

CATHOLICS, PROTESTANTS, JEWS AND MUSLIMS PROTEST “CORPUS CHRISTI”

The Catholic League is delighted with the strong support it has received for its protest of Terrence McNally’s blasphemous play, “Corpus Christi.” It is proud to announce that the following 49 organizations, representing the four major religions in the United States today, have signed a formal letter of protest objecting to the play:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alliance Defense Fund• American Catholic Lawyers Association<ul style="list-style-type: none">• American Family Association• Americans United for the Pope• Ancient Order of Hibernians in America, Inc.• (Diocese of the) Armenian Church of America<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brotherhood of Catholic Laymen• CALL Network (Collegians Activated to Liberate Life)• Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cardinal Newman Society• Catholic Alliance• Catholic Answers• Catholic Campaign of America• Catholic Coalition of Westchester• Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Catholics United for the Faith• Center for Equal Opportunity• Center for Jewish and Christian Values• Chinese Catholic Information Center<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Christian Coalition• Congregation of Mount Sinai• Council of American Islamic Relations<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Crisis• Family Defense Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Family Research Council• Free Congress Foundation• Guild of Catholic Lawyers<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interfaith Alliance• Interfaith Committee of Orthodox Jews<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Islamic Center of Long Island• Jews for Morality• Knights of Columbus• Knights of the Holy Sepulchre<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kosciuszko Foundation• Legatus• Media Research Center• National Cops for Life• National Council on Islamic Affairs<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Police Officers For Christ• Polish American Congress<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project Reality• Society of Catholic Social Scientists<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sons of Italy• Southern Baptist Convention (Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission)<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Toward Tradition• Traditional Values Coalition<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wethersfield Institute• Women for Faith and Family• Young America’s Foundation |
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The letter that they signed reads as follows:

“The Manhattan Theatre Club has a legal right to offend Christians, but it has no moral right to do so. Hate speech is hate speech; it does not become something less if dressed in artistic clothing. Moreover, to flagrantly offend the sensibilities of any religious group is outrageous and can only fan the flames of bigotry. History has shown that an attack on one religion may open the door to attacks on other religions, and that is why we call upon the goodwill of all Americans to join with us in condemning this blasphemy.”

The league urges all its members in the New York metropolitan area to join the rally on October 13.

BROADWAY'S CATHOLICISM

PROBLEM:

In the “Weekend” section of the September 18th edition *New York Times*, several plays were advertised on one page. Four of them deal with Catholicism, one way or another: “Corpus Christi”; “Tony n’ Tina”; “Nonsense A-Men!”; and “Late Nite Catechism.” Their treatment of Catholicism, as even reviewers have noted, ranges from ridicule to blasphemy.

The Catholic League issued a news release on this subject:

“The play ‘Tony n’ Tina’ features an Italian Catholic wedding in which a pregnant bride on drugs interacts with a drunken

priest. 'Nunsense A-Men!' is an adaptation of the play 'Nunsense,' only this time the characters are in drag; the nuns use drugs and hawk a Blessed Virgin Mary cookbook that contains sexual innuendo. 'Late Nite Catechism' ridicules the pre-Vatican II church in a way that its fans would label outrageous had the script targeted 'progressive' nuns. 'Corpus Christi' is Terrence McNally's contribution to hate speech.

"Reporters often ask me which segment of society harbors the greatest animus against Catholicism. They frequently think I will finger the media. No, I believe it is the artistic community that hates Catholicism the most; the higher education community is a close second. Why this is so has much to do with sex: our elites sponsor a libertine notion of sexuality while the Catholic Church preaches the virtue of restraint. Want to know which version liberates? The statistics kept by courts and morgues provide the answer."

A PABLUM CULTURE?

William A. Donohue

This past summer, *New York Times* columnist Frank Rich accused the Catholic League of being "too thin-skinned." Though we were not the only example he provided, he began and finished his piece with us. He is concerned that when groups like the Catholic League protest plays like "Corpus Christi," the result is self-censorship. His ultimate worry is that "The more self-censorship ensues, the more our culture becomes pablum."

I have good news for Frank: relax, there's nothing to worry about. Not, at least, as he defines the problem. But the rest

of us have something to worry about. It is not that our culture risks becoming like pablum, it risks becoming like vomit.

A few months after Frank's article appeared, I was asked by a reporter from the same newspaper whether our culture had grown weary of controversy. He, like Frank, was bothered by our protest of McNally's play (that neither he nor Frank was bothered by the play is telling). He wondered whether it was good for society that those in the entertainment industry and the performing arts might be shying away from hot issues. Not to worry, I assured him.

