

Religious Expression in the Public Schools: Testimony before the U.S. Civil Rights Commission

by William A. Donohue

(5/20/1998)

Testimony of William A. Donohue, Ph.D., President, Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights before the United States Civil Rights Commission on May 20, 1998 during a Public Hearing on *Schools and Religion*.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to testify today on the subject of schools and religion. As president of the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization, I am disturbed by the extent to which religious expression is treated as second-class speech in our schools. In addition, I am disturbed by the degree of tolerance for anti-Catholicism that too many school officials exhibit.

There is much talk these days about religious zealots who seek to ban books from school libraries. No doubt such persons exist. But no one seems to want to talk about the book banning that civil libertarians promote. For example, the ACLU has sued in the state of Wisconsin in an attempt to ban the book *Sex Respect*. Why? Because the book advocates abstinence and, as such, "promotes a religious perspective regarding the 'spiritual dimension' of sexuality." Books that promote condoms and abortion, however, are acceptable to the ACLU because they do not advance a religious perspective. This is what I mean by religious expression being treated as if it were second-class speech.

Something similar happened in California when the ACLU opposed a bill that promoted monogamy in the schools. The Union maintained that "teaching that monogamous, heterosexual intercourse within marriage is a traditional American value is an unconstitutional establishment of a religious doctrine in public schools." But the ACLU has no problem with schools that promote a radical homosexual agenda and that treat marriage as an alternative lifestyle. In short, sex education that advances a secular agenda is okay but it is not okay if world religions embrace a particular teaching regarding sexuality.

Just as bad are sex education seminars and workshops that disparage the Roman Catholic Church's teachings on sexual ethics. It is one thing to address homophobia in society, quite another to single out Catholicism for derision; this is a problem that has increasingly come to the attention of the Catholic League.

When books such as *The Bible in Pictures* and the *Story of Jesus* are banned from school libraries, we hear nothing from either civil libertarians or those who profess an interest in separation of church and state. But when books that show disdain for Catholicism are assigned to students, for example, *The Old Gringo* and *Anastasia Krupnik*, we hear a chorus of free speech from the same quarters. Moreover, when courses on religion or the Bible are introduced, the guardians of liberty raise objections, as witnessed recently in Ohio and Florida.

Perhaps the most consistent complaints regarding religious expression in the public schools that come to the attention of the Catholic League revolve around Christmas celebrations. Not only is there widespread repression of religious speech every December, it is selective in nature: celebrations of Hanukkah are usually tolerated but celebrations of Christmas frequently are not.

Just last year, the Glen Cove School District on Long Island

forbade the display of a crèche in the schools (it was donated by the Knights of Columbus) but allowed the display of a menorah. The year before, in Manhattan Beach, California, a public school removed a Christmas tree from school property after a rabbi objected that the tree was a religious symbol; however, the school allowed the display of a Star of David. In northern California, a school in Sacramento banned Christmas celebrations on the theory that Christianity "was not a world religion."

In 1996, the Catholic League threatened a lawsuit against the Millcreek Township School District in Erie, Pennsylvania when the school district prohibited students from creating artwork that depicted a nativity scene for the annual "Holiday Card Contest." In the same year, candy canes were confiscated from students at a public school in Scarsdale, New York, even though no one has ever alleged that such treats were in any way religious. Indeed, the same school district even took the word "Christmas" off the spelling list; even green and red sprinkles on cookies, as well as cookies made in the shape of a bell or star, were considered taboo.

In 1997, in Mahopac, New York, Boy Scout students were barred from selling holiday wreaths at a fundraiser, even though a wreath is a secular symbol; Hanukkah gifts, however, were allowed to be sold at the school's own fundraiser.

In 1997, the Hillsborough Board of Education was more equitable in its bigotry: the New Jersey school board banned class parties for Halloween, Christmas, Hanukkah and Valentine's Day. In Albuquerque, New Mexico, Highland High School choir director Frank Rotolo tried to appease the politically correct police by agreeing to remove Christian songs from the Christmas Concert, and he even acceded to their demand that the concert's name be changed to "A Winter Concert," but that still didn't satisfy the appetite to sanitize the schools of religious expression: the choir director was suspended by the principal.

Last December, I confronted an attorney for New York City Schools Chancellor Rudy Crew regarding the practice of banning crèches in the schools while allowing menorahs. At first, she cited the 1989 *County of Allegheny v. ACLU* decision to buttress her case, but when I pointed out that that decision undermined her case—making the argument that the high court declared a menorah to be a religious symbol, not a secular one—she quickly retreated. Such ignorance strikes me as willful.

The Catholic League has even had to intervene in securing release time for students who were penalized for attending religious instruction at night in lieu of participating in the school's concert.

