

WITNESS TO WAR: WORLD TRADE CENTER BOMBING

The following is a statement written by Catholic League president William A. Donohue:

On September 11, the Catholic League staff looked out the window and saw the World Trade Center's Twin Towers collapse right before our eyes.

It was October a year ago that the Catholic League's national headquarters was relocated to 450 7th Avenue in New York City. We are on the corner of 34th Street and 7th Avenue. East of us across the street is Macy's department store; south of us across the street is Penn Station. Because we are on the 34th floor of a 45-story building, we are able to look down at Macy's, Penn Station and Madison Square Garden (located above Penn Station).

Some of our offices face north to Times Square; some face east to the Empire State Building (two blocks away); some face south to the downtown area. My office looks south and west.

I open the office early each morning. As I enter my office, I look out the window and see the World Trade Center right in front of me; our view of the Twin Towers is unobstructed.

Just before 9:00 a.m. on September 11, some of our staff members drew my attention to something unusual. There was a big hole in one of the World Trade Center Towers, not too far from the top. Reports quickly surfaced that a plane had hit the tower. Visibility was fantastic that day thus making it implausible to believe that this was an accident. Flames were gushing out and so was some debris. Then the other tower was hit (some saw the plane go through the building). I looked out the window and saw an enormous ball of fire go sailing into the air. We now knew that this was deliberate.

The office quickly gathered and watched the tower that was just hit crumble right before our eyes. It imploded, going straight down, almost as if pancakes fell one atop the other. Then there was an incredible sight—a gargantuan explosion and burst of smoke filled the air. It reminded us of a World War II movie.

Still standing was the first tower that was hit. At this point we just stared out the window, hardly speaking. But it didn't take long before we saw the tower collapse. It was like a replay of what we had just witnessed.

Then we learned that the Pentagon had been hit and that a plane crashed near Pittsburgh. We knew we were at war and braced for the worst. Perhaps the Empire State Building just two blocks away would be next. And then, who knows?

Manhattan was closed so we couldn't get out. Right below us we saw a mass of humanity trying to get out of Penn Station. But it was too late—the police had sealed it off for security reasons. We tried to call our loved ones but the phones were down. Even cell phones failed to work.

As noon approached I did something to break the prisoner-like condition we were experiencing. I said we were going to lunch. So we walked to 38th Street and went to Lazzara's for pizza.

Lazzara's had a TV on so we couldn't escape watching the event continue to unfold. As the waiter came to our table, I had already begun to say a prayer; he joined us. After lunch we went back to the office. Then we learned that some trains were running, so we took a chance and left. Eventually, we all made it home safely.

When I got home, there was a message on my answering machine from a reporter calling for a comment on the terrorism. I simply erased the message.

The next day I was at work at my usual time. The trains were

mostly empty but I saw no reason to close our office; some made it in, others did not. Looking out the window was more smoke. But there were no Twin Towers.

Our hearts go out to all the surviving members of those who perished. We are especially grateful to all those police officers, firefighters and ironworkers who worked so bravely and so tirelessly to clear the debris and rescue those trapped below.

Many of these courageous people are often smeared because of a few bad apples in their ranks. It is time we realized that most of them are among America's greatest heroes. That they are overwhelmingly Catholic is something we're proud to note.

The terrorists want to paralyze us. But they just don't get it. They can change our skyline but not our deadlines. As long as we are guided by what Pope John Paul II has said many times—"Be Not Afraid"—the bad guys will never win in the end.

CATHOLIC LEAGUE TV AD WITHDRAWN

Beginning Monday, September 17, the Catholic League was scheduled to run an ad on television. But due to the national crisis, the ad has been withdrawn. Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

"We were ready to air a one-minute ad on TV aimed at getting new members, but due to the terrorist attacks on the United States, I have had it withdrawn. The ad was to appear for the next several weeks on select shows on cable television.

“It is nothing if not scurrilous to exploit a tragic moment like this for the self-interest of any individual or organization. There is a time and a place for everything and now is not the time to run our ad. It will run, however, at a later date, but to do so now would be callous and unethical. Hence the decision to put the ad on ice.