I made it clear that there was absolutely nothing controversial about bashing Catholics—it happens all the time. It takes no guts, no fortitude, no brains. But bashing gays on TV or on Broadway would take plenty of guts, so much so that there isn't anyone around with the nerve to do it. Or how about an A&E biography that put a positive spin on the late George Wallace? And by the way, did you read what *Time* magazine said about "Corpus Christi"? It said it might prove to be "intriguing." It might, but so might a script that projected an empathic understanding of Hitler's upbringing. Expect to see it in production?

The last thing those in Hollywood or on Broadway want to do is offend their friends. There's nothing unusual about that, it's just that their smugness is overbearing. After all, how much courage does it take to stick to your enemies? Like Catholics, for example.

A culture of pablum wouldn't sport the rot that we experience daily. Driving to work means listening to talk-show hosts who are increasingly vulgar. Turn the dial and four-letter words dot the lyrics of rap music. We get to work only to hear office talk about the sexual life of our president, followed by jokes that used to be cited as proof of sexual harassment. On the internet we see advertisements for raunch, and much

worse. The drive home leaves us stuck in traffic, forcing us to read the filthy bumper stickers in front of us. We try to relax at home by turning on the TV and are treated to sitcoms that feature discussions of bodily parts. Channel surfing means meeting Dr. Ruth. Or Monica.

Yet when the Catholic League complains about any of this, we are called to task as the bad guys. For example, *New York Times* writer Anita Gates says we live in “an era when a fictional Roman Catholic priest like the one on ABC’s *Nothing Sacred* can be persecuted by conservative groups just for being open-minded.” But if the show was nothing but fiction, why should she care if we “persecuted” it? Why would grown women who belong to something called Media Images and Religious Awareness (MIRA) still be shedding tears at a press conference a full year after the show aired? Was the loss of this fiction that hard for the sisters to bear?

Mary Atkay, a member of MIRA and a spokeswoman for the Sisters of Charity of Elizabeth, New Jersey, wasn’t very charitable to the Catholic League when she said that we were “a group of fanatics, right-wing people.” Mary is upset with us because we put an end to her vicarious living: we are the ones responsible for getting her favorite TV show thrown off the air. I am sincerely disappointed that Mary didn’t call me asking for dialogue. It shows an utter lack of compassion, but I’ll get over it.

Mary accuses the Catholic League of harboring a “limited vision of the faith.” Now I wonder what her take would be if she read a script that depicted progressive nuns as spoiled, disloyal, arrogant, hypocritical, self-righteous, amoral, dishonest old brats? Think she might call Jamie Tarses over at ABC and give her a tip? Think Jamie would be interested? Why not—it’s only fiction—right?

The day before Frank Rich wrote his column accusing us of being “thin-skinned,” the *New York Post* ran a story about a

Superman comic strip that showed the Man of Steel fighting the Nazis. The Anti-Defamation League went ballistic. Why? Because the strip failed to mention that the Holocaust victims were Jews. Too bad that one got by Frank, it would have been interesting to see what he might have said.

CONSENT ALONE IS NO BASIS FOR MORALITY

William A. Donohue

In his magnificent encyclical, *Veritatis Splendor*, Pope John Paul II said that the foundation of freedom was the Ten Commandments. This is, without doubt, one of the most radical and counter-cultural ideas of our age. It not only runs counter to the dominant thinking in the West, it is rejected with a ferociousness that is almost violent. Its rejection not only explains why anti-Catholicism is so prevalent among the learned ones, it also explains why our society is suffering from moral atrophy.

The reigning idea of morality, as broached by our elites and now accepted by millions, is that everything goes as long as it's consensual. It would be impossible to conceive of anything more foreign to the pope's thinking than this. For the pope, there is such a reality as truth, and it is our obligation to discover it and then act on it. Yet most of us demur, finding it easier to do what we want. The price we have paid for this folly reads like a litany of social pathologies: it shows up in data collected by courts and morgues.

This tortured understanding of morality finds its roots in John Stuart Mill's 1859 essay, "On Liberty." In that work,

Mill enunciated his “one very simple principle,” namely that “the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number is self-protection.” To be sure we get his point, Mill follows by saying that “the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others.”

The triumph of this libertarian idea is most easily seen these days in the expression, “What Bill and Monica did was consensual and therefore it is nobody else’s business.” This remarkable position, so commonly stated, requires examination. Let’s begin with Mill.

Mill wrote during the time of the Enlightenment, a period in Western history born in the aftermath of the French Revolution. It was a time when many intellectuals truly believed that the very elements that constitute society—family, church, community, voluntary associations—were seen as the enemy of liberty. This zealous crusade against the social order itself, which began with Jean-Jacques Rousseau, characterized the thinking of the Enlightenment. Edmund Burke was right to see in this an expression of nihilism, a total annihilation of social bonds and the radical individualism that it spawns.