The inequities cited are bad enough, but what is worse is the flagrant bigotry that Catholic students endure in some public schools. For example, in April, 1997, the art department at La Guardia High School in Manhattan authorized the distribution of fliers that depicted an image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in a sexually explicit way. There was another artistic contribution that showed a sketch of a man with "HEBRO" written across his head and "EVIL JEW" scripted above the figure. An arrow was pointed at him by a man holding a large penis. The man comments "Jesus I gots a present fo' yo' preachy ass!!" There were several other works of art that depicted Catholic schoolgirls in a vile way.

In 1997, Catholic students in Danville, California had to sit through the anti-Catholic movie, *The Last Temptation of Christ*; it was shown during Holy Week and when students complained about the explicit violence, sex scenes and bigotry, they were mocked by their teacher. The Catholic League has also encountered teachers and students in Middletown Township, New Jersey, who have had to endure anti-Catholic commentary in the school district's newsletter.

This spring, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, Catholic students were

prohibited from wearing T-shirts with an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe on them. In a well-reported case, students in a Houston suburb were denied the right to wear rosaries to school. And who can fail to recall the abuse and heckling that Christian students endured at the hands of antireligious extremists in Kentucky, a situation that culminated in the deaths of three students at Heath High School in West Paducah?

In 1995, President Clinton released a memo on religious expression in the public schools that is commendable in its clarity. The problem is that his directive, like those of the courts, have been ignored with impunity.

Not until religious expression in the public schools is given the same respect and latitude that is accorded secular speech, will we resolve this problem. In the meantime, we need to end the discriminatory practice of barring the use of public monies to promote religion while allowing public monies to be spent bashing religion. Schools that are sued for allowing "Jesus Christ Superstar" but are told to back off when objections are raised to putting on "Oh! Calcutta!" need relief, and no one needs it more than the Catholic schoolchildren who suffer through these injustices.

Atheism, Anti-Catholicism, and Paranoia

by William A. Donohue

(Catalyst 4/1998)

At the conclusion of John M. Swomley's article in the January/February edition of *The Humanist*, the credits read

that he is “emeritus professor of social ethics at St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Missouri, and president of Americans for Religious Liberty.” It would be more accurate to say that Swomley is one of the most prominent atheists in the United States, a long-time ACLU extremist whose understanding of social ethics is on a par with Father Ray’s appreciation for the Magisterium. It should also be said that Americans for Religious Liberty represents religious liberty in the same way that the People’s Republic of China represents the Chinese people.

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

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

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

Want to know what the league does for a living? “Chiefly, its

mission is to censor or suppress any activity, language, speech, publication, or media presentation that it considers offensive to the papacy, the Vatican or the Catholic Church in America.” Never mind that the league persistently forswears any appetite for censorship, and never mind that Swomley can’t cite a single instance to buttress his case, the point he wants to make is that the league must be stopped before America is overrun by those papal loyalists. Here are the ground rules: when Jewish and black civil rights organizations protest bigotry, that’s free speech; when Catholics do so, it’s censorship.

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

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

Swomley quotes the league’s by-laws but fails to mention that the ones he cites are from 1973. In another sleight of hand, he quotes a phrase from Canon Law 1369 about just punishment for blasphemy, and then claims, without warrant, that the league “exists in response” to this Canon (where he dreamed

this one up, I do not know).

After the pope came to the United States in 1995, the league commented that the media had generally been fair. This unexceptional observation is read by Swomley as proof that the Catholic League "intimidated the press." Furthermore, when I wrote that "The relatively few cheap shots that were taken at the Pope by the media in October is testimony to a change in the culture," Swomley put the following spin on this sentence: "In other words, the 'change in the culture' is the elevation of the pope and church hierarchy to a position above criticism." He seems to prefer a world where anti-Catholicism is accepted to a world where tolerance is achieved, because in his mind, tolerance for Catholicism is equivalent to the establishment of a privileged position for the pope.

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

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

A while back, the Catholic League was upset with the ADL for reneging on an award it promised author Richard Lukas for his splendid book, *Did the Children Cry? Hitler's War Against Jewish and Polish Children*. The ADL reneged because it thought

the book wasn't sufficiently appreciative of the anti-Semitic strain in Polish history (after a protest, mounted in part by the league, Lukas got the award). In an amazing twist of facts, Swomley accuses the league of criticizing the ADL for presenting the award to Lukas! Not without significance, he says that the league "even" attacked the ADL, as if "the Jewish organization" (as he calls it) was somehow off-limits.

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

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

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

It is impossible to separate Swomley's paranoia from his anti-Catholicism. Indeed, the latter partly explains the former. But because not all anti-Catholics are paranoid, there is something else at work here. And that something else is called

atheism. Yes, there are atheists who are not anti-Catholic, just as there are anti-Catholics who are not paranoid. But when there is a blend of atheism and anti-Catholicism, a strain of paranoia is almost always detectable.

Professor Swomley sports graduate degrees and prefers the pen to the sword. Klansmen sport white sheets and prefer the sword to the pen. Aside from that, there isn't much that separates them, and on the scale of bigotry and paranoia, they're twin cousins. Indeed, they have so much in common that they are likely to meet again in the next life (sorry for the bad news, professor). Exactly where I really can't say. I just hope I don't run into them.

