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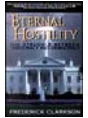
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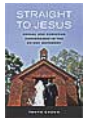
War on Judicial Independence

TALK TO ACTION recommended books



**Eternal Hostility: The Struggle Between Theocracy and Democracy**

by Frederick Clarkson



**Straight to Jesus: Sexual and Christian Conversions in the Ex-Gay Movement**

Tanya Erzen



**Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism**

by Michelle Goldberg



**With God on Their Side**

: How Christian

RECLAIMING CITIZENSHIP HISTORY AND FAITH  
**TALK TO ACTION**

**Who Are the True Agents of Apostasy? (The Catholic Right, Twenty-first in a Series)**

By **Frank Coccozzelli**  
 topic: Church/State Separation section:Front Page

Sun Jan 21, 2007 at 01:44:54 PM EST

The PBS Frontline documentary, *Hand of God.*, is the story of pedophilia victim Paul Cultrera. It is a disturbing illustration of an arrogant Catholic Church hierarchy that does not always practice what it preaches -- as well as a clear-cut case example of why no religious denomination should be allowed to exempt itself from equal justice under the law by pronouncing itself as its ultimate arbiter.

As I watched the horror of the film unfold, I was reminded of when I first learned of the scandal. More so, I recalled how many of the Catholic Right provide cover for a dysfunctional, but reactionary portion of the hierarchy. Instead of cauterizing the pain by taking responsibility, they tried to shift the blame upon both the violated children for whose protection they were entrusted as well as those seeking accountability within the Church.

Filmmaker Joe Cultrera's dark, but moving portrait of his older brother Paul's ordeal stirred many of my personal adverse feelings for certain church hierarchy. I recognized the lack of explanation, the arrogance, the second-class treatment Italian-American Catholics are often subjected to; as well as the detached coldness of some of my church's leadership. But there was one experience Paul had that I could not relate to: being molested by a priest.

The ordeal of the victims has only been exasperated by pastors, bishops and cardinals who still shirk responsibility often while trying to shift the blame to a secular society for what they often incorrectly misinterpret as hyper-individualism. The obvious question is raised: by evading full accountability, isn't it now certain clergy, the not society at large that is pursuing a reckless a course of self-interested behavior?

It is impossible to miss the film's **justified anger and bitterness**. This is not the story of an individual who just walked away from his religion out of convenience -- but of a once-faithful man who in 1964 was abused by priest whose behavior was known to the local hierarchy and was not stopped and properly disciplined. Shockingly, Paul's abuser, priest Joseph Birmingham who was first alleged to be a child abuser in the early 1960s, was instead assigned to duties that put him within greater access to potential victims, eventually rising to the level of pastor. Instead of punishing the abuser, certain clergy of the hierarchy chose to ignore the victim, and reward the predator with greater opportunities to further his serial crimes.

An overall theme emerges in many of these pedophilia cases: a Catholic hierarchy that continually seems more interested in protecting the church as an institution rather than her flesh and blood members. Power always seems to come before the personal well-being of her congregants. Accountability is avoided. In its place, members of the Church hierarchy brazenly seek to be exempted from the rules -- make that the laws -- that apply to everyone else. No wonder why many on the Catholic Right rail at the notion of keeping church and state separate.

And the Catholic Right uses this scandal by **attempting to use it to further an ultra-orthodox agenda** as well as **making homosexuals in general the scapegoats**. In Rove-like fashion they are trying to turn a disastrous weak point into a strength. Many of the hard Right leadership deride ordinary Catholics who simply want the violators and their enablers held accountable as "a culture of dissent," as if their primary goal were the Vatican's demise. We hear of bishops and cardinals who falsely describe this shameful chapter as being the result of the *aggiornamento* of Vatican II or worse, as the logical outcome of living in societies built upon American liberal democracy.

This outrageous claim just doesn't square with the facts. Joseph Birmingham and one of his primary enablers, Bishop John McCormack both graduated from St. John's Seminary in Brighton, Massachusetts in 1960-two years before Vatican II effected the changes so disdained by ultra-traditionalists. Several generations back, there was a disturbingly similar incident within the Catholic community in Australia that was well-documented by the CBS news magazine *Sixty Minutes*. Pedophilia among clergy has been known to exist in a variety of societies.