“Our prayers are with all those who have lost a loved one in this moment of horror. We also pray that justice will be done to those responsible for these unspeakable crimes against humanity.”

Catholic League members should know that we are determined to run our ad on “The O’Reilly Factor” and “Hannity and Colmes” on the Fox News Channel and on “Hardball with Chris Matthews” on MSNBC. But we will wait until things settle down before doing so. Many thanks to all those who contributed so generously to this campaign.

AGENDA POLITICS

William A. Donohue

Unfair judgments are made all the time. But there is a profound difference between judgments that are unfair due to error and judgments that are unfair due to calculation. We must tolerate the former but never the latter. With regard to the work of the Catholic League, it is the difference between those who are wrongheaded and those with an agenda.

Let me give an example that has nothing to do with the work of the Catholic League. Over the Labor Day weekend, the United Nations sponsored a conference on racism that was held in Durban, South Africa. Its purpose was noble—the eradication of

bigotry—but the conference nevertheless proved to be an unmitigated disaster. That's because too many who participated had an agenda: their real goal was to bash America and bash Israel and as a result both nations withdrew their delegations.

Anyone interested in stamping out racism would not demand that the United States pay reparations for slavery. After all, the Europeans bought African slaves from African slavemasters. And while we made slavery illegal in 1865, Africa did not do so until 1980. More important, slavery flourishes in Africa today, especially in Sudan and Mauritania. Yet the U.N. conferees had the temerity to bash the U.S. (By the way, in the event reparations are ever mandated by law, I want to know how much I owe Oprah.)

The Taliban are wiping out Christians in Afghanistan; Protestants are terrorizing Catholic schoolgirls in Northern Ireland; Eastern Europe is rife with murder; Chinese communists are persecuting Tibetans; Cuba is still a hellhole; genocide is commonplace in Africa. Etc. So out of the whole world, which nation does the U.N. conference target as an oppressor? Israel.

Those who have an agenda are not interested in the pursuit of truth. Indeed, they regard truth to be a fiction. So they pursue politics. Shameless as they are unethical, these post-modern nihilists (many of whom reside in academia) will never let the facts get in the way. That is why they can teach the most abominable lies about the U.S. or about Catholicism and never blink an eye. When I was a college professor, I had a particular way of handling these hacks.

For example, when I taught a course in "Social Problems," I always assigned a textbook; this was unusual in itself as I generally eschewed assigning textbooks. Virtually all the textbooks in this field put the worst possible face on contemporary American society, so it didn't matter which one I

chose. So bad was the presentation that if a Martian had descended to earth knowing nothing about America except for what he read in one of these books, he might rightfully conclude that we must be the most oppressive society in the universe.

I then took the book apart, piece-by-piece. How? By discussing whatever subject was covered in a given chapter—race relations, the role of women, poverty, health care—in a cross cultural and historical context. For example, I compared the U.S. record on whatever social problem we were discussing to that of other countries around the globe. Then I compared the U.S. record of today to what it was 100 and 200 years ago. The students quickly got the point.

I made these comparisons because I wanted to show that these textbook writers had an agenda—to bash America. I'd then ask the students why it is that so many professors and students would never stand for an instructor who only told them the best about the U.S. but nevertheless they accept as gospel those who only tell them the worst.

Similarly, all of us have done honorable things and things we deeply regret. Now if someone who knew us well were to tell strangers only the worst things we have ever done—and had the gall to present this as an accurate portrait of who we are—the picture of us would be patently unfair. Yet precisely this kind of intentional distortion of the record happens all the time in the hands of writers who have an agenda against the Catholic Church.

That's why I have a problem with many of those writers who are consumed with blaming Catholicism for the Holocaust. Any sober-minded scholar would first admit that anti-Semitism long antedated the rise of Christianity. He would further admit to the difference between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism. And he would most certainly acknowledge that it took a distinctly secular and anti-Christian worldview to give rise

to Nazism. In short, it took a Hitlerian agenda to put Jews into ovens.

We should not be offended when critical statements are accurately made about our religion. That is how we move forward. But those who have an agenda to discredit Catholicism deserve a firm rebuttal. They need to be exposed, confronted and defeated. To do any less is to cooperate in our own demise. And that is not something the Catholic League is prepared to do.

