

WHO'S CRAZIER?

There has been no shortage of college professors willing to bash the U.S. for creating the “root causes” of the terrorist attacks on America. Andrea Peyser of the *New York Post* wrote a splendid column taking after the profs. Bill Donohue, who's had his differences with Peyser, praised her for ripping the “Hate America First” gang and added a few remarks of his own.

In a letter that the newspaper published, Donohue said, “My 16 years as a college professor convinced me that there is precious little difference between the academy and the asylum; save that those in the asylum aren't crazy enough to side with fascists.”

HITCHENS' MAD OBSESSION

He's at it again. Left-wing malcontent Christopher Hitchens has launched another attack on Mother Teresa. In the October edition of *Vanity Fair*, Hitchens explains that the Vatican invited him to make his case against the beatification of Mother Teresa. Given his mad obsession with her, it was not surprising that he took another opportunity to bash her. William Donohue's response to Hitchens will be published as a letter to the editor in *Vanity Fair*. Here is the letter:

“It was a shock to me,” says Christopher Hitchens, “when I first discovered that none of the things commonly believed about Mother Teresa—such as her unworldliness and modesty—are even the least bit true.” I don't believe him for a moment. Given his hatred of the woman (she is the “ghoul of Calcutta”), it is implausible to believe that Hitchens would have been shocked by this “discovery.”

That Hitchens provides no evidence for his “discovery” shows a disturbing consistency in his writings. For example, in his book against Mother Teresa, *The Missionary Position*, Hitchens offers not one endnote for readers to check on the veracity of his accusations. This violates a rather simple principle demanded by scholars: the more serious the allegation, the more serious the evidence must be.

What drives Hitchens mad about Mother Teresa is missionary envy. His failed statist prescriptions for ending poverty don’t stack up too well when measured against Mother Teresa’s missionary work. It was never her goal to conquer poverty; her job was to alleviate the suffering of those who lived in poverty—a condition more often than not the direct result of statist designs.

Hitchens has admitted to me, and has admitted in writing, that he regrets that the American intellectual elite is not anti-Catholic. I commend him for this admission even as I strongly disagree with him. To prove my point, it is unfathomable that *Vanity Fair* would ever publish a piece by someone who lamented the fact that the American intellectual elite was not racist or anti-Semitic.

When Mother Teresa is beatified I promise to buy Chris a drink. He’ll need one.

MEDIA IGNORE SURVEY ON RELIGION AND TEEN SEX

According to a new survey by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, there is evidence that teenagers who are religious are less

likely to have sexual relations outside of marriage.

In fact, the survey found that conservative Protestant and Catholic girls delay sexual activity longer than their less religious cohorts. Moreover, it is religious activity and parental influence that has the greatest effect on teenagers, not advice from the clergy. William Galston, who worked in the Clinton administration, chaired the task force.

The Catholic League's main interest in this story was the way the media reacted, or more accurately failed to react, to the report.

To begin with, there is perhaps no area of survey research on human behavior that is more neglected than the influence of religious values on teenage sexual activity. That is why it was so important to have such a respected group of Americans come together to support this effort.

Unfortunately, the media ignored the important findings of the survey. With the exception of AP stories on September 25 (the day the report was released) and a story in the *Washington Times*, the survey was ignored (the *Washington Post* never even covered it).

The Catholic League charged that the news blackout was intentional. For example, when the surgeon general, Dr. David Satcher, issued a report in June that argued the need to go beyond abstinence in sex education, the media gave it front-page coverage. When a survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation was published in October 2000 concluding that parents want more sex education in the schools, the media did the same. Yet when a study was issued in January 2001 showing that virginity pledges can be effective, it was generally ignored.

It is the league's contention that stories on national security do not explain the blackout. For instance, a health story on arthritis made the A-Section of the *New York Times* the day after the report was released. No, the reasons

were political.

“To be specific,” we told the press, “our cultural elites, as well as the sex ed industry gurus at Planned Parenthood and SIECUS, are motivated by a strong animus against religion.” It was for this reason, we argued, that they “censor evidence that threatens their beliefs and their pocketbooks.”

HOLOCAUST “HATE ART”

No sane person denies the horror of the Holocaust or excuses those responsible for it. Unfortunately, it needs to be said time and again that it was the Nazis, *and no one but the Nazis*, who bear sole responsibility for what happened. Somebody needs to tell this to Fritz Hirschberger.

The Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center in Maitland, Florida, is hosting Fritz Hirschberger’s “Indifference—The Sur-Rational.” Hirschberger, a Holocaust survivor, uses art to blame the Catholic Church for the Holocaust.

One of his displays is called “The Last Supper at Evian or The Fish Stinks First From The Head.” Its depiction of the Last Supper shows delegates who met at Evian, France and did nothing to protect the Jews. There is a portrayal of three clerics entitled, “The Sun and the Moon Shine on All: The Mute, The Blind, The Deaf.” Then there is “The Concordat,” a portrait of a Nazi and a cardinal, with a caption that essentially says the Catholic Church sold out the Jews by getting in bed with the Nazis. Other representations project the same theme.

William Donohue wrote to those responsible for sponsoring this

hate art. He wrote to Dr. Stephen Feinstein, who is the curator of the Hirschberger exhibit at the University of Minnesota; Tess Wise of the Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center in Florida; Peg Richardson, Director of Cultural Affairs for the Florida Department of State; and Karen Plunkett of the United Arts of Central Florida. Here is the text of his remarks:

"My primary objection to this work is its malicious characterization of Catholicism. To associate the Catholic clergy with Hitler is a vicious lie. Indeed, according to Israeli diplomat, Pinchas Lapide, Pope Pius XII was responsible for saving as many as 860,000 Jewish lives. No one matched this figure. Indeed, fully 85 percent of Jews survived in Italy because of his efforts. Moreover, the record in other Catholic nations, in contrast to what happened in Protestant countries, was also quite good. That was one reason among many why Hitler hated the pope.

"Hitler also killed millions of Catholics, and thousands of priests. To put Catholicism in the same bed with Nazism is historically dishonest and morally objectionable. Criticism is one thing, but this is slanderous."

Donohue also fired off a letter to the *Orlando Sentinel*. Philip Bishop, a correspondent at the newspaper, had the gall to say "Sometimes the interfaith dialogue is best aided by a little sober truth telling." Donohue replied that "Bishop's general comment is correct but he shows himself to be anything but sober when he cites Hirschberger's work as an example."

Then he concluded by saying, "It would be more accurate to say that Hirschberger's malicious distortion of the historical record fuels anti-Catholicism and is therefore counterproductive to interfaith dialogue."

The politicization of art is nothing new, but the use of this genre of communication to slander Pius XII is particularly

reprehensible. We await the response to Donohue's letters.

TORN OUT OF CONTEXT

The *New York Times* recently ran two positive reviews of David Kertzer's book, *The Popes Against the Jews*; one review was by Richard Bernstein and the other was by Garry Wills. Kertzer maintains that a long line of popes prepared the way for the Holocaust. Both men seize on the same quote taken from Kertzer to prove how malicious the Vatican was to Jews.

In 1918, Msgr. Achille Ratti (later to become Pope Pius XI) wrote the following in a report to Pope Benedict XV regarding conditions in Poland: "One of the most evil and strongest influences that is felt here, perhaps the strongest and the most evil, is that of the Jews."

For Bernstein, this passage is an example of how Ratti—and by extension the Church—thought of the Jews. But it is not clear from this quote whether Ratti was endorsing this view or merely offering a descriptive account. Obviously, it makes a big moral difference. Bill Donohue called Bernstein and left a message explaining what it was about but Bernstein (whom Bill knows) never got back to him.

What Wills wrote is even more disturbing. He introduces the quote from the report by writing that Ratti "dismissed reports of pogroms there as inventions of Jewish propaganda."

But in Kertzer's preceding paragraph to the Ratti quote in question, he cites from the report that Ratti spoke kindly of Jews: he explicitly said that he has come "to admire the goodness and the faith of their people." Ratti does mention that "Unfortunately, if they are not defended by the work of

good influence, they will certainly succumb” to evil influences. But this is a far cry from saying Jews are evil, much less dismissing reports of pogroms.

There is nothing new about tearing quotes out of context. But when it is done to malign someone unfairly, it is inexcusable.

CATHOLIC BASHERS DELIVER “LIAM”

“Liam” is the story of a Depression-era Liverpool family seen through the eyes of a 7-year-old boy. The movie opened in select theaters on September 21 and was previewed that day by Catholic League research analyst Louis Giovino.

We knew there was a Catholic element in the movie that bared watching. We noted, for example, the dreary tale of Liam’s experience preparing for First Communion. The way the school is portrayed is also noteworthy. It seems that about the only thing Liam learns is just how filthy children’s souls are. He learns this from his teachers, as well as from the parish priest. The priest, a quintessential bully, bombards the kids with horrific sermons on Hell, effectively bestowing them with fear and guilt.

