

# TED TURNER INSULTS CATHOLICS; APOLOGY FOLLOWS PROTEST

On March 6, Brit Hume of Fox News Network reported that CNN founder Ted Turner stunned CNN employees in Washington when he made an anti-Catholic remark on Ash Wednesday. Seeing ashes on the foreheads of some workers, Turner said, "What are you? A bunch of Jesus freaks? You ought to be working for Fox."

The Catholic League immediately contacted the Corporate Affairs department of CNN in Atlanta seeking more information. Their first response was to refuse to confirm, or deny, the validity of the story. Declaring this position unpersuasive, William Donohue issued a statement to the press that recounted Turner's previous remarks regarding Christians in general, and Catholics in particular.

Donohue pronounced Turner a recidivist. "Like all repeat offenders, he said, "Turner evinces an animus against a particular portion of the population. For him, it is Christians whom he despises." Indeed, in 1999, Turner sent an apology to the Catholic League after we blasted him for insulting the pope.

The Catholic League president reminded the media that Turner was on record for a) branding Christianity a religion "for losers" b) labeling pro-life Christians as "Bozos" c) insulting the pope with one of his cheap jokes at a pro-abortion meeting and d) blasting Christianity for being "very intolerant." Donohue then said, "Now he's back, this time slamming those who wear ashes on Ash Wednesday."

Both the print and electronic media picked up on the Catholic League's response (it made the front page of the *New York Post*) and within 48 hours, Turner issued the following statement: "I apologize to all Christians for my comment about

Catholics wearing ashes on their foreheads on Ash Wednesday. I do not believe in any form of prejudice or discrimination, especially religious intolerance.”

In reply, Donohue released told the media that we are “torn by what has happened.” He explained “On the one hand, our religion teaches us the virtue of forgiveness and the necessity of penance. On the other hand, we don’t like being played for a fool. So let’s put it this way: we’ll bite our lip and drop the issue, skeptical though we are.” Donohue also requested a meeting with Turner to “find out what’s bugging him.” We are awaiting Turner’s decision.

We hope this is the last time we have to press Turner into an apology.

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## Daily Variety

*Daily Variety* printed the following headline on March 8: “Catholic League prexy gives Turner a sermon.” It then quoted Donohue on Turner: “He may be just as dumb as John Roker, but unlike the Atlanta pitcher, he occupies a position of significant influence in our culture.” Which is why Donohue floated the idea of shipping Turner off “for some sensitivity training.”

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# ART DEBATE ENSUES

The lead article in the last issue of *Catalyst* was on the latest flap at the Brooklyn Museum of Art. It involved the Catholic League's criticism of "Yo Mama's Last Supper," a photographic exhibit that featured artist Renee Cox appearing nude as Jesus in a rendition of the Last Supper. On February 20, Donohue debated Cox at the First Amendment Center in New York.

In front of an unsympathetic audience, Donohue branded Cox's work "anti-Catholic propaganda." He pointedly asked Cox, who is black, whether she would object to a picture of a white man urinating into the mouth of Martin Luther King and having it displayed in a public library during Black History Month. Cox got indignant but never answered him on whether she would simply regard this as art.

When the crowd showed sympathy for Cox, Donohue said he had another example for them to consider: imagine a picture of Hitler with a halo over his head sticking a dagger into the side of Jew. Once again, no one would say that they wouldn't protest such a vulgar display. Thus did Donohue make his point.

Joining the debate was Edward Cardinal Egan of New York who called Cox "pathetic." Mayor Rudolph Giuliani went further saying he would ask for a decency panel to screen art scheduled to be shown at public museums. Also condemning the art was the Orthodox Jewish Community of New York..

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# JUSTIFYING                    ANTI-CATHOLIC BIGOTRY

William A. Donohue

Scenario: a group of so-called enlightened thinkers assemble to play a word association game. When they hear the term “bigotry,” they respond by saying things like “anti-Semitism,” “racism,” and “sexism.” It would never occur to them to say “anti-Catholicism.” But why?

It’s too easy to say that Jews, blacks and women have done a better job than Catholics in educating the public to the particular strain of bigotry that affects their group. This is certainly true enough, but it is not an adequate answer. What must be said is that anti-Catholicism is simply not seen for what it is—a type of bigotry. And that’s because those who harbor this prejudice think we Catholics are only getting our just deserts. Consider the following.