Organizations such as the Catholic League try to use red herrings by stating that there is an increase in pedophilia incidents in public schools or miscasting the severity of the scandal by claiming the victims were mostly teenagers instead of pre-pubescent children--as if that were to lessen the already inflicted damage. As historian Garry Wills observed, "Priestly pedophilia is also set apart from other varieties by the fact that the seduction technique employs religion."

Paul Cultrera wonders how folks such as his parents could remain faithful to the Catholic Church. The answer is simple. They know that the Church is not about Bishop Lennon, Father Birmingham or Bernard Cardinal Law--members of a hierarchy who flagrantly seek exemption from the rules of our pluralistic society. Instead the true Catholic Church is Joe and Paul Cultrera's parents, folks who in the best tradition of American liberal democracy play by the rules and merely ask that everyone else do the same, even princes of the

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 Thanks to Ethics Daily for exposing the incendiary rhetoric and tone of Rick Scarborough's latest fund-raising letter. Scarborough, a former fundamentalist candidate for President.....  
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**Why Books Are Like Bin Laden and Hitler**  
 Rabbi Daniel Lapin, long a figure on the religious right, has a warning for his conservative Christian friends: books now on the shelves in.....  
 By **Frederick Clarkson** (2 comments)

**Human Rights, Civil Liberties, and Apocalyptic Thinking**  
 A Speech by Chip Berlet This audio program is part one of a speech I gave in 2006. http://www.cberlet.info/audio/2006/berlet-omaha-2006-01.mp3 The full title of this.....  
 By **Chip Berlet** (0 comments)

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 Senior Analyst, Political Research Associates (author info) Max Weber noted the synergy between fundamentalist Calvinism and Free Market Ideologies in his famous book.....  
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 During 2005's Kitzmiller v Dover Area School District trial, a Federal court case that answered the question of whether "intelligent design" (ID) could be.....  
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**Who Are the True Agents of Apostasy? (The Catholic Right, Twenty-first in a Series)**  
 The PBS Frontline documentary, Hand of God., is the story of pedophilia victim Paul Cultrera. It is a disturbing illustration of an arrogant Catholic.....  
 By **Frank Coccozzelli** (10 comments)

**Israeli Author Urges Jews to Support Evangelicals**  
 Time carries a short opinion-piece by Zev Chafets, former press officer for Menachem Begin and author of A Match Made in Heaven, a new.....  
 By **Bartholomew** (1 comment)

**Hollywood Documentary on Abortion Politics to Premier**  
 The most ambitious and likely to be the most influential film ever made on the politics of abortion will have its U.S. premier on.....  
 By **Frederick Clarkson** (4 comments)

**The Strange Belief that a Woman Cannot Teach a Man the Bible**  
 The Southern Baptist Convention is the largest protestant denomination in the US and it is at times confusing to understand its complex history and.....  
 By **Carlos** (4 comments)

**Alan Keyes for President?**  
 In 2004, Democrat Barack Obama's Republican opponent for the U.S. Senate from Illinois was Alan Keyes -- a Christian Right firebrand and perennial candidate.....  
 By **Frederick Clarkson** (5 comments)

**Barack Obama: Sheep or Goat?**  
 The Christian Right is worried that Barack Obama may win the approval and vote of evangelical Christians. The Rev. Bob Schenck has written an.....  
 By **Carlos** (4 comments)

**Plaintiff Intimidation in Church/State Cases**  
 Anyone who pays any attention to lawsuits involving the establishment clause can tell you one thing for certain: the plaintiffs will be the targets.....  
 By **Ed Brayton** (4 comments)

**AntiGay Scientist Thinks Slaves Were "Better Off" in America**  
 As if the ex-gay therapy movement was not controversial enough, Gerald Schoenewolf a member of the Science Advisory Board of the National Association for.....  
 By **Frederick Clarkson** (7 comments)

