning when my Jewish neighbors in my building read the paper, they'll come to me and say, 'Didn't I tell you, they ain't going to change?' And they may be right."**

*Rabbi Leon Klenicki, director of Interfaith Affairs, Anti-Defamation League. Source: Rabbi Klenicki's published "Reading" on the document.*

**"We [Jews] should understand that, if we were in their [Catholic's] shoes, we might wonder if the dialogue is a bank from which Jews only make withdrawals."**

**"The organized Jewish community has to educate our people about the tremendous positive changes in the Catholic Church since Vatican II, three decades ago, and especially under the present Pope. I suspect most Jews do not fully understand, if at all, what progress has been made.**

**"As we desire more study and expression from the Church on sensitive matters, we too should be forthcoming on issues of concern for them. For example, we might at least discuss, if not re-evaluate, our present positions on school vouchers and partial-birth abortion. Most of all, we should be sensitive to what Catholics perceive as a widespread tendency towards 'Catholic-bashing' in American society.**

**"The Roman Catholic Church is the Jewish people's best partner in interreligious affairs. It is time for our laity to realize that fact and for our leaders to respond accordingly."**

*Rabbi Moses A. Birnbaum, spiritual leader of Plainview Jewish Center in Long Island, and a veteran of interreligious dialogue. Source: Jewish Week, March 27, 1998.*

**"There are elements in there [the document] that are positive, that hopefully will be picked up and used and made part of Catholic life. And there are some disappointing areas where I think it could have been strengthened greatly."**

*Rabbi A. James Rudin, director of interreligious affairs, American Jewish Committee. Source: Quoted in Newsday, March 17, 1998.*

**"To take 10 years and find absolutely no fault in the role of Pope Pius XII calls into question the seriousness of this document."**

*Rabbi Marvin Hier, Simon Wiesenthal Center. Source: Quoted by Richard Z. Chesnoff, Daily News, March 18, 1998.*

**"They [American Jews] did next to nothing to save the Jews of Europe, and worse, they demonized the Jews and Christians who gave their all to turn FDR. Ben Hecht and Peter Bergson were the Jews who led the fight to save the Jews of Europe. They went after FDR with great advertisements in the press in an effort to awaken the nation to the conspiracy of silence that was burying the Jews.**

**"The court Jews, led by Rabbi Stephen Wise, FDR's great buddy, went after Hecht and Bergson, told the Jews of America that 'these guys' were the enemies of Jews.... Wise was aided in this endeavor by The New York Times and The Washington Post, both papers owned by Jews. And by one of the top Jews in Congress, Sol Bloom.**

**"What bothers me as a Jew is the chutzpah of the Jewish leaders. Let them look into their own archives, let them examine what their ancestors didn't do to save the Jews of Europe. And the same for the Israelis, who have plenty to answer for."**

*Sidney Zion, columnist for the Daily News. Source: Daily News, March 30, 1998.*

**"What's lacking is taking moral and historical responsibility for Christian anti-Semitism. It [the document] fails to identify the direct link between the church's historic teachings of contempt toward the Jews and the cultural environment that facilitated the Holocaust."**

*Abraham Foxman, director of the Anti-Defamation League. Source: Quoted in New York Post, March 17, 1998.*

**"It is too little, too late. I have no doubt that the church did not do everything it could have to save people... [Pius XII's] silence cost millions of human lives."**

*Meir Lau, Israel's chief rabbi. Source: Quoted in Los Angeles Times, March 17, 1998.*

**"I expected much more from the Vatican and much more from this Pope. The document took long in coming, and it does not contain what I believe to be the full story of the Church's role during the Holocaust years."**

*Seymour Reich, former president of B'nai B'rith. Source: Jewish Week, March 20, 1998.*

**"Spectacular. They are repudiating anti-Semitism."**

*Rabbi Jack Bemporad, director of the Center for Interfaith Understanding, Ramapo College. Source: Quoted in New York Times, March 17, 1998.*

**"Those of us who have engaged in dialogue have not yet succeeded."**

*Elan Steinberg, director of the World Jewish Congress. Source: Jewish Week, March 20, 1998.*

**"What this document demonstrates is that those of us who are engaged in this dialogue have not yet succeeded and there is a need to strengthen the dialogue."**

*Rabbi Marc Schneier, Hampton Synagogue, Westhampton Beach, Long Island. Source: Newsday, March 23, 1998.*

**"It should never be said that Christians were responsible for the Holocaust—Nazis were. Blaming Christians would be as unjustified as holding Jews accountable for the death of Jesus. Individuals were responsible in both situations."**

*Ed Koch, former mayor of New York. Source: Daily News, March*

27, 1998.

**"The butchers were all baptised. The truth is that the majority of Christians did not lift a finger because in their parishes they heard repeated every day that Jews are the perfidious Christ-killers."**

*Elie Wiesel, Nobel Prize winner. Source: Quoted in Reuters news story, March 17, 1998.*

**"The Jewish response now needs to be cautious and devoid of needless hyperbole. Dialogue is our objective, not diatribe."**

*Rabbi Mark L. Shook, Congregation Temple Israel, St. Louis. Source: St. Louis Post-Dispatch, March 25, 1998.*