

# **“ALLY McBEAL” OFFENDS; FOX WILL END ATTACKS**

The November 2 episode of the Fox TV show, “Ally McBeal,” featured a nun who sued the Church because she was dismissed for breaking her vow of celibacy. Throughout the show, repeated attacks were made on Catholic sacraments, teachings and practices. Here is a sample of the lines that were voiced.

Ally: “Nuns are not supposed to have sex except with other nuns.”

Nun: “A priest has sex with a boy, he gets transferred. Me they...At least my lover was of legal age for God’s sake.”

Female Colleague: “Maybe I can talk them into rehiring her. I’m very good at flirting with clergy. At Communion, I always got the extra wafer.”

Nun: “If the sex is great, you can’t be a nun.”

Ally (in confessional): “I went to bed with a guy, partly because he had a uh, uh...It was uh big, big. God, I slept with it...him.”

Priest: “I often hear that size doesn’t matter. How was it?”

Ally: “It was great, unbelievable. You have no idea. I mean, I assume you don’t. It was amazing. Am I forgiven?”

The Catholic League wasted no time issuing the following statement:

“The bigots are at work again. On the September 28 episode of ‘Ally McBeal,’ a cheap shot about priest pedophilia was made. That subject returns this week, only with much more in the way of offense. Now we have Father O’Reilly videotaping confessions about sex for his documentary, ‘World’s Naughtiest

Confessions.’ And, of course, we have nuns that are degraded and sexual comments that are designed to disparage.

“We will take our case to Fox, which has already been inundated with complaints. Make no mistake: all of this—every bit of it—is intentional.”

Our news release led to a tidal wave of media interest, hitting both the electronic and print media around the country; even international sources picked up the story. Fortunately, there was a happy ending.

The immediate response from the league was to ask Fox’s Department of Standards whether there were any future shows of “Ally McBeal” that dealt with Catholicism and, if so, whether the content could be disclosed at this time. We were assured that no such shows were planned and, furthermore, that “it won’t happen again.” We plan to hold them to that.

There was one report that said Fox didn’t make these concessions. Perhaps this was a face-saving effort. If not, we’ll do battle again.

---

## **FCC                      CONTACTED                      OVER “HISTERIA!”**

It was bad enough that the show was classic Catholic-baiting. What made it worse was that it was an animated-history lesson for kids done to fulfill FCC requirements. We are speaking of an edition of the Warner Bros. show “Histeria!” that ran nationwide on October 31 and November 1.

In the show that we addressed, there was a portrayal of the

Inquisition, “Convert or Die,” that depicted a game show where the contestants are tied to a wheel and tortured for every wrong answer. The host of the show, a bishop, is called “Torquemada” by the prisoner-contestants.

In the show, the bishop gives the contestant 20 seconds to confess “the single most terrible heresy you’ve committed.” We get answers like, “I ate meat on the day of abstinence,” etc. The bishop informs him that the correct answer is “I have read books forbidden by the Catholic Church and am a big stinky heretic.” He adds, “the next time you commit a mortal sin against the Church, don’t be surprised if someone comes up to you and says....[interruption]—‘Convert or Die.’”

Usually, our complaints just go to the offending network. But in this case, we went directly to the FCC. By its own admission, WB says that “Histeria!” is supposed to be an “original and hysterically amusing way” of “fulfilling the FCC educational programming requirement.” We hope the FCC doesn’t find anything “hysterically amusing” about our complaint.

---

## **NO ONE CALLED THEM CENSORS**

**William A. Donohue**

For the past five-and-a-half years, I have had to reason by analogy with the media, educators, activists, artists and others, just to get my basic point across. Unfazed by anti-Catholicism, our adversaries generally respect the rights of gays, blacks and Jews. Even when they don’t, they generally know enough to keep their mouths shut. I only wish they thought of us the same way, and this is especially the case when the subject switches from individual Catholics to the institutional Church.