- I recently appeared on the Paula Zahn show, “The Edge,” to discuss blasphemous art and obscene song lyrics. The other guest, an entertainment writer by the name Tom O’Neil, all of a sudden went on a rampage blasting the Church for persecuting homosexuals.
- On a recent edition of “Hannity and Colmes,” I debated civil rights lawyer Michael Gross on the subject of anti-Catholic art. He argued that ex-Catholics who contribute to anti-Catholic art are expressing their hostility to what the Church did in the past. He cited Galileo.
- When I debated Renee Cox, the artist of “Yo Mama’s Last Supper” fame, she justified her decision to insert herself as a stand-in for Christ—in the nude, no less—as a payback for the Church’s participation in the slave trade.

- The producer of a new anti-Catholic movie recently told reporters that the Church deserved to be treated in a less than generous way because of what it did during the Inquisition.

These are not isolated examples. I hear stuff like this all the time. To which I say: be careful going down this road because no one is safe.

Ever hear of Jewish slumlords that ripped off blacks? Ever hear of blacks that persecuted Asians? Ever hear of Native Americans that participated in savagery? Ever hear of a tribal group that didn't massacre their brothers at one time or another? Ever hear of a part of the world that didn't at one time practice slavery? And so on.

There is not a demographic group in the entire world—of any race, nationality, ethnic stock, clan, tribe or religion—that comes to the table with its hands clean. The same is true of institutions. Yes, the Catholic Church has its share of dirty laundry, but name for me one institution that has been around for even one one-hundredth as long that isn't also soiled? And remember this: it is not the teachings of the institutional Church that leads Catholics to sin. It is their rejection.

Why, then, are Catholics who are alive today considered fair game to attack, simply because some of their forefathers were beasts? What about the children of non-Catholic beasts? Shouldn't we give them a smack, too?

There is no logic to any of this. And the proponents of this line of thinking know there isn't. I know this because none of them has ever been able to answer me when I go down the list of crimes that other groups and institutions are commonly known to have committed. That's why I don't want to hear another word about the Crusades.

I refuse to be a punching bag for those bigots who want to attack my religion because of some past incidents of

injustice—real or imagined—committed in the name of Catholicism. It is high time we stopped being on the defensive every time this rhetorical game is played and started dishing it back to the bigots in spades. To do any less is to acquiesce in our own suffering. There's a name for this kind of malady and it's called masochism. And I'm no masochist.

My critics think I should try a less confrontational approach. I say give me a ring when you get my results. Besides, taking a tough line doesn't necessarily mean that people stop talking to each other. I asked for a meeting Ted Turner because I think it's just possible I might be able to convince him that his comments regarding Catholics are deeply offensive. But I didn't ask for a meeting before I got him to apologize. That's the Catholic League way.

Grant it, there is never cause for reckless speech or conduct. But that still leaves a lot of room for settling the score in a responsible manner. We can either step up to the plate and meet our adversaries head-on or just keep ducking every time they fire. It will come as no surprise to anyone that we at the Catholic League don't like ducking.

Remember, despite all its faults, the Catholic Church has a track record of generosity and selflessness that no institution can match. And it has a spiritual message to deliver that demands a fair hearing. That's enough reason for me to stay in this fight. And believe me, I sleep easier each night knowing that it's good enough for you, too. Which is why we'll prevail.

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# THE “BLACK LEGEND”: THE SPANISH INQUISITION

Most of the myths surrounding the Inquisition have come to us wrapped in the cloak of the Spanish Inquisition. It is the world of Edgar Allen Poe's *The Pit and the Pendulum*, with vivid descriptions of burning heretics, ghastly engines of torture with innocent Bible-believers martyred for their faith. In many ways, the reality of the Spanish Inquisition has its own human tragedies, but it is not the tragedy presented in the common caricatures.

It is a curiosity of history that the medieval Inquisition of the 13th and 14th centuries was little utilized in Spain. It was only after the mid-fifteenth century that the Spanish Inquisition would develop, and its target would not be heretics in any traditional sense, but rather those whose Jewish ancestors had converted to Christianity and were accused of secretly practicing their old faith. To many contemporary historians of the Spanish Inquisition, the story unfolds not as a “religious” persecution, but rather a racial pogrom.

Spain was unique in Western Europe for the diversity of its population. In addition to a large segment of Muslims, medieval Spain had the single largest Jewish community in the world, numbering some one hundred thousand souls in the 13th Century. For centuries Jews and Christians had lived and worked together in a more or less peaceful though generally segregated co-existence.