Twenty-five Years After Roe: Sliding Into Infanticide

by Rick Hinshaw

(Catalyst 1/1998)

It is now 25 years since the Supreme Court declared unborn children to be non-persons, opening the floodgates to a slaughter of innocent human life unprecedented in our nation's history.

Pro-life people were horrified by *Roe vs. Wade*. They foresaw the mass destruction of pre-born life which it would unleash; and they also warned, as *National Journal* senior writer Michael Kelly recently recalled, "that the widespread acceptance of abortion would lead to a profound moral shift in

our culture, a great devaluing of human life.”

Senator James Buckley of New York asked on the floor of the U.S. Senate whether America would continue to uphold the “supreme value” of human life, or whether, in the wake of *Roe vs. Wade*, the sanctity of life would be “downgraded to one of a number of values to be weighed in determining whether a particular life shall be terminated?”

Others, however, dismissed such dire warnings, and until recently Kelly counted himself among those skeptics. “Why,” he reasoned, “should a tolerance for ending human life under one, very limited, set of conditions necessarily lead to an acceptance of ending human life under other, broader terms?”

Now, however, he has awakened to the clear connection between unrestricted abortion and our growing culture of death—a connection which, sadly, many in our own Church still cannot grasp, as they continue to dismiss abortion as “only one issue”. What has finally convinced Kelly that “the pessimists were right”? Let him tell you in his own words (*Washington Post*, 11/6/97):

“On Sunday, Nov. 2, an article in the *New York Times*, the closest thing we have to the voice of the intellectual establishment, came out for killing babies.” That’s right, he’s talking about killing babies *after* birth, as opposed to “terminating a pregnancy” by killing them before birth.

The column Kelly is referring to, by MIT psychology professor Steven Pinker, begins as an examination of the recent rash of killings of newborns by their mothers and, in at least one instance, by the father as well.

While conceding that he is “sensationalizing,” but “only slightly,” Kelly sees Pinker coming dangerously close to justifying, if not endorsing, infanticide. In Pinker’s “modest proposal,” writes Kelly, “mothers who kill their newborn infants should not be judged as harshly as people who take

human life in its later stages because newborn infants are not persons in the full sense of the word, and therefore do not enjoy a right to life. Who says that life begins at birth?"

A reading of Pinker's column justifies Kelly's alarm, especially when we examine, step by step, the professor's "logic" in trying to define legal personhood.

He begins by dismissing the "anti-abortionists" who "draw the line at conception."

"That implies," he writes, "that we should shed tears every time an invisible conceptus fails to implant in the uterus." So if no one sheds tears at our death, you see, our life never really existed. By that utilitarian logic, there is no inherent value to human life; and our right to live is wholly dependent on the value which other people place on our existence.

Next, Pinker claims that "those in favor of abortion draw the line at viability." Not quite. *Roe vs. Wade* allows states to legalize abortion *up to the moment of birth*, and no less a force than the President of the United States, by his veto of a ban on partial-birth abortion, has upheld the unrestricted killing of children well past the point of viability.

Yet even this does not go far enough for Professor Pinker, who calls for a re-examination of the presumption that "the line must be drawn at some point before birth." Instead, he writes, "the moral philosophers say" that "the right to life" must derive "from morally significant traits that we humans happen to possess. One such trait is having a unique sequence of experiences that defines us as individuals and connects us to other people. Other traits include an ability to reflect upon ourselves as a continuous locus of consciousness, to form and savor plans for the future, to dread death and to express the choice not to die. And there's the rub: our immature neonates don't possess these traits any more than mice do."

The logic will be familiar to anyone who has argued the abortion issue: Life has no inherent value. Personhood, and thus one's very right to exist, are dependent on a range of arbitrary factors—level of consciousness, connectedness to other people, awareness of life and death—that will be defined and determined by other human beings. Indeed, Pinker's criteria for achieving personhood are very similar to those set forth by Mary Ann Warren in her 1973 essay "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion": "consciousness," of "internal" as well as "external" existence; "reasoning"; "self-motivated activity"; "the capacity to communicate"; and "self-awareness."

Even Pinker's use of semantics—labeling a newborn child a "neonate" rather than a "baby"—is of a piece with the pro-abortion strategy of dehumanizing the unborn child through the use of terms like "conceptus" or "fetus."

Of course, Pinker, while not disputing this logic, distances himself from it somewhat by attributing it to unnamed "moral philosophers." And indeed, what is perhaps most sobering about his column is that the ideas he expresses are *not* new, nor are they unique to him. They have long been standard fare among some in the intellectual and medical elite, who have advocated infanticide as a logical corollary to legalized abortion.

Dr. Joseph Fletcher, for instance, in his 1979 book, *Humanhood: Essays in Biomedical Ethics*, stated unequivocally that "both abortion and infanticide can be justified if and when the good to be gained outweighs the evil—that neither abortion nor infanticide is as such immoral."