It is not just that gays, blacks and Jews are less dumped on culturally, when they fight back against the bigots in their midst, they are treated differently than Catholics. For example, when they complain about unfair treatment in the media, they are almost never called censors; they are generally seen as exercising free speech in defense of their civil rights. Not so with Catholics. Here are some recent examples of what I mean.

When Coral Ridge Ministries recently posted TV ads announcing that gays could “convert” to the straight lifestyle, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLADD) went on the warpath. Joan Garry, the group’s executive director, said she would fight the new commercials. No one called her a censor.

When a Chicago TV station, WGN, recently decided to renege on an agreement to run ads sponsored by a gay group, the matter wound up in court. The Cathedral of Hope in Dallas, the nation’s largest gay and lesbian church, filed suit trying to force the station to broadcast their gay message. No one called them censors.

When African Americans recently protested the UPN show, “The Secret Diary of Desmond Pfeiffer,” everyone listened. The program, a Civil War sitcom about a black butler in the Lincoln White House, was blasted by the Rev. Jesse Jackson and many other black leaders as racist. Then government got involved.

The Los Angeles City Council actually asked the city’s Human Relations Commission and the Days of Dialogue on Race Relations Project to screen upcoming episodes of the series; it later changed its mind and canceled the screening. The best the ACLU could do was to refuse to participate in the scheduled screening, saying that it was indicative of censorship (note: it neither charged censorship nor threatened to sue). In any event, UPN has put the show on ice. No one called them censors.

When Louis Farrakhan appeared on "Meet the Press" in October, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) took out a full-page ad in the *New York Times* blasting NBC president Bob Wright for extending the invitation. No one called them censors.

When the ADL recently dispatched one of its officials to Oberammergau, Germany, to work with government officials in providing recommendations for the historic Passion play's Year 2000 presentation (to suit ADL's tastes), the script was rewritten. No one called them censors.

When Nickelodeon ran a *Rugrats* comic strip that portrayed a Jewish character in a way that was reminiscent of stereotypical Nazi-era depictions of Jews, ADL complained and the network granted assurances that it would never run a particular edition of a comic strip that was offensive to Jews. No one called them censors.

When Marvel Comics ran a *Wolverine* comic book that mistakenly described its new character as "a kike known as Sabretooth," the ADL pressured the company and Marvel recalled 250,000 copies. No one called them censors.

When a comic strip that showed Superman fighting Nazis didn't mention that he was fighting to save Jews, ADL went public with its criticisms. No one called them censors.

When the Catholic League complained about "Nothing Sacred" and "Corpus Christi," virtually everyone called us censors.

Sometimes the labels are discreet. For example, reporters often refer to us as a group which "says it is the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization." Or we get, it "*describes itself as* the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization." Never have we once seen the NAACP, ADL, NOW or GLADD characterized as a black, Jewish, feminist or gay organization that *says, or describes itself as,* the nation's largest civil rights organization of its kind.

Nor have we ever heard of these groups referred to as a *left-wing* or *liberal* watchdog group. But it hardly ever fails that we are mentioned by our critics as a *right-wing* or *conservative* watchdog group, even though we evince no party line and go after conservatives (*Washington Times*) as well as liberals (*New York Times*).

So the double standard never ends. All we can do is continue to do what we are doing and not let these hurdles disable us. At this point, let me make a New Year's pledge: we will never be disabled, no matter how hard they try. It's simply too much fun beating them at their own game. Merry Christmas.

---

## TRINITY FOUNDATION LOOKS AT CATHOLICISM

*William A. Donohue*

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

"The structure of the Roman Catholic Church is a totalitarian hierarchy." Furthermore, "It must never be forgotten that the Roman Papacy is an absolute, unlimited, tyrannical monarchy, a worldly, secular government." It never will be forgotten, at least to those who heard Richard Bennett's words: for three

straight days, October 8-10, a small group of Catholic-hating Christians assembled in Erwin, Tennessee to hear claptrap like this at the first annual Trinity Foundation Conference on Christianity and Roman Catholicism. The Catholic League sent its own Arthur Delaney to spy on the conference and bring home the bacon, so to speak. He did not disappoint.