Given this climate of utter disdain for social constraints, it is not hard to understand Mill. Ever the rationalist, he believed that individuals had the ability to morally govern themselves and were in no need of social supervision. Liberated from the reach of family, community and religion, each and every individual would carve out his own ideas of right and wrong, doing whatever he wanted, just so long as others were not harmed.

On paper, Mill’s idea sounds great. In real life, it’s a mess. Make no mistake about it, Mill’s “one very simple principle”

is at once the most intellectually seductive, and sociologically destructive, idea to have surfaced in the last century and a half.

In 1874, James Fitzjames Stephen, answered Mill. "The condition of human life is such that we must of necessity be restricted and compelled by circumstances in nearly every action of our lives," wrote Stephen. He then questioned, "Why, then, is liberty, defined as Mr. Mill defines it, to be regarded as so precious?"

The fundamental tension between Mill and Stephen lay in their view of society. Mill saw individuals—walking, talking, working, playing—all going about their life willy-nilly. There are no groups in this vision, just aggregates, or bunches, of people. Stephen had a different vision: "A man would no more be a man if he was alone in the world than a hand would be a hand without the rest of the body." In short, for Stephen, the individual is only intelligible as he is connected to others.

Philosophers can debate until the end of time which version they like better. But for sociologists, only Stephen's makes any sense. Certainly for Catholics, only Stephen's makes any sense. Just consider what the pope has said.

As with the Founders, Pope John Paul II favors the term "ordered liberty"; it conveys a notion of freedom connected to morality. The Ten Commandments that he sees as the bedrock of liberty puts the hinges back into the discussion: freedom, the pope repeatedly says, is the right to do what we ought to do. We know what we ought to do by following the Ten Commandments.

For the most part, the Ten Commandments tell us what we should not do ("Thou Shalt Not"), and this explains why it is so radical these days. Our MTV world cannot accept the idea that anything should be off-limits. Restraint, in this view, is anathema to liberty. So if we want to indulge our passions, and do not interfere with the liberty of others, it is nobody's

s business but our own. If a consenting adult joins us in our indulgence, then that, too, is nobody else's business.

There are several problems with this position. In the first place, it wrongly assumes that others aren't hurt when someone indulges his passions. After all, wasn't Hillary harmed by what Bill and Monica did? Less obvious, but no less real, is the harm that consenting adults do to others when they flaunt the moral order. And that is why it doesn't really matter in the end even if Hillary were to give her consent to Bill and Monica: there is still the problem of the harm done to the rest of us.

We are all moral actors, but none of us is in a position to exclusively decide the moral worth of his acts. Bribery is wrong even though those who engage in the transaction do so consensually; nothing changes even if the bribe occurs in the privacy of one's own home. The same is true of those who conspire to break the law. In both cases, an innocent third party may be hurt. But even if there isn't an obvious third party who is directly hurt, consensual acts may still be immoral.

Take dueling. Two men want to duel it out. They willingly consent to a fight to the finish. Further-more, thousands are willing to freely give of their hard-earned money so that they can watch them duel. Should the duel be allowed? Do we have a right to stop the players and the spectators? After all, no one is forced to either participate or watch.

Or how about female mutilation? Would this barbaric tradition, still practiced in some parts of the world, become right if women willingly consented to their own mutilation? Would those of us who find it immoral have a moral right to prohibit this consensual act between the mutilator and the mutilated?

It is a tragic commentary on our society that so many Americans could not articulate a single reason why dueling and

female mutilation should be illegal. Seduced by Millian logic, they cannot understand that the morality of any given act is never defined exclusively by the parties to it.

Morality is a social construct, and it is not therefore an expression of individual will. By that it is meant that morality reflects a consensus reached by society. This consensus was reached by those who came before us and is sustained, or changed, by our contemporaries. So it doesn't matter whether some like dueling or consent to female mutilation. What matters is whether a moral code—held by most in society—has been broken. Up until recently, at least, there would be no doubting the immorality of these acts.

For practicing Catholics, as well as for practicing Protestants and Jews, this sociological definition, while helpful, is not sufficient. It is not sufficient because it does not address the proper source of the moral code. That source, as the pope exclaimed, is the Ten Commandments. What the Lord gave Moses was the basis of what we call the natural law, determinations of right and wrong accessible by reason and given by God's grace.