In the 14th Century, however, anti-Jewish attitudes were on the rise throughout Europe. In 1290, England expelled its Jews and France followed in 1306. Spain began to experience an increasing anti-Jewish sentiment. It exploded in the summer of 1391 with angry anti-Jewish riots. These riots led to major

forced conversions of Jews to Christianity. These Jewish converts would be called conversos or New Christians, to distinguish them from traditional Christian families. The converso identity would remain with such families for generations.

To the converso families, such conversions were not without benefit. They were welcomed into a full participation in Spanish society and they would soon become leaders in government, science, business and the Church. Over the years the Old Christians saw these converso families as opportunists who secretly maintained the faith of their forefathers. It was a strong mixture of racial prejudice against the conversos that would stir-up the Spanish Inquisition.

Spain in the 15th century was in the process of unifying the two traditional kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, while engaging in the final defeat of the Muslim stronghold of Granada. Isabella of Castile had married Frederick of Aragon in 1469. She came to the throne in 1474. When Ferdinand became king of Aragon in 1479, the two kingdoms were effectively united. War was waged with Granada beginning in 1482, with its final defeat coming 10 years later.

In his book "The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision" (Yale University Press) Henry Kamen writes, "From the mid-Fifteenth Century on, religious anti-Semitism changed into ethnic anti-Semitism, with little difference seen between Jews and conversos except for the fact that conversos were regarded as worse than Jews because, as ostensible Christians, they had acquired privileges and positions that were denied to Jews. The result of this new ethnic anti-Semitism was the invocation of an inquisition to ferret out the false conversos who had, by becoming formal Christians, placed themselves under its authority."

In 1478, Ferdinand and Isabella requested a papal bull establishing an inquisition, a bull granted by Pope Sixtus IV.



In 1482 the size of the inquisition was expanded and included the Dominican Friar Tomas de Torquemada, though Pope Sixtus IV protested against the activities of the inquisition in Aragon and its treatment of the conversos. The next year, Ferdinand and Isabella established a state council to administer the Inquisition with Torquemada as its president. He would later assume the title of Inquisitor-General.

This allowed the inquisition to persist well beyond its initial intention. The papacy would continue to complain about the treatment of the conversos, but the unity of the Spanish Inquisition with the State would remain a distinguishing characteristic, and a primary source of post-Reformation European hatred.

The stated reason for the inquisition was to root out “false” conversos. There seems to have been an allure to the claim that many conversos secretly practiced their old Jewish faith and, as such, were undermining the Faith. For centuries, such legends would persist in Spain, though most evidence shows that there were few “secret” Judaizers and that most conversos, particularly after the first generation of forced conversions, were faithful Catholics.

In March, 1492, Isabella and Ferdinand ordered the expulsion – or conversion – of all remaining Jews in their joint kingdoms. The purpose of the declaration was more religious than racial, as Jewish conversion rather than expulsion was certainly the intent. While many Jews fled, a large number converted, thus aggravating the popular picture of secret Judaizers within the Christian community of Spain. Up through 1530, the primary activity of the inquisition in Spain would be aimed at pursuing conversos. The same would be true from 1650 to 1720.

The Spanish Inquisition had been universally established in Spain a few years prior to the expulsion of the Jews in 1492. Records show that virtually the only “heresy” prosecuted at that time was the alleged secret practice of the Jewish faith.

Through 1530, it is estimated that approximately 2,000 "heretics" were turned over to the secular authorities for execution. Many of those convicted of heresy were conversos who had already fled Spain. These were burned in effigy.

The most famous period of the Spanish Inquisition, under the legendary Torquemada, had little to do with the common caricature of simple "bible-believing" Protestants torn apart by ruthless churchmen. The true picture is unsettling enough: it was a government-controlled inquisition aimed at faithful Catholics of Jewish ancestry. The papacy, under Sixtus IV (1471-1484) and Innocent VIII (1484-1492), rather than controlling the Spanish Inquisition, protested its unfair treatment of the conversos with little result.

With the outbreak of Luther's Reformation in Europe and the spread of its ideas in the 1520s, the Inquisition was entrenched to protect Spain from Protestant "infiltration" and as a further means to buttress the royal power of Charles V, the successor to Ferdinand and Isabella.