When would the "good" to be gained by killing a newborn infant "outweigh the evil" of such an act? Well, when the baby had been so uncooperative as not to die during an attempted abortion, for one thing. Such babies should be given neonatal care only if the parents wish them to survive, said Dr. Mary

Ellen Avery, chief of Boston Children's Hospital, back in 1975. "There must be a right to dispose of an infant survivor of abortion," agreed abortionist Dr. Warren Hern (*Denver Post*, 2/2/77), who has since authored the leading textbook on late term abortion procedures.

Destroying children born with disabilities would be another "good" derived from infanticide. James Watson, Nobel laureate for DNA discovery, declared in 1973 that he would not "declare (a child) alive until three days after birth," in order to allow for the killing of newborn children with birth defects. His co-discoverer of DNA, Sir Francis Crick, concurred, stating that newborns should have to pass certain genetic tests before being granted the right to live. Geneticist Colin Austin said that personhood should not be declared until some time after birth, to allow for killing the deformed. John Lachs, Ph.D., Vanderbilt University, wrote in the *New England Journal of Medicine* that some defective infants are "beings that are only human-looking shapes," and should be put to death like animals.

University of California attorney F. Raymond Marks, speaking at the 1976 Sonoma Conference on Ethical Issues in Neonatal Intensive Care, asserted that the state's interest in maintaining the lives of defective newborns was offset by the high cost of keeping them alive. "We would prefer a system that broadly defined a class of infants declared as non-persons who could be disposed of by their parents," he declared.

This brings us back to Pinker's central theme, which is the key link between legalized abortion and legalized infanticide: de-humanizing those whom we wish to kill, in order to deny them legal personhood.

In the Aug. 11, 1969 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Dr. Robert Williams of Washington State Medical School said that he would not consider infants to be

persons until near the end of their first year outside the womb, and that until that point he would justify infanticide. Nuclear physicist Winston Duke compared killing an infant to killing a chimpanzee.

In 1979 Michael Tooley, author of "A Defense of Abortion and Infanticide," flatly declared, "Since I do not believe human infants are persons, but only potential persons, and since I think that the destruction of potential persons is a morally neutral action, the correct conclusion seems to me to be that infanticide is in itself morally acceptable."

Mary Ann Warren reached the same conclusion, writing that "killing a newborn infant isn't murder." And, despite her extensive list of attributes necessary for personhood, she ultimately decides that the right to kill a newborn infant depends, like abortion, solely on one factor: whether or not the child is "wanted." "When an unwanted or defective infant is born into a society which cannot afford and/or is not willing to care for it," she writes, "then its destruction is permissible."

Nor have such ideas been consigned solely to the realm of idle theorizing. Even before *Roe vs. Wade* there were reports of handicapped newborns being left to die without medical treatment.

"In 1973 I expressed the concern that abortion of somewhere between a million and two million unborn babies a year would lead to such cheapening of human life that infanticide would not be far behind," Dr. C. Everett Koop, later U.S. Surgeon General, said in a 1977 speech to the American Academy of Pediatrics entitled "The Slide to Auschwitz." "Well, you all know that infanticide is being practiced right *now* in this country...I am concerned that there is no outcry...I am concerned about this because when the first 273,000 German aged, infirm, and retarded were killed in gas chambers there was no outcry from that medical profession either, and it was not far from

there to Auschwitz.”

Incredibly, Professor Pinker warns in his column that we must establish “a clear boundary” for conferring personhood, lest “we approach a slippery slope that ends in the disposal of inconvenient people or in grotesque deliberations on the value of individual lives.” He somehow fails to realize that we have long since begun our descent down that slippery slope, and that his column is itself one of those “grotesque deliberations.”

Twenty-five years and more than 30 million deaths later, Michael Kelly is right to be alarmed. *Roe vs. Wade* has brought us to where we stand now. Either we restore protection to the unborn, or ultimately no human life will be safe.

(A shorter version of this article previously appeared in *The Long Island Catholic*)

Religion on TV Doesn't Have a Prayer

by Evan Gahr

(*Catalyst* 12/1997)

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

Rabbi Marc Gellman, one of the first clergymen to appear regularly on network television in some 40 years, says that “there's an anti-religious perspective in the media. News has

created life without religion. That has created a distorted version of the world.” Adding insult to injury, he contends, are the entertainment programs that offer “demeaning and libelous” portrayals of clergymen. Crazy rabbis betray confidences, priests are pedophiles, others are just plain simpletons. Few men of the cloth receive much sympathy unless they’re outright heretics or rabble-rousers.

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

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

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

positive, prime time has too often presented distorted unfair views of both clergy and laity.”

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

Again, other groups would never receive such unflattering treatment. Indeed, “reality-based” television shows sometimes take “creative liberties” to insure that their fictional miscreants aren’t too heavy with minorities. Yet while religious criminals are over-represented on TV, religious do-gooders are few and far between. James Martin, who writes on television for the liberal Catholic weekly *America*, notes that “ER” presents a wide array of representatives from the “helping professions”—everyone from teachers to Girl Scout leaders. But the only hospital chaplain he recalls is a nun who appeared in full habit, which most sisters haven’t worn for years.