THE LIE OF MARIA MONK LIVES ON

By Robert P. Lockwood

She was one of the most famous imposters in the history of the United States, yet her story can still be found in the bookstores and is widely available on the Internet. Maria Monk was the 19th century woman who claimed to be a nun that finally escaped after years of torture and sexual degradation at a convent in Canada.

Her book describing her horrendous tale, commonly referred to as *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*, took America by storm in an era when Nativist anti-Catholicism was about to explode in riots and the growth of the Know-Nothing anti-Catholic political party. While *The Awful Disclosures* did not cause 19th Century anti-Catholicism in America, it was a popular propaganda tool to spread hatred of the Church. (The formal title of the 1836 release was *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk as Exhibited in a Narrative of Her Life and Sufferings during a Residence of Five Years as a Novice and Two Years as*

a Black Nun in the Hotel Dieu Nunnery in Montreal).

Since its first release in January 1836, *The Awful Disclosures* became a staple of anti-Catholic literature and appears never to have been out of print in 165 years. Originally released by a dummy corporation set up by Harper Brothers Publishing of New York to keep it an arm's-length away from what was considered salacious material, it sold an estimated 300,000 copies before the Civil War. It was second in sales at that time only to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Since the 19th Century it has been reprinted by an endless number of publishers and has sold untold millions of copies. A 1997 paperback edition, for example, was released in England by Senate, an imprint of Random House in the United Kingdom. The earliest edition was published in the 19th Century by T.B. Peterson of Philadelphia.

Tales of sexual perversion in the Catholic Church were common enough prior to the appearance of *The Awful Disclosures*. But Maria's extraordinary fabrication would soon outshine all the competition. *The Awful Disclosures* begins with Maria's birth, background and early introduction to Catholicism. Though Protestant, she attended schools taught by nuns who instructed her on the "evil tendency" of the Protestant Bible. Converting as a child, she claimed to be introduced to offensive sexual questioning by priests in the confessional. Despite this, she decided to become a nun. Yet even as a novice, she wrote, the priests "heard me confess my sins, and put questions to me, which were often of the most improper and revolting nature, naming crimes both unthought of and inhuman."

After four years as a novice, Maria reported that she decided to flee and entered into a hasty marriage. But changing her mind, she returned to the convent to prepare for taking her final vows. After taking her vows she was told that "one of my great duties was to obey the priests in all things; and this I

soon learnt, to my utter astonishment and horror, was to live in the practice of criminal intercourse with them." She was also told that because of this, infants "were sometimes born in the Convent, but they were always baptized, and immediately strangled." She was then forced to submit to a night's orgy with three priests.

And so her tale goes on, containing all the classic elements of anti-Catholic literature. Disloyal and disobedient nuns were kept in dungeons in a cellar. Some were murdered outright and in one scene she detailed the death of a nun suffocated under a mattress at the order of the local bishop. Lime was poured over the pit in the basement where the remains of the strangled infants and recalcitrant nuns had been thrown. A "subterranean passage to the seminary" allowed priests to come and go as they pleased without being seen by the public. Money was extorted from naïve parents, and nuns were taught to perfect the art of lying to cover the sins of the convent. Tortuous penances were commonplace, including "drinking the water in which the Superior had washed her feet." The Superior "would sometimes come and inform us that she had received orders from the Pope to request that those nuns who possessed the greatest devotion and faith, should be requested to perform some particular deeds, which she named or described in our presence, but of which no decent moral person could ever venture to speak." She even claimed that arms and ammunition were hidden in the convent and smuggled out for use during election riots in Montreal.

Discovering that she was pregnant by a "Father Phelan," she decided to finally flee the convent. She escaped to New York but was pursued everywhere by agents of the Church until rescued by brave Protestant ministers. There the story ended with the warning: "The priests and nuns used often to declare that of all the heretics, the children from the United States were the most difficult to be converted; and it was thought a great triumph when one of them was brought over to the 'true

faith.'"