The Reformation would have little impact in Spain. As Kamen explains: "Unlike England, France and Germany, Spain had not since the early Middle Ages experienced a single significant popular heresy. All its ideological struggles since the Reconquest had been directed against the minority religions, Judaism and Islam. There were consequently no native heresies (like Wycliffism in England) on which German ideas could build."

The image of a Spanish Inquisition burning hundreds of thousands of Protestant heretics has no basis in historical fact. There were so few Protestants in Spain that there could be no such prosecution. During the Reformation period, the inquisition in Spain certainly searched for evidence of Protestantism, particularly among the educated classes. But before 1558 possibly less than 50 cases of alleged Lutheranism among Spaniards came to the notice of the inquisitors.

The discovery of a small cell of Protestants – about 120 – in late 1550s, however, generated concern in the highest quarters in Spain. Charles V from his monastery retirement wrote in an infamous letter to his regent daughter Juana that so “great an evil” must be “suppressed and remedied without distinction of persons from the very beginning.” Though Spain braced for a tidal wave of revelations and discoveries – with finger-pointing and accusations of pseudo-Protestants everywhere – in all, just over 100 persons in Spain were found to be Protestants and turned over to the secular authorities for execution in the 1560s.

In the last decades of the century, an additional 200 Spaniards were accused of being followers of Luther. “Most of them were in no sense Protestants...Irreligious sentiments, drunken mockery, anticlerical expressions, were all captiously classified by the inquisitors (or by those who denounced the cases) as ‘Lutheran.’ Disrespect to church images, and eating meat on forbidden days, were taken as signs of heresy,” Kamen reports.

The last major outburst in activity of the Spanish Inquisition was aimed once again at alleged Judaizing among *conversos* in the 1720s. The Inquisition was formally ended by the monarchy in 1834, though it had effectively come to an end years prior.

Edward Peters in “Inquisition” (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 1989) explains how the myth of the all-embracing inquisition developed in European thought. The creation of the myth of the Inquisition was tied to the creation of an image of a Catholic Spain in the consciousness of the West. “An image of Spain circulated through late sixteenth-century Europe, borne by means of political and religious propaganda that blackened the characters of Spaniards and their rulers to such an extent that Spain became the symbol of all forces of repression, brutality, religious and political intolerance, and intellectual and artistic backwardness for the next four

centuries. Spaniards and Hispanophiles have termed this process and the image that resulted from it as 'The Black Legend,' *la leyenda negra*." It is this post-Reformation anti-Catholic "black legend" that created the myths surrounding the Spanish Inquisition. Serious historical studies in the 20th Century have debunked these myths, but they continue to persist in popular imagination.

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## ABORTION PROPAGANDA

On February 8, Dr. Wayne Goldner appeared on the "The O'Reilly Factor" with Bill O'Reilly. In a debate on abortion, Dr. Goldner, who is an abortionist from New Hampshire, made the startling claim that in the 1950s there were as many abortions then as there are today. When O'Reilly challenged him, Dr. Goldner went even further saying that there were *more* abortions in the 1950s than there are today.

The next day, William Donohue contacted the publicist for Dr. Goldner asking for the evidence. After several phone calls, we finally tracked down Dr. Goldner himself. Here is what he told Patrick Scully on March 9:

- In reality there is no way to tell what the rate of abortion was in the 1950s.
- The "hard number" of abortions in the 1950s was lower than today because of the smaller population but Dr. Goldner estimates that the rate per 1,000 women was the same or higher than today.
- He estimate was based on a book by Carol Jaffee, *Doctor of Conscience*, and *The Story of Jane* by Laura Kaplan. He then made some more conjectures based on unofficial rates of abortion in Ireland.

Pressed by Scully, Dr. Goldner admitted that what he presented as fact on TV was not factual. But he excused himself by saying he “didn’t have a lot of time to explain himself” on the show. Dr. Goldner then confessed, “there is really no way to tell.”

It is utterly shameless that any doctor would present as fact that which is merely an unsubstantiated opinion. But this is hardly the first time that those in the abortion industry have, in fact, distorted the truth. You can write to Dr. Wayne Goldner at Manchester Obstetrical Association, 150 Tarrytown Rd., Manchester, NH 03103-2713.

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## **FAILED COMPARISON**

Hardly an Ash Wednesday comes and goes without an anti-Catholic incident. While Ted Turner took the prize this year, WJFK-FM in Virginia was runner-up; the show originates from WJFK in Washington, D.C.