If the first three Commandments speak to the reverence we owe God, the other seven speak to qualities of human nature that, if not checked, result in social dissolution: violence, adultery, theft and covetousness are social problems, the consequences of which are felt by those who are not party to the sin. Moreover, their inherent selfishness thwarts our ability to love thy neighbor.

This is what we need to learn: at some point, individual acts of self-destruction ineluctably make for social disintegration. That is why it is right for us to criminalize obscenity, adultery, sodomy, polygamy, prostitution, gambling, public drunkenness, drug use and assisted suicide. To the refrain that these are acts engaged in by consenting adults, and should therefore be legal, we need to say that these are

acts of self-destruction that at some point become our problem. Common sense demands that we take precautionary measures now.

Part of the problem is that over the last few decades, we have become conditioned to accepting virtually every sexually deviant behavior (the term is verboten in elite circles) that exists. For that we can thank Phil Donahue and his ilk. As one sexual freak after another has been introduced to America on daytime TV, we have learned from guys like Phil that it is wrong to be judgmental of them. They are just like the rest of us, we are assured, and they are entitled to our tolerance, if not respect. Is it any wonder why so many are willing to give William Jefferson Clinton a pass?

A mature society, especially one that prizes liberty, does not look at morality and freedom as opposites, but rather as complementary properties. While it is true that there can be a society without freedom (history abounds with examples), it is not true that there can be a society without morality.

The kind of moral code that Pope John Paul II recommends—the Ten Commandments—is suitable for all societies, but none more than free societies. Societies that seek self government demand self governing individuals, and that is why following the Ten Commandments is so important: they enable us to live in communion with our neighbors, a condition that is indispensable to liberty.

It is high time we spent the next few decades trying to put this anchor back in place. If we succeed, it won't matter what Bill and Monica think. Or, for that matter, what Hillary thinks. What will matter is whether adultery is a moral wrong deserving of sanctions.

NEW AGE BLISS

It is a sign of the times that interest in New Age religions is booming. What these religions have to offer reads like a do-it-yourself therapeutic workshop. One New Age website that we tapped into says that it offers “a new perspective in the evolution of spiritual concepts.” That it does.

“Spiritual Persistence,” the website says, “forges new ground by looking beyond conventional thought and symbol patterns. Its basic message is connection: not connection to a far-off or far-out impersonal being or universe, but to ourselves and others around us.” In other words, those who incline toward self-worship will love it. So will fruitcakes.

What do New Agers do? They’re big into “channeling,” a meditation process that allows “angels” to communicate with them (it is not uncommon for the so-called angels to literally strike up a conversation!). Being non-judgmental is seen as a plus and indulging one’s feelings is a must. There are no rules or regulations in this world of bliss, just a free-floating sense that life is a journey without end.

To demonstrate how popular this fad is, just tap into any search engine on the internet and see how many pages of information there is on the major religions in the U.S. and then see how this stacks up against New Age religions. Here’s what we found:

Catholicism	60,070
Protestantism	12,362
Judaism	170,910
New Age	50,190,196

This is striking when one considers that Protestants comprise almost 60% of the population, Catholics make up around 25% and 2% of Americans are Jewish. There is no specific No Age category, but there certainly are millions of men and women (especially women) who nominally belong to an established religion while actually functioning as a New Age being.

“Come walk with me,” is a common expression in the vocabulary of New Age psychobabblers. We say, “Take a walk.” Solo, that is.

CBS FLIPS THE RIGHT WAY

We weren't sure what was going to happen. That is why we were as pleased as we were relieved when we learned that, in the end, CBS decided to flip-flop the right way by gutting an anti-Catholic remark.

A new CBS show, “The King of Queens,” premiered on September 21. We were anxious to find out if the show deleted an anti-Catholic line that had been inserted by a writer for the series. According to the television guide of the September 6-12 edition of the *Washington Post*, the pilot featured a dialogue in which the “King's” father-in-law, played by Jerry Stiller, gives money to a priest (following a funeral) and tells him to “get himself a choir boy.” The article speculated whether or not the line would survive an editor's pen.

When the show aired, the line in question was replaced. Here is how the dialogue went: “Thanks for everything, Padre. You did a great job. Here [he hands him the money], go get yourself an egg cream.”

It should be noted that the *Chicago Daily Herald* credited the

change to the Catholic League. “Obviously,” the newspaper said, “CBS was more worried about alienating the Catholic League” than anything else. Smart move for CBS. We hope the other networks took note.

GOV. PATAKI MAKES RIGHT CHURCH-STATE DECISION

In the wake of a fire that devastated New York’s Central Synagogue on August 28, Governor George Pataki ordered a state of emergency that allows the congregation to use the New York State Armory on Park Avenue; access was granted for 10 days, from the eve of Rosh Hashanah on September 20 until Yom Kippur on September 29. The governor’s order suspended state military law that prohibits the use of armories for religious purposes.