It was a fabulous tale and also an out-and-out fraud exposed as such almost immediately. According to the mother, as a child the girl had been rammed through the ear with a pen and had been uncontrollable since, engaging in wild fantasies. Her mother had committed Monk to a Magdalen Asylum under Catholic auspices in Montreal. That was her only formal contact with the Catholic Church. She left the asylum after becoming pregnant. She then, at age 18, hooked up with a William Hoyte of the Canadian Benevolent Society, a Protestant missionary association with a strong anti-Catholic approach to its work. Hoyte took her to New York where she met a group of rather unscrupulous Protestant clergymen. Whether Monk's story was her invention or that of the ministers is not clear, though certainly the ministers – most notably Rev. J.J. Slocum – were the actual writers. Advanced notice of the book appeared in the popular anti-Catholic newspapers of the era, particularly one published in New York called *The American Protestant Vindicator*. (Its editor would eventually distance itself from the story when it became more and more clear that the book was a fabrication).

The book was such a success upon release that Slocum and Monk immediately became embroiled in lawsuits with the other ministers for a cut on the profits. But nothing seemed to dampen the public's enthusiasm for what they saw as the first real portrayal of convent life. Rave reviews appeared throughout the Protestant press and the small Catholic community could do little but protest that it was a hoax. But cracks in her story quickly began to appear. Two Protestant clergymen traveled to Montreal and reported that the Hotel Dieu was nothing like the physical description given in Maria's book. A Protestant journalist investigated the story and pronounced it a complete hoax. All critics, however, were dismissed as Jesuits in disguised or bribed by the Church. In Canada, the story had enraged many, both Protestant and

Catholic, as the Hotel Dieu was actually a widely respected charitable hospital and convent whose nuns had recently served heroically during a cholera epidemic.

Maria Monk did nothing to aid her cause. She disappeared in August 1837, only to resurface again in Philadelphia where she claimed to have been kidnapped by priests. It was discovered, however, that she had simply run off with another man under an assumed name. Another book was published under her name that year, claiming pregnant nuns from Canada and the United States were being hidden on an island in the St. Lawrence River.

In 1838, Monk became pregnant again, though she claimed it was a Catholic plot to discredit her. She married but her husband soon abandoned her. In 1849 she was arrested for pickpocketing at a house of prostitution. She died a short time later at age 33 in either a charitable house or, as some claimed, in prison. The child of that last marriage published a book in 1874 telling the story of Maria's final days as well as her own conversion to Catholicism.

The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk was important in that it popularized so many of the anti-Catholic stereotypes that would persist in the American consciousness well into the 20th Century. Monk painted a Catholic faith based on medieval superstition, inquisitorial tortures, crafty "Jesuitical" manipulation, suppression of the Bible and oppression of liberty. It was a Church foreign to democratic ideals eager to convert and undermine America. It would engage in any act, including murder, to pursue its nefarious ends. Soon and for decades to follow various state legislatures and local authorities would pass "convent inspection laws" in order to search for nuns held against their will. In the 1890s, the American Protective Association (APA) would claim that caches of weapons were hidden in convents and Catholic Church basements for an uprising on the feast of St. Ignatius Loyola.

Maria's story is still popular and available in the more

virulently anti-Catholic fundamentalist bookstores as well as on the Internet. More important, however, is that much of today's secular anti-Catholic stereotypes prominent in the news media, the arts and entertainment are simply Maria's inventions stripped of their religious pretensions. The Church as oppressive of women, interested only in power, prudish but at the same time secretly lascivious, a threat to freedom and choice, and Catholics as ignorant dupes of medieval superstitions, are commonly accepted caricatures of Catholicism in conventional wisdom. *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* is still with us today, not just in sleazy corners of the Internet, but in many of the prejudices of the cultural elite.

Robert P. Lockwood, the league's former director of research, is now the director of communications at the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

CATHOLICISM BLAMED FOR THE TERRORISM

It didn't take long. Just a matter of hours. On the same day as the bombing of the World Trade Center (WTC), we received the following comment on our website feedback section. It is being reprinted here with the misspellings and grammatical errors intact. We chose not to spell the obscenities.