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

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

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

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

What I don't quite get is Robbins' fixation on this business of "justification by faith alone." Even he doesn't believe it. On page 3 of his paper, he thanks the supporters of the Trinity Foundation for hanging in there, acknowledging that there is almost no support for what he's doing in the Protestant community. Of his backers, he says, "They will receive a great reward in Heaven for the help they have given us." So acts count after all.

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

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

"This absolute world monarchy," is how Robbins describes the Catholic Church in world history, "developed into the first



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

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

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

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

You guessed it—what the Church means by the common good constitutes a third Hitlerian influence. To be fair, Robbins credits Aristotle as the source of the Church's idea of the common good. But in a footnote, he quotes another deep-thinking Trinity Foundation malcontent, Gordon Clark, who

says: "Now if Plato's theory is a form of communism, perhaps Aristotle could be called fascist." Why not? And perhaps Robbins could be called a scholar.

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

"The spirit of the Antichrist has been working relentlessly for two thousand years to achieve a worldwide consolidation of ecclesiastical and political power." With all this overtime, I would have thought that the Church's dream of a world government would finally be at hand. Robbins concedes that it hasn't happened yet, but if the Catholic Church "fails to reach her goal within the next hundred years, she will not quit." Good girl. "She will continue to work tirelessly for world power, even if it should take another two millennia." We do take the long view, don't we.

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

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

---

# GO SEE “THE PRINCE OF EGYPT”

In 1997, Jeffrey Katzenberg of DreamWorks asked me to come to Los Angeles to preview a movie that was still in its early stages. What I witnessed was an animated version of the Biblical story of Moses called, “The Prince of Egypt.” It left a great impression on me.

In March of this year, I was asked back, this time to see the film in its closing stages. Having seen the movie in its entirety, I can honestly say that it is bound to be a hit: the story, the animation, the special effects and the music are captivating. Moreover, this is a film that will be enjoyed as much by adults as by children.

Catholic League members know how hard we have fought movies like “Priest,” TV shows like “Nothing Sacred” and plays like “Corpus Christi.” In all three cases, the productions failed and the Catholic League scored big. Now it is time for DreamWorks and the Catholic League to be on the same side of victory, and that is why I am urging all of you to bring your families to see this movie during the holidays.

Katzenberg wants our support because he knows that there are many Americans, of all faiths, who are critical of much of the work being done by Hollywood. He has committed big bucks to this movie and if it doesn’t go over big, it will send a message to Hollywood that people like us really don’t care. On the other hand, if it is the success I think it will be, the likelihood that we will see similar fare in the future is good.

Go see “The Prince of Egypt.” You’ll be doing yourself a favor and putting your imprint on the culture at the same time.

# SCAPEGOATING OVER SHEPARD AND SLEPIAN

Two thugs kill a homosexual in Laramie, Wyoming (Matthew Shepard) and a nut kills an abortion doctor in suburban Buffalo (Barnett Slepian). Immediately, gay-rights advocates and abortion-rights advocates (often one and the same) blame Christianity. Some get specific and either criticize, or blame, Pope John Paul II, Cardinal O'Connor and William Donohue for what happened.

"There's no bigot like a Christian bigot," is how Bob Hanna began his column in the *Standard Times*, a New Bedford, Massachusetts newspaper. "When it come to bigotry," he said, "Christians have a copyright." He then proceeded to recount stories about witches, the slaughter of Indians, racism, the Holocaust (Pope Pius XII was guilty of "never lifting a finger"), etc. He ended by saying, "Fear the Christian bigot."

Donohue's letter on Hanna's article, which was printed in the newspaper, wondered whether "a writer would be kept on staff if he simply ended his piece with, 'Fear the Jewish bigot,' never mind engaged in a bigoted diatribe against those 'Christ-killing Jews.'" Donohue closed by saying, "By printing Hanna's hate speech, you have done a public service, however perversely intended: You have demonstrated the two-faced bias that pervades your newsroom."