The league endorsed Pataki’s with a comment to the media:

“Governor Pataki is to be commended for extending to the congregation of Central Synagogue the right to use the Seventh Regiment Armory on Park Avenue. Only a separation of church and state fanatic would oppose this move. Which raises an interesting question: would the ACLU, People for the American Way and Americans for Separation of Church and State be as quiescent if the armory had been extended to the parishioners of St. Patrick’s Cathedral in the wake of a similar disaster? Maybe an inquiring journalist will let us know.

“What’s at stake in this issue is the proper *accommodation*, as opposed to sponsorship, of the state to church needs. That all of us can live with the governor’s decision, and that the U.S. Constitution will not come undone in the meantime, is proof positive that those who have willfully distorted the meaning

of the establishment clause are wrong once again.

“Congratulations to Governor Pataki and best wishes to the congregation of Central Synagogue.”

HEADS UP FOR “TRINITY”

On October 16, NBC will air a new show, “Trinity.” Its Department of Media Relations describes the show as a “powerful one-hour drama” from executive producer John Wells; Wells produced “ER.” The plot revolves around the McCallisters, “a working-class Irish-Catholic family from New York’s Hell’s Kitchen.” Viewers are introduced to “five young-adult siblings” who “lead contrasting lives and whose fierce loyalties are often pushed to the limit.” So far, so good. But wait.

Maureen Dowd of the *New York Times* tells us that one of the siblings, Amanda, is “a teacher at a Catholic school who keeps her first communion picture by her bed, gets drunk and hides the shame of being pregnant and unwed.” Kevin is another sibling. He’s a parish priest. What kind we do not know, but this much is for sure: the producer, Wells, is a self-confessed “great admirer” of “Nothing Sacred.” He thought it was “extremely well done.”

“I’m sure we will end up dealing with issues, with a Catholic family, of Catholicism and the decisions that adult Catholics have to make,” Wells said. It is not certain what Wells means by this, but it can be said that he won’t be projecting some of his own experiences: he is the son of an Episcopal priest.

Perhaps the most revealing thing we’ve learned about Mr. Wells is his sensitivity to African Americans. Some TV reviewers who

have seen some of the shows apparently took Wells to task for continuing a bad NBC practice of airing shows about urban dwellers who are virtually all-white. Wells responded that this was a mistake he planned to correct.

We hope that Wells' sensitivity extends to Catholics, as well. If it doesn't, we'll be sure to see if he responds to *our* concerns in a responsible fashion.

CATHOLICS CAN'T GO TO HEAVEN

Imagine what you would do if you learned that your child, or grandchild, came home from school one day and told you that he was taught that he couldn't get into heaven because he was a Catholic. This is exactly what Wayne and Debra Anderson were told when their daughter, Jenny, came home from class at Eagle Nest Elementary School in Eagle Nest, New Mexico. That's why they sued the school.

The incident occurred at the end of the school year last spring. Third grade teacher Devonna Todd told her class, "Christians go to heaven." It is alleged that she then said that Catholics would not. According to court papers, Todd is also accused of saying that "the devil was in the classroom, in the drawers, in the desks and in the children themselves." The students were told not to tell their parents about any of this. But Jenny did.

The Anderson's, who have since moved out of the school district, are suing claiming that their daughter was traumatized by the experience and that her civil rights were violated. The teacher was suspended from the school and is now in court arguing that she was "wrongfully terminated."

We hope you keep the Anderson's in your prayers. Their daughter has suffered nightmares about the devil and doesn't want to be alone at night; she was also ostracized by other students. In addition, her parents were initially told by a callous principal to try homeschooling or switch to another district. They sold their house at considerable loss and are now trying to put their lives back together. We trust they will win in court.

MEMBERS EXTRACT APOLOGY

In the last issue of *Catalyst*, we cited several instances where anti-Catholic bigotry was actually rewarded by schools and newspapers; we also printed the name and address of the offending parties. In at least one instance, the message that our members sent clearly hit home.

We heard from Marty Gephart of Rochester High School, editor-in-chief of *Rocktimes*. The high school publication had published an anti-Catholic essay by Jess Matthews. After hearing from Catholic League members, Ms. Gephart wrote to Father Richard A. Fowler of St. Anthony's Parish in Bethel, Vermont (he initiated the complaint and brought it to our attention) and to the Catholic League, expressing her sincere apologies.

We are happy that this issue was resolved amicably and congratulate Father Fowler and our members for their efforts.