"People like you and your fat priests, bishops and popes are as responsible as the terrorists who bombed the WTC. You and your bull-- god has done nothing for the human race except create, hatred, polarization, pain, suffering guilt and the right to kill other human beings for your stupid fanasty

called jesus and mary. Who the f— cares about god except for all you a—- who make a living making other people miserable. I'm sure the pope and all the great cardinals will feel oh so bad. Ttotal b—-. What don't you put your energy into things that support life instead of your bull—- after life crap. ALL REGIGATION SHOULD BE OUTLAWED FOR THE GOOD AND FUTURE OF MANKIND."

Here's another piece of hate mail we received in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks:

"Stop spreading your propaganda. You are no better than the Nazis. Must I remind you of the church's platform of 'Non involvement' in the holocaust. You idiots were probably happy to see your biggest competitor (the jews) reduced in numbers. Children can be raised with good morals without filling their heads with lies. I am a perfectly moral citizen, raised without the influence of your archaic institution. In this day and age science has the potential to explain the complexities of the Universe properly. The Holy bible is a half-a— attempt to explain existence. THE EASY ANSWER to put it bluntly. You people make me sick. P.S. Since God doesn't exist, that would make Jesus either a liar or a raving lunatic. Son of god my a—!! Also that would make Mary 'the village whore' not a virgin. I bet she cooked up that story to keep Joseph from beating her a— when he discovered how loose she really was."

USUAL SUSPECTS GO MUTE

Friday, September 14 was designated by President Bush as a National Day of Prayer. He came to New York that day to view firsthand the remains of the World Trade Center and to spend time with rescuers and the surviving family members of those

who died.

We applaud the president for his decision to call for a National Day of Prayer. We couldn't help but notice, though, that the usual suspects who oppose any public expression of religion went mute. Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the American Civil Liberties Union and People for the American Way always go ballistic whenever an event like this takes place. But this time they decided to shut up.

We're glad they did. But we won't give them any relief the next time we confront their spokesmen in debate.

Unlike them, we don't have to deviate from our policy positions because of external events. If it is wrong to have a National Day of Prayer when we are at peace, then it should be wrong to have one when we are at war. But the fact that the separation of church and state fanatics shied away from blasting Bush for his September 14 decision shows that even they don't have the stomach for their own medicine. Too bad they don't learn something from this and just pack it in.

NO RESPECT FOR HOUSE RULES

Seven years ago a little boy in the Philadelphia area died of a seizure. This year his mother decided she wanted to show her gratitude to everyone at St. Anselm's who has been so nice to her; the boy would have graduated from St. Anselm's this past June. She wanted to award \$500 in savings bonds to ten deserving graduation students. The problem was that she wanted to select the students; school policy says the faculty decides all awards. She was therefore denied her request.

This is akin to a family quarrel. But our point is that no

matter what side one takes, this is a question for the parishioners at St. Anselm's. It is most certainly not the business of the local newspaper (in this case, the *Northeast Times*). Reporting on the controversy is one thing, but taking an editorial position on this issue (they sided with the woman and blasted the parish) is quite another.

This is a straight case of house rules. In response to our criticism, the newspaper said it had a legal right to issue the editorial. How pitiful. That was never our point and they know it.

BISHOPS RESPOND TO MILLER BREWING

In the September *Catalyst*, there was a story regarding a particularly crude and bigoted attack by Howard Stern on Catholic priests. We wrote to every bishop in the nation asking him to write a letter of protest to Miller Brewing Company (owned by Philip Morris), Stern's most prominent sponsor.

The following bishops wrote to us saying they would join our protest, though they chose not to share their letter with us:

Bishop Joseph V. Adamec (Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown)

Auxiliary Bishop Moses B. Anderson (Archdiocese of Detroit)

Bishop Robert J. Baker (Diocese of Charleston)

Bishop Raymond Boland (Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph)

Archbishop Charles J. Chaput (Archdiocese of Denver)

Bishop John McCarthy (Diocese of Austin)

The following bishops shared their letter with us. The following is an excerpt from each of them:

Archbishop John F. Donoghue (Archdiocese of Atlanta):

"We are asking, prior to any subsequent actions on our part, that you sever your relationship with this bottom-of-the-barrel production, as unworthy of a company with your tradition of excellence, and as detrimental to the good mental and spiritual health of this country's citizens."