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

people.”

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

Meanwhile, normally astute journalists continue to ignore religious angles. When heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield was interviewed live after Mike Tyson lost their June fight on account of biting, Holyfield repeatedly praised Jesus—and suggested that his faith helped keep him calm when Tyson turned his ear into an appetizer. But the subsequent—and otherwise exhaustive—news coverage virtually ignored Holyfield’s religious pronouncements.

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

Wehmeyer, who has covered everything from Christian capitalists to a spiritual revival among Jews, stressed her gratitude to ABC and Peter Jennings for their commitment to religious news coverage—a commitment underscored when ABC

signed her for another three-year contract this spring.

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

Most newsmen and commentators routinely insert details about themselves into their stories. But religion still gives the powers-that-be the willies. Rabbi Gellman, who along with Monsignor Thomas Hartman constitutes "Good Morning America's" "God Squad," notes that "several people at ABC went way out on a limb" to bring the duo on the air. The resistance is rather bizarre. After all, clergymen have a proven track record. The Emmy award-winning Bishop Fulton J. Sheen proved a smash commercial success in the 1950s with his show, "Life Is Worth Living."

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

Just ask Martha Williamson, the born-again Christian who had to fight tooth and nail to get her show "Touched by an Angel" on the air. A well-informed TV producer tells me that CBS's head of programming hated the show and bent over backwards to

sink it. Even after its test-marketing proved impressive, he tried to bury the program in an awful time slot. Panned by critics and shunned by CBS, the show nevertheless soon achieved immense popularity. (At that point, the hostile network executive decided to take credit for birthing the show.) With some 20 million viewers weekly, "Touched by an Angel" ranks among television's top three rated programs—and now has the coveted Sunday night time slot. CBS even has a spin-off, "Promised Land," which Williamson also produces.

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

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

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

Hollywood will lose interest.”

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

Evan Gahr is a regular contributor to The American Enterprise, in which this originally appeared.

Apologies in the Age of Spin Control

by Mary Ann Glendon

(Catalyst 6/1997)

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

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

history when they departed from the spirit of Christ and his Gospel, and, instead of offering the world witness of a life inspired by values of faith, indulged in ways of thinking and acting that were truly forms of counterwitness and scandal.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Professor Glendon teaches at Harvard Law School and is a member of the Catholic League’s Board of Advisors.

Can There Be “Common Ground”?

by William A. Donohue

(Catalyst 10/1996)

In August, Cardinal Bernardin along with eight bishops and 17

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Survey of Chick Publications

by William A. Donohue

(Catalyst 10/1996)

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

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

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

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

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

Catholicism's Errors

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The "Secret Army" of the Jesuits

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Catholic Cabals

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

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

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

spectacular give-away in history."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What Makes Chick Tick?

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

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

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

A Survey of Chick Publications

by William A. Donohue

(Catalyst 10/1996)

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

this than Chick Publications.

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

Chick's booklets are available in Afrikaans, Albanian, Bulgarian, Burmese, Cambodian, Chichewa, Chinese, Creole, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Haitian, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Lithuanian, New Guinea, Norwegian, Pidgin, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Tagalog, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese and Zulu. Priced to sell at just 13 cents each, Chick has done a masterful job marketing its hatred. Titles include "Are Roman Catholics Christians?"; "Why is Mary Crying?"; and "The Death Cookie," which by that is meant the Host.

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

Catholicism's Errors

Chick specializes in attempting to debunk Catholic teachings, thereby preparing the confused for eventual conversion to Protestantism. For example, in his book *Answers to My Catholic*

Friends, Thomas F. Heinze writes that "There is no real salvation in the Roman Catholic Church." From William C. Standridge in *Born-Again Catholics and the Mass*, we learn that Catholics cannot be "born again." Ralph Edward Woodrow, in his book *Babylon Mystery Religion*, goes further by arguing that Mary is the "goddess of paganism" and that "a mixture of paganism and Christianity produced the Roman Catholic Church."

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

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

Speaking of wives, Chiniquy writes that "As she becomes an adulteress the day that she gives her body to another man, is she any the less an adulteress the day that she gives her confidence and trusts her soul to a stranger?" Chiniquy writes like a contemporary reporter for *Enquirer* or *The Star* when he says that the "poor confessor" is "surrounded by attractive women and tempting girls, speaking to him from morning to

night on things which a man cannot hear without falling." This is because the woman confesses "her constant temptations, her bad thoughts, [and] her most intimate secret desires and sins."

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

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

The day Lehmann was ordained, he noticed late at night that one of his companions "became affected in his mind, the strain of mechanical routine, innumerable petty restrictions and formulas," a condition Lehmann describes as "a species of religious madness called `scrupulosity.'"