Chris Quinn, director of something called the New York City Anti-Gay and Lesbian Violence Unit, went so far as to hold the

Catholic League complicit in Shepard's death. Why? Because the league was protesting the gay Jesus play, "Corpus Christi," at a time when Shepard was killed. In a sentence that defies logic, Quinn said, "If it's blasphemous for the image of Jesus Christ to be gay, then they're saying that it's blasphemous for anyone to be gay."

The *National Catholic Reporter* offered an article by Joseph Cunneen, formerly a drama professor at Fordham University, that not only sounded the same alarm, it enunciated the same tortured logic. "It's not only that 'Corpus Christi' opened the same week that a young homosexual student was killed in Wyoming; anyone aware of the psychological pressures on Catholic high school boys knows that there is immense work to be done." We have a hunch what Cunneen means, but that is all. Can you figure this out?

We have a better grip on what Cunneen means when he talks about the "immense work" that needs to be done. "Church authorities and moral theologians need to engage in open dialogue on norms of behavior." There's that word again—dialogue.

Open dialogue sounds to us much better than closed dialogue, which is why we're anti-closed dialogue. Now what about this business about a dialogue on "norms of behavior"? We trust that Cunneen isn't talking about drinking and driving, but about accepting sodomy and gay marriages. Swell.

In the course of Cunneen's review of "Corpus Christi," we couldn't help but notice that he found acceptable most of what the Catholic League found objectionable. But there was one scene, so short it had no effect on us, that did get his goat.

Cunneen rightfully registers a complaint about Terrence McNally's portrait of "Mary as a lush," but then adds how it is hard for him to understand why the playwright presented Joshua, the Jesus-figure, as someone who would deny Mary the

right to enter the room just as the Last Supper was about to take place. It “seems like an odd attack on the women’s ordination movement.” No wonder that one got by us. But it does prove one thing: even the *National Catholic Reporter* is capable of being offended by an artist.

“You helped create the Holocaust (sic) of hatred, prejudice, killings and beatings against all gays and lesbians in America!” This is what someone wrote in a letter to Donohue regarding the killing of Shepard. “You are the Real Murderer of Matthew W. Shepard! Confess!” The letter goes on like this and ends with “What Goes Around—Comes Around! God will Strike You Down—Watch!!!” The underlining was in red, with yellow added to some comments. Attached to this letter was a news clipping about Shepard, and in large red letters across the top, it said, “DONOHUE—MURDERER!” Just another day in the office.

No one knows how to scapegoat like Tony Kushner, the avowed homosexual, anti-Catholic playwright. In a telling article in the *Nation*, the Stalinist journal of opinion, Kushner not only blames Trent Lott for killing Shepard, he blames the pope. “Pope John Paul II endorses murder,” is what he said.

Not one to waffle, Kushner says that “on the subject of gay-bashing, the Pope and his cardinals and his bishops and priests maintain their cynical political silence.” Want more? “Behind this murdered kid [Shepard] stand legions of kids whose lives are scarred by the bigotry this Pope defends as sanctioned by God.” Donohue’s reply to this piece ended with, “Save it, Kushner, and grow up: accountability is not a sin.”

Kushner’s irresponsibility was matched by Polly Rothstein, president of the Westchester Coalition for Legal Abortion. Rothstein blamed John Cardinal O’Connor for the killing of Dr. Slepian. She said that had it not been for people like Cardinal O’Connor “spewing hate, there would be no anti-abortion movement.” Incredibly, she added that although the

Cardinal “did not pull the trigger,” he was still “accountable for these religious followers who do pull the trigger.” The league blasted Rothstein in a news release for her slanderous attack.

Finally, we have the august *Philadelphia Inquirer* weighing in with a lecture to Cardinal O’Connor. In an editorial on the slaying of Dr. Slepian, Cardinal O’Connor was taken to task for allegedly offering nothing more than “perfunctory laments”; the newspaper duly noted that this “will not suffice.”

Now either the *Philadelphia Inquirer* was ignorant of Cardinal O’Connor’s remarks on this subject (if so, it was willful), or the writers knew exactly what the New York Archbishop had said and were dismissing his comments so as to set him up for a cheap shot. “Either way,” Donohue said, “you come out a loser.” The newspaper printed Donohue’s letter.