All the familiar anti-Catholic stereotypes are there: the Catholic Church exists solely to torment young children, is sexually repressive, etc. Indeed, the film is so over the top that Giovino concluded it was unfair to say that it was a one-dimensional portrait of Catholicism. No, this is a cruel caricature that has been deliberately crafted.

Most revealing is the fact that the film is the work of a

Who's Who of Catholic Bashers. "Liam" is written by Jimmy McGovern; the distributor is Lions Gate; and the producer is the BBC. McGovern previously wrote the anti-Catholic movie, "Priest"; Lions Gate previously released the anti-Catholic film, "Dogma"; and the BBC has produced more anti-Catholic flicks than any other company (it was also responsible for "Priest").

In a news release, William Donohue said, "I'm trying to think of an analogy that works but I can't." The Catholic League president admitted he couldn't think of a single writer, distributor or producer—in Hollywood or London—that is the bigoted equivalent of McGovern, Lions Gate and the BBC. "That's because all forms of bigotry are taboo among the cultural elite," he remarked, "save one."

Donohue predicted that "Liam" would draw well in "New York, Los Angeles and in neighborhoods populated by artists and college professors."

"MEGIDDO" LEAVES US WONDERING

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, Hollywood decided to put "Megiddo: The Omega Code 2" on ice. But not for long. Two weeks later it opened. Though the critics generally panned it, only one reviewer picked up on what disturbed the Catholic League.

"Megiddo" bears no relation to "The Omega Code." The plot is about Armageddon with events based on *Revelations*. Brought to the brink of destruction by a dictator who fights a worldwide coalition led by the U.S., the film is set in New York City and ends with a man being buried alive under rubble and debris. What left us wondering is why the movie felt it

necessary to make a negative statement, however oblique, about Catholicism.

The film suggests that the antichrist and his priest companion are Catholic. A black mass is performed, a priest asks the antichrist to save him, etc. Even the *Los Angeles Times* noted how slanted the film is. Movie critic Kevin Thomas observed “much of the film is set outside Rome, with familiar shots of the Eternal City.” Indeed, Thomas goes so far as to say that “it’s especially puzzling that not a word is heard from the Pope.” The movie portrays a human-like Satan taking over the world.

When we learn of such Hollywood fare we immediately find out who’s behind it. In this case it is Matt Crouch of the Trinity Broadcasting Network (Trinity is owned by Paul and Jan Crouch, Matt’s parents). Paul and Jan host the flagship show, “Praise the Lord,” and reach a wide audience of mostly Protestant viewers. They are evangelicals.

Movies like “Megiddo” don’t do any substantial harm to Catholicism. But that’s not the point. The point is that there are some who just can’t let it go and move on. They’re not stuck in neutral—they’re stuck in reverse.

CATHOLIC CHURCH BLAMED FOR BACKING “CLONES” OF ISLAMIC TERRORISTS

On September 20, the *San Francisco Examiner* published an article by one of its contributors, Kimberly Blaker, that accused the Catholic Church of organizing and supporting

“clones” of Islamic terrorism. In addition, the Catholic League was branded a “violent” organization.

After criticizing Rev. Jerry Falwell for his remarks blaming the ACLU, gays and lesbians, et al. for secularizing America (thus contributing to the reasons why the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were attacked), Blaker wrote, “The irony is that the Islamic terrorists responsible for the Sept. 11 fatalities are merely clones of America’s own Christian Right extremists, sheathed in a different religion.”

Later in her column, she wrote, “The Catholic Church is one of the main organizers and supporters behind the Christian Right.” Blaker also hurled charges at the Catholic League, saying that “while less violent in nature” than some other groups, the league was still a threat to liberty.

William Donohue blasted Blaker as follows:

“It will come as a surprise to scholars and journalists, never mind the Catholic clergy, that the Catholic Church is the force behind ‘the Christian Right.’ That invidious term is typically used to discredit organized evangelical and fundamentalist Protestants. But in the mind of Blaker, a noted atheist, distinctions don’t matter. What matters is that a prominent Baptist minister made an irresponsible comment (for which he has apologized) and that’s all that’s needed to libel millions of Christians.”

Donohue asked the *San Francisco Examiner* to provide him with the evidence, drawn from criminal records, that the Catholic League is a violent organization. “Surely the police, if not the FBI,” he said, “have proof of our violent activities.”