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

The "Secret Army" of the Jesuits

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

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

It's a sure bet that most Catholics never knew that "The Jesuits had secretly prepared World War II, and Hitler's war machine was built and financed by the Vatican to conquer the world for Roman Catholicism." And how many knew that "Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco were to be the defenders of the faith"? It gets better: "They were set up to win and conquer the world, and set up a millennium for the pope. Behind the scenes, the Jesuits controlled the Gestapo." Somehow every historian who has written on World War II seems to have missed these "facts" altogether, but not the world-renowned scholar, Jack Chick.

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

Jack Chick, at least, it all makes sense.

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

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

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

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

Though similar to Chick, de Semlyen has a creative side to him as well. Readers learn, for example, that the "Roman Catholic hierarchy" played a role in the assassination of President Lincoln. Also newsworthy is the charge that the Vatican "has the most efficient and widespread spy network in the whole world" (de Semlyen is kind enough to attribute this finding to

yet another careful student of Catholicism, Nino Lo Bello, in his book, *The_Vatican Papers*).

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

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

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

Catholic Cabals

Chick Publications loves to publish books that promote devil's theories, but when it comes to conspiracy-minded plots that implicate the Vatican, few can top Avro Manhattan. In his best-selling work, *The Vatican Billions*, Manhattan sets the

tone right from the start: "Christ was born, lived and died in poverty. His `church' is a multi-, multi-billion concern." In fact, the Catholic Church is "the wealthiest institution on earth." But how did it get so rich? My favorite story is the one about the end of the first millennium.

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

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

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

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

According to Manhattan, at the end of the Middle Ages, the Vatican resorted to some rather bizarre means to extract money from the peasants. Various bishops, Manhattan contends, were busy excommunicating insects, the result of which was an outpouring of revenue from grateful peasants. To be specific, leeches were excommunicated in 1451, caterpillars in 1480 (and

again in 1587), snails got the boot in 1481 (they were dumped again in 1487) and grasshoppers were shown the door in 1516. He says not a word about the praying mantis, but perhaps this was an oversight. Either that or the bishops thought they were too holy to excommunicate.

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

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

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

of the Vatican-Moscow alliance.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hunt goes further with this charge by saying that "The gross immorality of the Roman Catholic clergy is not confined to the past but continues on a grand scale to this day." To make sure we get his point, Hunt contends that "popes, cardinals, bishops and priests without number have been habitual fornicators, adulterers, homosexuals, and mass-murderers—ruthless and depraved villains who pursued their

degenerate lifestyles immune from discipline.” Nothing nuanced about that!

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

What Makes Chick Tick?

No serious student of religion or history would ever believe the absurd charges that Chick Publications specializes in, but that should hardly give us pause. There are millions of people all over the world who want to believe the worst about the Catholic Church, and unsophisticated though they may be, these men, women and children will never dislodge themselves of their hatred for Catholicism as long as they are given a steady supply of Chick fodder. To be sure, the Church will survive this assault, but that doesn’t relieve the objections that fair-minded people of every religion should have about Chick.

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

Catholic Women and Abortion

by William A. Donohue

(Catalyst 10/1996)

In a study by the Alan Guttmacher Institute, it was reported that Catholic women have an abortion rate 29 percent higher than Protestants. The study also concluded that about half of American women will have an abortion at some point in their lives. The gist of the findings is that a) the Catholic Church's teachings on abortion are falling on deaf ears and b) abortion is becoming a common procedure among women. But there is more to this than what the public has been left to believe.

To begin with, in virtually every newspaper account on this story, there was no mention of the fact that the Alan Guttmacher Institute is the research arm of Planned Parenthood, the nation's leading abortion rights organization that receives tens of millions each year from the federal government to service its mission. This is not to say that the Guttmacher researchers "cooked" the data, but it is to say that readers should be as suspect of their work as they would if the Pentagon had a research arm that produced studies indicating the need for an arms buildup.

If the Guttmacher Institute were truly interested in assessing the relationship between religion and abortion, it would have asked the women who listed a Catholic affiliation whether they were regular Church-goers. But they didn't. Nor did they ask those women whether they agreed with the Church's teachings on abortion. It is not unreasonable to assume that had such

questions been asked, the results would not have been quite so dramatic.

It is well-known that non-white minority women have pressures on them that make comparisons with white women somewhat difficult. The report is not entirely useless in this regard, though more data would allow for a more complete conclusion. Now consider the following.

The report says that although black women are 14 percent of the age-bearing class between the ages of 15-44, they make up 31 percent of all the abortions. Hispanics are 11 percent of the age-bearing segment yet they account for 20 percent of all the abortions. This is important because fully 20 percent of Catholics belong to minority groups: 14 percent of Catholics are Hispanic and 5 percent are black. As John Leo of *U.S. News and World Report* discovered after he examined this data, when black and Hispanic women are factored out, "Catholic women have an abortion rate 37 percent lower than average."