**Anatomy of Another Attack**  
 The following e-mail came to me yesterday. It tells a sad story of a church under attack. I have asked permission of the pastor.....  
 By **John Dorhauer** (16 comments)

**Separation of Church and State? Sez Who? Take the Quiz!**  
 Last summer, in the wake of Senator Barack Obama's speech regarding the role of religion in public life, I wrote several essays pointing out.....  
 By **Frederick Clarkson** (2 comments)

**Desperation Time At Left Behind Games?**  
 The misguided folks over at Left Behind Games, who are committed to giving Christian young people what they call the "positive message" that God wants them to convert or kill non-Christians, seem to be.....  
 By **Timothy F Simpson** (4 comments)

**Tough Lc Focus On Fires Emg Whose D: Recently Murdered**  
 In a rather s clash betw The.....  
 By **Bruce W** comments)

**Russian C Church C: Alliance # "Militant**  
 [ see fuller a Bartholomew Religion ] ful By **Bruce W** comments)

**Bartholomew Notes O: Religion**

**Chip Ber**

**Max Blu**

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**Citizens DefCon: Campaig Defend 1**

Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy, and Democracy in George W. Bush's White House. by Esther Kaplan



Right-Wing Populism in America

: Too Close for Comfort by Chip Berlet

and Matthew N. Lyons

sample chapter

Special Features

Attack on The United Churches of Christ

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"The Christian Right, Dominionism, and Theocracy", by Chip Berlet

Parts

One

Two

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Five

"Taking Over The Republican Party", a four part series by Joan Bokaer

The Woman in A Mink Coat

While We Were sleeping

Angels On a Pinhead

Under Cover of Night

The Indian River Incident : What You Can Do

link >

The "Stop the ACLU Coalition" Shaming Project

How you can help stop "Stop The ACLU" just by sending a few emails

'Left Behind' video game image

The Shaming Project

does the violence of "Left Behind: Eternal Forces" bother you ? If so, what can you do ? Well, to begin with you can email Jonathan Hutson's stories to people you know. That will help to bring more public scrutiny of the game. Public shaming really works ! Just click on the "email" icon and link at the top or bottom of the story and you'll be taken to a form that will allow you email the first story.

The Purpose Driven Life Takers

or the

latest installment

without leaving this site. Thanks.

'Left Behind' video

Church. Someday, good people such as they will better be able to contribute to the direction of that great institution. But this will only come about when individual Catholics realize that without dissent, accountability is an impossibility- even at the risk of excommunication.

In Part Five of this series we examined how the issue of clergy pedophilia is a clear illustration of how theocracy can easily translate into physical and psychological danger to our most vulnerable loved ones. And in Part Twenty we examined the Aristotelian belief in inequality that still permeates the traditionalist Catholic mindset, paternalistic in its belief that only holy philosopher-kings, not the common men truly understand what constitutes the common good. The logical implication of a theocratic society built upon this autocratic thought would be an increase in such immoral behavior simply because there would be no secular society to ensure accountability.

IRD stalwarts of the Catholic Right, such as Robert H. Bork, rail against Liberalism's faith in equality. Yet it is this very adherence to equality that prevents self-exemption from the law by those evoking the unenlightened grounds of heredity or non-meritoriously arrived at privilege. It almost seems bizarre that those whose actions are the most repugnant and close-minded have the audacity to attack loyal, reasoned dissent as attacks upon the Catholic Church. It is astounding that they would attack those who--as Christianity's Founder questioned His religious hierarchy's powers-that-be did--call for internal accountability. Why is it that they are so threatened by a secular society that merely requires equal justice under the law? If threats of eternal damnation and excommunication could be used to avoid justice when sectarian beliefs are not carbon copies of secular laws, what greater evils could be advanced if that were to change?

But in closing we must return to the aggrieved, victims such as Paul Cultrera. It is for him and others who have been first violated then alienated as if they, not the pedophile clergy were the perpetrators who must be made whole. Justice, both sectarian as well as secular has a duty to them before it considers the Catholic Church an institution: that much is owed to them for a continuum of psychological pain, broken marriages and the moral confusion that comes from the misplaced threat of damnation to buy silence. It is only through such a placement of priorities that the Church could redeem its reputation. And if the church hierarchy fails to do so in this age of falling church attendance, perhaps they should look into the mirror if they seek the true agents of apostasy.