The kinds of statements restated here suggest that there is something worse than anti-Catholicism going on. When people’s heads and hearts are full of hate, there is literally no rational rebuttal that will sway them. That’s all the more reason why the Catholic League will dig in its heels and continue to fight the good fight.

---

## THIS VAMPIRE LACKS TEETH

Just in time for Halloween came “John Carpenter’s Vampires,” a movie about as dumb as they get. The Office of Film and Broadcasting of the U.S. Catholic Conference’s Department of Communications found it to be “morally offensive” and noted its “cynical disdain for religion” (Roman Catholic, that is). Yet the Catholic League said nothing. Why?

The reason the Catholic League said nothing had nothing to do with the lack of anti-Catholic elements in the movie. The movie features a Vatican-sponsored vampire hunting team that goes to work in rural New Mexico. "There's a lot of Catholicism," in the film, said Roger Ebert.

Here's a sample of Ebert's comments: "We meet a cardinal...who apparently supervises Rome's vampire squad" and "an innocent priest in a Spanish mission which harbors the Black Cross which Valek [the vampire] covets." The cross, it seems, used to be employed during "inverse exorcisms," meaning that "instead of driving the evil spirits form the body and leaving the person behind, the person is cast out and the spirit retains the rights of tenancy."

The reviews of "John Carpenter's Vampires" were uniformly bad. And virtually every review cited its inane script, nudity, profanity, violence and gore, with most of the attention given to its absurd qualities. A rating of one-and-a-half stars was considered high.

The Catholic League will take note of this movie in its 1998 Annual Report on Anti-Catholicism—it is worth a log item—even though it did not issue a news release on the subject. The reason is simple: a film so bizarre has little chance of impacting the culture and therefore it would be silly of us to issue a media alert. Better to save our guns for movies that have a reasonable chance of leaving an anti-Catholic imprint on the culture. "John Carpenter's Vampires" is certainly not in this class.

---



# ABC AND NBC SEEK TO OFFEND EVERYONE

In a new twist on the old saw that the best defense is a good offense, ABC and NBC are now bragging that in some of their shows, they seek to offend everyone equally.

The league complained to ABC about two editions of "Politically Incorrect" that aired back-to-back on October 8 and 9. The October 8 show featured actor Ed Begley, Jr. discussing such things as Catholic guilt and cafeteria-style Catholicism. The comment we took offense to was by Bill Mahr: "You know, the pope says you shouldn't masturbate or have abortions, but that's fine for him, he's an elderly man." The audience, as usual, couldn't restrain themselves from laughter.

The next night journalist Jerry Nachman offered the observation that "The Vatican purportedly has the largest pornography collection in the world." As this scene fades out, a woman follows with a quip about the pope's love for pornography.

Put together, these shows made us ask ABC whether it was "Catholic-bashing week on 'Politically Incorrect?'"

Over at NBC, on the October 7 edition of the "Late Night With Conan O'Brien," we were treated to a caricature of Charlton Heston: there was an irreverent portrayal of a Jesus machine-gunning Pontius Pilate.

On the October 14 Conan O'Brien show, there was a depiction of the pope sitting atop an oil gusher, celebrating the discovery of Vatican oil. While not our cup of tea, we explicitly said to NBC that this show did not merit a complaint. But the October 17 show did.

It was on that show that O'Brien did his routine "at random" interview with audience members. One of the members said he was studying for the priesthood. O'Brien used this opportunity to denigrate priestly celibacy, singing that the man would "always be horny" but would "never have sex," and would wind up "a shriveled old man...alone in his room with his gonads on a shelf."

The response we got from the two networks was nothing short of amazing. ABC admitted that "distasteful comments about all ethnic and religious groups are often made." Thanks, guys. Then, in a remarkable statement, we were told that "the program goes to great lengths to make sure they offend as many groups as possible." Nothing like equality.

NBC took the same line. Referring to "Late Night With Conan O'Brien," we were told that the show "is one of the network's most irreverent programs and has lampooned almost every ethnic, religious and racial segment of the American population." Did they get the Eskimos?