On February 28, “The Don and Mike show” aired a segment called “Ass Wednesday.” It seems that Don Geronimo and Mike O’Meara’s idea of fun on that day was to find the listener with the biggest behind. The contestants were then brought into the studio where Don “blessed” them by using brown lipstick to paint a cross on their forehead while saying “In the name of the Father...” Don and Mike then got into a discussion over O’Meara’s “Catholic guilt.”

Our complaint was treated seriously; though learning that the station is also known for playing “Hanukkah games” did not assuage us. How that compares with insulting Catholics on a solemn day like Ash Wednesday, we do not know. In any event, you can try to explain the difference by writing to Jim

McClure, Program Director, WJFK-FM, 10800 Main Street,  
Fairfax, VA 32030.

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## TEXTBOOK CASE

Catholic League members are familiar with the many ads that we've run on the op-ed page of the *New York Times*. We are most proud of the fact that some of these ads have been picked up by museums. Now we've made an entry in a college textbook, *Making Sense of Media*, authored by George Rodman. The book, which is published by Allyn and Bacon, is widely used in communications classes.

The ad that was selected, "Will the Real Censors Please Stand Up!", was written by William Donohue when the movie "Dogma" was about to be released. At that time, Dan Petrocelli, attorney for film's producer's, Harvey and Bob Weinstein, as well as for the movie's director, Kevin Smith, attempted to intimidate the league by sending a threatening letter to Donohue. But it backfired when Donohue printed the ad in the *Times* charging Petrocelli and company with censorship.

The ad appears in chapter one of the book in a section called, "Controversy: The Many Meanings of 'Censorship.'" Author Rodman provides a fair presentation of this issue in the chapter entitled, "Making Sense of the World of Media." We are pleased that our work continues to provide a basis for serious discussion.<sup>a</sup>

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# CHURCH VANDALS HIT FIVE STATES

In February, Tucson metropolitan area was home to three separate incidents of church vandalism targeted at the same site. The acts occurred in a mortuary chapel next to the world-renowned Mission San Xavier del Bac near Tucson, Arizona.

The first act, which happened on February 13, included the desecration of 35 of the 50 statues located in the chapel; extensive spray painting was also apparent. On the morning of February 18, three more statues were broken. Later that evening, a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe was found covered in motor oil and smoldering.

Vandals at St. James Church destroyed a century-old statue of Madonna on February 15 in McMinnville, Oregon. Labeling it sacrilegious, Father Tom Farley said the congregation “felt personally violated.”

Notre Dame Church in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, was the scene of vandalism on February 18. Derogatory notes about Catholicism were left, a picture of Christ was burned and pieces of Communion wafers were tossed around the church. The teenagers responsible for this incident also trashed a Jewish cemetery. Most of the alleged offenders were arrested and charged with a hate crime.

On March 10, Catholics in Topeka, Kansas, learned that vandals had broken a life-sized marble statue of Jesus that was located in Topeka’s Mount Calvary Cemetery. The damage occurred either the night before or early that day.

Police descended upon Saint Edward’s Catholic Church in Pembroke Pines, Florida, looking for the arsonists that tried to torch the church on March 12. The vandals broke into the

church and did approximately \$10,000 worth of damage before setting off the fire alarm.

These senseless acts of violence demonstrate the rage that some young people have towards Catholicism. They also show that no region of the country is immune from such vicious acts.

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## **BOLD AS BRASS**

There is hardly an issue of *Catalyst* in the last few years that hasn't mentioned the hate ads placed in major newspapers by the Eternal Gospel Church. These are the ads that use biblical passages to condemn the Catholic Church as the Whore of Babylon, etc. Fortunately, most publishers listen to our complaints and agree not to run them again. But now the hate-mongers have tried to penetrate a Catholic newspaper.

The *Catholic Spirit* is the official newspaper of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, West Virginia. The Eternal Gospel Church submitted their infamous "Earth's Final Warning" ad, obviously hoping it would get by the eye of the editor. It did not. Thomas Papeika, who is editor and general manager of the diocesan weekly, rejected the ad and then contacted the Catholic League. But talk about bold as brass!

We wrote to Rafael Vidaud at the Eternal Gospel Church to let him know our thoughts about this matter. You can do the same by writing to him at P.O. Box 15138, West Palm Beach, FL 33416.