

PBS: ISLAM AND CATHOLICISM

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Islam

- “Islam: Empire of Faith” is a PBS documentary that aired on May 8, 2001. When the film was first made, there was a scene featuring a 14th century painting of Muhammad. But it was reedited for TV: a PBS spokesman said the scene was deleted because it “was an issue of respect.”
- On December 18, 2002, PBS aired a two-hour documentary, “Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet.” The *Washington Post* called it “enjoyable and informative,” and the *Los Angeles Times* gushed how it was “thoughtful, flowing [and] visually stunning.” It was also an exercise in unrelieved flattery: none of the nine experts offered anything but glowing accounts of Muhammad. The film even depicted Islamic tenets as though they were historical facts.
- On May 1, 2007, I saw the documentary, “Islam vs. Islamists: Voices from the Muslim Center,” at a private screening in New York City. It was to air on PBS as part of an 11-part series dealing with post-9/11 developments. However, it was spiked because it depicted Islamist terrorists as *not being representative of Muslims*! So in the mind of PBS, Islamists are ordinary Muslims.

Catholicism

- In August, 1991, PBS decided not to air a documentary, “Stop the Church,” that showed homosexual militants busting into St. Patrick’s Cathedral during Mass. It said the film was “inappropriate for distribution because of its pervasive tone of ridicule.” But guess what? One month later it had a change of heart and aired

the anti-Catholic film.

- On February 6, 1996, a PBS "Frontline" documentary, "Murder on Abortion Row," covered the shooting of an abortion doctor by John Salvi. Instead of focusing on Salvi's mental problems, the film sought the source of his derangement in his Catholicism.
- On March 10 and 11, 1996, PBS aired, "The Burning Times," a film that falsely blamed the Catholic Church for the Inquisition and the "women's holocaust." However, it was the secular authorities, not Catholic officials, who were responsible for almost all the Inquisition.
- On April 17, 1996, a "Frontline" broadcast, "Shtetl," was so unfair to Polish Catholics that the co-chairman of the Polish American Congress, Michael Preisler, a Catholic survivor of Auschwitz, accused it of "smearing" Polish Catholics. Another Polish leader, Irena Szewiola, branded it a "false history, the kind that results in hatred against Poles and the ostracizing of Polish schoolchildren."
- A 1997 "Frontline" show portrayed the Catholic Church, including the pope, as condoning the genocide in Rwanda. At the time, I wrote to PBS saying, "surely you know the pope does not defend mass killings." The response walked back the initial charge.
- In August, 1997, KBTC, the Tacoma PBS channel, aired three shows about "churchianity" that bemoaned the alleged oppression of women in the Catholic Church and its alleged "goddess-worship" of Our Blessed Mother.
- On April 6 and 7, 1998, a "Frontline" show, "From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians," was boldly advertised as "challenging and upsetting conventional ideas." It had the audacity to say that this "Jesus Seminar" account presented "the real story of the rise of Christianity."
- In 1998, PBS aired "Reflections on Vatican II." It was so biased against Pope Pius XII, the world figure who

did more to rescue Jews during the Holocaust than any other leader, that Newsweek religion reporter Kenneth Woodward called it a “monstrous calumny.”

- On September 28, 1999, “Frontline” aired “John Paul II: The Millennial Pope.” Its portrayal of the Catholic Church’s treatment of women, and the Church’s teaching on abortion, reeked of bias.
- “Absolute Truth” aired in January 2000. The Church was depicted as a reactionary organization that engaged in “conspiracies.” It also held “outdated” teachings that threatened to make it “irrelevant.”
- On July 9, 2003, PBS offered “Empires: Martin Luther.” It was straight out of the “Black Legends.” I asked for proof of some of the more outrageous claims, but received no answer.
- On May 9 and 16, 2007, PBS aired a documentary, “The Secret Files of the Inquisition.” It never mentioned how of the 125,000 cases tried by the Spanish Inquisition, one percent resulted in the death penalty. Moreover, it was the secular courts that did almost all the killings, though once again the viewer was not told this.
- On June 22, 2008, the PBS affiliate in New York aired, “Tal Como Somos (“Just As We Were”). At one point in the film, a comparison was drawn between the Catholic Church’s teachings on homosexuality and the antics of the Ku Klux Klan.