It must also be said that the 1 percent abortion rate among Jewish women is suspect. The majority of Jews profess no religion, and therefore it is entirely likely that when Jewish women were asked to choose which religion they belonged to, the majority checked off "None" as opposed to "Jewish," thereby underreporting their actual abortion rate.

The study does show that although only 6 percent of non-believers are between the ages 15-44, they account for 24 percent of all the abortions. Now if the researchers, as well as the media were fair, they would have highlighted this finding: women who have no religious affiliation are four times more likely than other women to have an abortion. But owing to bias, this was not done.

Finally, the data show that the abortion rate is not only declining, it is at the lowest rate since 1979 (the highest rates were born between 1983-1985). The present rate, 27.5

percent (and dropping), makes nonsensical the Guttmacher conclusion that half of all American women will have an abortion sometime in their life.

What this tells us is that if you start with a politicized agenda, you get a politicized outcome. In the end, there is no substitute for independently checking the findings of any research report, especially those that are produced by highly politicized organizations that have a vested financial interest in the conclusions.

Testimony before the U.S. House Subcommittee on the Constitution

by William A. Donohue; on the Religious Freedom Amendment

(7/23/1996)

On July 23, Catholic League president William Donohue testified before the Subcommittee on the Constitution of the House Committee on the Judiciary on a proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The Religious Freedom Amendment, which was first sponsored by Rep. Ernest Istook and then revised twice, once by Rep. Henry Hyde and again by Rep. Dick Armey, reads as follows: "In order to secure the right of the people to acknowledge and serve God according to the dictates of conscience, neither the United States nor any State shall deny any person equal access to a benefit, or otherwise discriminate against any person, on account of religious belief, expression or exercise. This amendment does not authorize government to coerce or inhibit religious belief,

expression or exercise." Text of Donohue's testimony: The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization, enthusiastically endorses the Religious Freedom Amendment as proposed by Congressman Henry Hyde and modified by Congressman Dick Armey. The First Amendment was written, in part, to secure religious liberty by keeping religion free from governmental intrusion. James Madison, who authored the First Amendment, made it quite clear what he meant when he wrote the so-called establishment clause. He meant to forbid the establishment of a national church and to forbid governmental preference of one religion over another. The idea that this clause would be used to insulate religion from government would have struck Madison, and the other Framers, as bizarre and downright disrespectful of their original intent. Regrettably, the work of the Framers has been so upended by recent judicial and executive decisions as to make moot their efforts. In the 1984 Supreme Court decision, *Lynch v. Donnelly*, Chief Justice Warren Burger, writing for the majority, stated that the Constitution does not require "complete separation of church and state; it affirmatively mandates accommodation, not merely tolerance, of all religions, and forbids hostility toward any." Unfortunately, the record shows an increasing hostility for religious belief, expression and exercise, making necessary the remedy that Congressman Armey has proposed. Whatever the sources of the current animus against religion, there can be little doubt that state encroachment on religion is a reality and that religious speech is often assigned a second-class status. The examples that follow are offered as evidence of the need for a Religious Freedom Amendment. The encroachment of government on religion has infused many public policy measures. It has been well-documented that religious organizations have managed to service the needy in ways that are both effective and cost efficient. Yet when the federal government entertains day care bills, as it did in 1988, it does so with the proviso that religious institutions that participate in such programs must first sanitize their

quarters of religious symbols and halt all religious instruction and worship. In New York the authorities even went so far as to say that religious preference was illegal in religious-based foster care centers and that Catholic schoolchildren were barred from making the sign of the cross before meals. It would be more honest for legislators to simply say that the gutting of religious institutions is a precondition for largesse. Even more incredible was the attempt by the City of New York to force the Archdiocese of New York to abide by an executive order (Executive Order 50) that mandated an affirmative action program for homosexuals for all institutions that receive municipal funds. The Archdiocese of New York, which was expecting to receive \$120 million to operate its child care facilities, refused to accept this litmus test and thus did not receive the funding. Though the Archdiocese eventually prevailed in the courts, it did not do so before considerable damage had been done to the children in its care. Indeed, the damage was even more extensive than that. At the time that the litigation was pending, the Archdiocese of New York had responded to an appeal by the mayor to open its churches to the homeless during a very bad winter. It did so without hesitation. But when the winter ended and the priests who serviced the homeless sought reimbursement for their outlays, the city refused to pay a dime, citing non-compliance with Executive Order 50. Freedom of religious expression is challenged in many ways. I recently was asked by the New York Daily News to participate in an Op-Ed debate over the question of Cardinal O'Connor's criticisms of partial-birth abortions. The issue was not whether His Eminence was right on the subject, but whether he had the right to even address the issue. That's how far we've gone: Catholic priests now have to explain why they should have the same First Amendment rights that others enjoy. And I know from talking to many priests, that this attempt to accord a second-class status to the free speech rights of priests has had the effect of stifling their expression, so scared are they of jeopardizing the tax exempt status of the