As to whether Catholics are singled out on Conan O'Brien, we were told, in no uncertain terms, that we should "please be aware that in previous versions of this particular piece, groups such as non-English speakers and the elderly have all been recipients of the same type of song delivered by Mr. O'Brien." How reassuring.

So there you have it. Catholics are bashed and we are told to relax, it's happening to everyone. But somehow we doubt that the intensity and the frequency of the "lampooning" is equal.

Have something to say? Write to Christine Hikawa, vice president of Broadcast Standards & Practices, ABC, Inc., 77 West 66 Street, New York, New York 10023 and to Andrew Brewer, vice president of Program Content, Systems and Standards, NBC Entertainment, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, New York 10112.

---

# DISNEY PUTS THE ARM ON ABC

Disney owns the ABC network and, of course, it claims never to interfere with programming decisions that might compromise the profession of broadcasting. To those who buy the party line, well, think again.

Regnery has published a great new book by Peter and Rochelle Schweizer called, *Disney: The Mouse Betrayed*. The book details how the once family-friendly giant became a notorious force for cultural decay. From violations of child labor laws to its role as the number-one promoter of pay-per-view pornography (since abandoned), Disney has evolved into a company that its founder, Walt, would scarcely recognize. By the way, mention is made in the book of the Catholic League's role in protesting the Disney-Miramax movie, *Priest*.

The book quickly got the attention of Rhonda Schwartz, a producer for "20/20." She gave investigative reporter Brian Ross the job of doing lengthy interviews with the Schweizers. But on October 13, it was announced that the story "did not work," and so it died. "20/20," you see, is an ABC show.

---

# THREE MORE DUMB PLAYS

The fall of 1998 has been a busy season for Catholic-bashing playwrights. In the last *Catalyst*, we covered Terrence McNally's "Corpus Christi" and Thomas Disch's "The Cardinal Detoxes." Bringing up the rear, so to speak, is Richard Vetere's "Holy Water," Christopher Durang's "The Marriage of

Bette and Boo,” and Paul Rudnick’s “The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told.”

“Holy Water,” which ran in the artsy TriBeCa section of downtown New York, was described by the *New York Times* as featuring “two muscular, not-very-bright characters in gym clothes.” Of the Virgin Mary, they say, “She’s been around. Trust me. She knows how guys are.” Then, in a question that begs an answer, one of the men says, “How come women never smile?” To which it is said, “Because of us.”

Christopher Durang has been bashing Catholics for a living for years. Raised a Catholic and educated at Harvard and Yale, he’s the genius who gave us “Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You.” From October 16 to November 8, he delighted the bigots in Cambridge, Massachusetts with “The Marriage of Bette and Boo.”

Durang’s latest is a dark comedy that obtains its darkness at the expense of his former religion. There is a pompous priest who delivers an insincere eulogy and then “spins out of control into an embarrassing, nonsensical story about his ‘colored garbageman’ and how “‘colored folk have funny ideas for names.’” Sounds hilarious.

Durang, the son of an alcoholic mother, says his playwriting works as therapy. In psychology, maladies such as his are also understood as “projection,” or the tendency to project onto others one’s own short-comings. God knows he has certainly found a convenient target for his projections in the Catholic Church.

Rudnick’s creation, “The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told,” is certainly not the most fabulous play ever performed, and that is why the Catholic League will not take the bait—and we have been baited—by slamming it the way we did “Corpus Christi.” It just isn’t worth it.

This play is about a gay couple, Adam and Steve, who “live in

the Garden of Eden and share, instead of an apple, phallic foods like carrots and bananas.” Now how’s that for ingenuity? “On their travels,” one report says, “they meet up with a crippled lesbian rabbi and board an Ark populated with gay rabbits, a horny rhinoceros and a crew of dominatrices.” Bet your sides are splitting right open.

Strangely, it is a safe bet that those who attend plays like these have a higher than average IQ. This forces us to conclude that intelligence really isn’t measurable after all.