Michael Stoll, an official at the newspaper, told Donohue that while his criticisms were “valid,” what Blaker wrote was nonetheless her opinion. Her remark about the Catholic League being violent, he said, was just a “rhetorical flourish.” Donohue shot back that it was his opinion that Blaker “be

fired for making patently reckless, and arguably libelous, accusations against the Catholic League.”

We urge members to write to Michael Stoll, *San Francisco Examiner*, 988 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94102, and ask him why the newspaper still hasn’t dropped Blaker.

TOLERANCE AND RELIGION

The following is an excerpt from a new pamphlet by Toward Tradition; the organization is led by our friend, Rabbi Daniel Lapin. The pamphlet, “Terrorized by Tolerance,” was written by Adam Pruzan. It discusses how those who scream the loudest in favor of more tolerance (the Tolerance Teachers) actually abuse the word to advance their own intolerant agenda. To obtain a copy send \$2 to Toward Tradition, P.O. Box 58, Mercer Island, WA 98040.

In the American Left’s political mythology, religion makes people intolerant. Religion is seen as dogmatic, forbidding critical thinking; exclusionary, encouraging an us-versus-them mentality; and immoderate, promoting fanaticism. This may have been an accurate picture of the medieval Church—although that is a very complex question—and it may even be a fair description of a few other religions throughout history. Certainly, a great many horrors have been perpetrated by imperfect human beings in the name of religion. But, in the American context, to equate religious fervor with intolerance (and its associated evils) is gravely dishonest, for several reasons.

First, this mythology simply doesn’t fit the history of American Christianity.

Second, the most basic morals of American society—even the very ideas and values that the Tolerance Teacher claims to admire most—come directly from our Judeo-Christian heritage. Loving thy neighbor as thyself, showing compassion to the widow and orphan, freeing the slave, affording dignity to every person, governing by justice (rather than for the benefit of the rich and powerful), providing for the poor: In the rich amalgam that is Western civilization, none of these things comes from the Greeks, the Romans, the Germanic tribes, or any other source. All come directly from the Torah.

And who incorporated those Torah values into the Western traditions? Not secularists, and not even Jews. The Christian Church did.

Again, the mythology of the Left demands that we mention what should be an obvious fact. Too many “enlightened” liberals—and many Jews—unfortunately see little in their history of the Church besides the Crusades, the Inquisition, the blood libel, forced conversions, and the like. Christianity’s role in preserving the traditions of charity, human brotherhood, the rule of law, and liberal learning, is too often ignored.

Third, as usual, the Tolerance Teachers’ argument dissolves into incoherence, they criticize Christians—in particular the Catholic Church—for failing to do more to save Jews from the Holocaust. How self-contradictory can you get? The only way the latter criticism could be legitimate is if Christianity mandates a very high standard of concern for others, and therefore individual Christians are guilty of failing to live up to that standard. But that would be an admission that Christianity is in fact a pillar of *tolerance*, something liberals should welcome *more* of in public life.

Fourth, starting with the French Revolution, anti-religious ideologies, far from being more tolerant than religious one, have proven themselves to be infinitely less so. The past two centuries have seen oceans of blood spilled in the name of

nationalism, socialism, communism, fascism, and Nazism—all doctrines that were at best indifferent to, and most often virulently hostile to, the Judeo-Christian tradition.

The truth is that religion is the only viable bulwark of decency in any society. (And let us not forget that in America, “religion” for all practical purposes *means* “Christianity,” with Judaism, Islam, and other minority faiths playing, at best, a modest supporting role.) Not only does religion promote tolerance; just as important, the Tolerance Teachers’ effort to banish religion from the public square is in itself intolerant.

VIDEO ALTERED

Over the past few years, we have received many complaints from New Yorkers regarding a video that all prospective jurors have to watch. The video contains a reenactment of a medieval “trial by ordeal” that reflects very badly on Catholicism.

William Donohue wrote a letter of complaint to Judge Judith Kaye, chief judge of the New York State Court of Appeals. He questioned the propriety of showing a video that is biased against the Church in a forum that is supposed to prepare jurors to be objective in their judgments. Donohue said, “If this were a video slated for use in a college class on the Sociology of Law, I would not object. But given that its purpose is to sensitize prospective jurors, it can surely send the wrong message.”

Judge Kaye agreed. The scene in question has been removed from the video.