Catholic Church. Their fears, of course, are not unfounded. In the late 1980s, the National Catholic Conference of Bishops and the United States Catholic Conference were sued by abortion advocates because they advocated a pro-life position. Though the plaintiffs were denied standing, the effect of this action was to create a chilling effect on the free speech rights of the Catholic clergy. Perhaps one of the most disturbing problems that the Catholic League faces is the extent to which religious expression is denied by the same agents of government that allow for the defamation of religion under the guise of freedom of expression. To be specific, despite court decisions to the contrary, the placement of religious symbols on public property continues to be problematic, while public funding of bigoted assaults on religion proceeds with alacrity. Yet if it is wrong to use public monies and facilities to promote religion, why is it not also wrong to use public monies and facilities to bash religion? This is a question that needs to be addressed and it is one reason why the Catholic League is looking for a remedy in Congressman Armey's bill. To be specific, in the fall of 1993, a blasphemous ad for VH-1, an MTV outlet, was posted on the sides of buses in New York City. It pictured Madonna, the pop star, on one side, and Our Blessed Mother on the other, with the inscription, "The Difference Between You and Your Parents" placed squarely in the middle. Now I cannot imagine for a moment that an ad that simply featured Our Blessed Mother, complete with a reverential statement, would have passed muster with the guardians of church and state in New York. Here's another example. In 1990, in the Capitol rotunda in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, a Christmas tree was put on display, adorned with about 1,000 ornaments made by senior citizens. Three of the ornaments were made in the shape of a cross, and that was enough to send the ACLU into federal district court. Though the ACLU lost, the point to be made here is that if the senior citizens decided to immerse their crosses in a jar of their own urine—much the way the celebrated artist Andres Serrano did—perhaps the ACLU would

have defended their action as freedom of expression (they might even have qualified for a federal grant from the National Endowment for the Arts). We have also seen attempts to remove Catholic federal judges from cases dealing with abortion, and instances when Catholic jurors have been excluded from cases where a priest is the defendant. These examples of blatant anti-Catholic bigotry may not occur everyday, but to those who suffer such indignities, it is a condition that needs to be seriously addressed. If there were ever a place where religious expression is frequently challenged, it is in our nation's public schools. Not only are teachers afraid to even discuss religion in the classroom, principals and superintendents throughout the nation have engaged in religion-cleansing efforts to rid the schools of any religious element. Most of these school officials are good Americans who bear no animosity toward religion and who would be quite supportive of directives that allowed for equal treatment of religious expression. What motivates them to rid their schools of religious expression is not malice, but fear. Fear of a lawsuit. I have spoken to too many school lawyers to know that even they are confused about the status of the law. So they do what lawyers naturally incline to do—they advise their clients to avoid any opportunity for a lawsuit. The result is that religious-free zones are the norm. Here are some examples of what I mean. We have all heard of instances where the display of crèches are banned in the schools, as well as the singing of religious songs like "Silent Night." But how many know about the banning of "garlands, wreaths, evergreens, menorahs and caroling"? That is exactly what happened in Scarsdale, New York just a few years ago. In addition, the Scarsdale School Board revoked permission to sing secular songs like "Jingle Bells" and took the word "Christmas" off the spelling list in its schools. Candy canes were even confiscated by some teachers and even the color and shape of cookies became an issue: green and red sprinkles as well as bell and star shapes were all suspect. The same sanitization program was applied to Easter, to the point where

even the term "Easter" was stricken from all school publications. We know there is something terribly wrong when the play "Jesus Christ Superstar" is banned from public high schools. Would they ban "Oh! Calcutta!" as well. Not for a minute: the argument would be made that frontal nudity and simulated sex was freedom of expression and if people didn't want to see it, they could absent themselves. That plays with a religious theme are not accorded the same treatment is testimony to the present state of affairs. Children have been harassed by school officials for reading a bible on a school bus and teachers have been told to remove their bibles from the view of students in the classroom. Books like "The Bible in Pictures" and "The Story of Jesus" have been banned from school libraries, but we hear no outrage from the same civil libertarians who would protest the removal of child pornography from library shelves. Even more astounding have been the attempts by the ACLU to ban books from school libraries that promote abstinence. It does so on the grounds that abstinence is a religious perspective and is therefore unsuitable for dissemination in public schools. Other examples are easy to come by. Public school teachers have refused to accept term papers on the life of Jesus, prayers are banned in a huddle before football games and the mere mention of God at a commencement exercise—by a student valedictorian—is regularly proscribed. The Catholic League believes that if the Religious Freedom Amendment were passed by the Congress and ratified by the states that it would go a long way toward ensuring the rights that were originally guaranteed in the First Amendment. There is nothing in the amendment that would coerce anyone from observing any religion, and that is how it should be. What we are looking for is not special treatment but an end to the two-class system we have at the moment where secular expression is given preferential treatment over religious expression. That is why the Catholic League strongly urges this committee to vote in favor of Congressman Armey's amendment.