Bishop Thomas G. Doran (Diocese of Rockford):

"I will expect that your company will disavow this libel and make public amends by making a public apology in whatever Catholic forum you choose. Failing that, I intend to stigmatize the Philip Morris Companies and the Miller Brewing Company whenever I have a suitable opportunity."

Bishop Thomas L. Dupré (Diocese of Springfield, MA):

"I deplore the statements attributed to Mr. Stern and urge Miller Brewing Company to take definitive and immediate action to discontinue sponsorship of this television show."

Auxiliary Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton (Archdiocese of Detroit):

"I understand that Mr. Stern frequently goes beyond the borders of good taste, but his recent comments about Catholic priests were vicious. His comments were directed to the entire Roman Catholic priesthood and these generalities can do nothing but foster disrespect."

Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien (Archdiocese for the Military Services):

"I found it hard to believe that any Corporation or media resource would tolerate much less support the bitter and

slandorous invective of the kind unleashed against the Catholic Church that evening by Mr. Stern and his allies.”

Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland (Archdiocese of Milwaukee):

“I cannot see how the Miller Brewing Company can in good conscience be involved as a sponsor for such a program. I find the show about as low as one can go in a lack of morality and values.”

We want to thank all of these bishops for writing a letter. We are especially grateful for the letter sent by Archbishop Rembert Weakland. Because the Miller Brewing Company is headquartered in his diocese, it took a special degree of courage for His Excellency to join the protest.

IDAHO STATESMAN PUBLISHES HATE AD

The *Idaho Statesman* has become the latest newspaper to print the hate ad sponsored by the Eternal Gospel Church. On September 2, the newspaper ran the despicable “Earth’s Final Warning” ad. We immediately objected.

The ad is the work of a Seventh Day Adventist splinter group that operates out of Palm Beach, Florida. It claims that the Catholic Church wants to govern the world and blames Pope John Paul II for carrying out the conspiracy. The ad is loaded with biblical passages that are applied to the Catholic Church: phrases like “Mother of Harlots” and “Image of the Beast” color the ad.

It is disconcerting that we still have to hound publishers at

major American dailies on this matter. But we will continue to do so wherever and whenever they appear.

You can write to the president and publisher of the *Idaho Statesman* asking her not to provide space for such a bigoted ad again. Her name is Margaret E. Buchanan and the address is P.O. Box 40, Boise, Idaho 83707.

Let her know that this is not a matter of censorship but responsible editorial judgment. Articles, ads and letters are submitted everyday to newspapers all across the nation and many never see the light of day. That's why it's her call what appears in her newspaper.

BILL SEEKS GAG ORDER ON ABORTION PROTESTERS

On August 21, the New York City Council debated Bill NO. 645-A that seeks to limit the free speech rights of abortion protesters outside abortion clinics.

The bill, introduced by council member Kathryn Freed, would make it illegal for abortion protesters to pass out leaflets or handbills to an unconsenting person outside abortion facilities. It would also ban signs, oral protest, education and counseling "within a radius of fifty feet from any entrance or exit of a reproductive health care facility, or the premises in which such a facility is located."

The Catholic League issued a news release to the media and presented testimony before the New York Council. Here is the text of our news release:

"In 1994, gays paraded naked in front of St. Patrick's Cathedral in an illegal march up Fifth Avenue and the New York City Council uttered not a word of protest. On many occasions, Rev. Al Sharpton has tied up traffic on bridges, bringing the city to a halt, and the New York City Council utters not a word of protest. But let Catholics pass out rosary beads to a woman seeking an abortion and the councilmen go berserk. They can tolerate every kind of free speech but this.

"The First Amendment does not have an asterisk next to it that makes free speech rights null and void for abortion protesters. Nor does it permit laws that violate the standard of viewpoint neutrality: it is illegal to deny to one class of protesters their right to free speech based on the content of their expression.

"If this bill were to become law, it would mean that priests and nuns who hold signs saying 'Choose Life' would be arrested and treated as common criminals. This is a gag order, pure and simple.

"The Catholic League will ask Council Speaker Peter Vallone, co-sponsor of this bill, to sponsor an amendment that would ban the speech of protesters outside houses of worship within a radius of 500 feet."