The Catholic Right: A Series, by Frank Coccozzelli : Part One Part Two Part Three Part Four Part Five Part Six Intermezzo Part Eight Part Nine Part Ten Part Eleven Part Twelve Part Thirteen Part Fourteen Second Intermezzo Part Sixteen Part Seventeen Part Eighteen Part Eighteen Part Nineteen Part Twenty

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Who Are the True Agents of Apostasy? (The Catholic Right, Twenty-first in a Series) | 10 comments (10 topical, 0 hidden)

Thanks again, Frank (5.00 / 1)

I think you describe very well why those of us who are Catholic stay that way. I try to have an informed conscience and to remember that the hierarchy isn't the church, but that the church is the people of God. It often seems that many of our fellow Catholics appear to be rather passive or are disinclined to rock the boat. I tend to tune out the hierarchy and to concentrate on the liturgy and Jesus' teachings.

One thought I had about the scandals-I wonder how many lay Catholics have left the Church over this. I think there has been a quiet attrition over the years.

Kathy

by khughes1963 ON Sun Jan 21, 2007 at 07:44:24 PM EST

Anytime, Kathy (none / 0)

It's a lot of work, but knowing that you and others are listening while providing feedback makes it all worthwhile.

by Frank Coccozzelli ON Sun Jan 21, 2007 at 08:00:00 PM EST [ Parent ]

But What Can Laypeople Do? (4.00 / 1)

Once again, I love this series. It's so gratifying to know that others notice the things that troubled me so much during my years as a Catholic.

But what can we, as laypeople, possibly do about any of it? The Catholic Church is all about power, all of which is in the hands of the clergy. A layman's only access is to buy the favor of high-ranking clerics.

The brave members of Call to Action and similar organizations have been struggling for years.

Obama Resources

Since Barack Obama has formally announced his exploratory committee for a run for president, those who are interested may wish to look back on some of the hoo na following his speech last summer..... By Frederick Clarkson (2 comments)

Rev. Phelps to picket inauguration of Ohio's new Governor

Fred Phelps seems to be taking a break from demonstrations at funerals of troops killed in Iraq. Why, you may ask, would he picket a governor's inauguration? Well... Strickland may have appointed a..... By Psyche (2 comments)

Bisexuals Don't Work for the Christian Right

Yet another Christian Nationalist spokesman thinks bisexual lives are the ultimate argument against gay (and bisexual) rights. By GreenEyed Lilo (2 comments)

Dozier's Biblical Objection to Mosque Dropped by CNN

Dr. O'Neal Dozier of the Worldwide Christian Center complains that CNN censored his dominionist comments ..... By Bartholomew (1 comment)

2006 Koufax Awards Nominations are Now Open

The Koufax Awards named for the Hall of Fame left handed pitcher, Sandy Koufax, celebrates the left side of the blogosphere. This year "Sandys" will be awarded in 17 categories -- including Best Post, Best..... By Frederick Clarkson (1 comment)

Couric, "Embarrassed" By Goode, States US A Secular Nation. Blitzzer Blames Ellison ?

The Ellison-Goode controversy has recently led a religious coalition to promote a petition inviting for Virgil Goode to visit a mosque in his Virginia congressional district, as an act of reconciliation following Goode's controversial..... By Bruce Wilson (2 comments)

A prayer for the new year

All day yesterday I tried to think of something to say about the execution of Saddam Hussein--well, bigger than that--about my country and the world at this point in time. But no thoughtful analysis..... By Renee in Ohio (0 comments)

Fighting for The Soul of the Republican Party: Kansas (Part 2)

Part I: Senator Sam Brownback A story in The Washington Post yesterday takes us right into the fray. It looked like fiercely antiabortion former attorney general, Phil Kline, was on his way out. But..... By Joan Bokaer (0 comments)

New Book Recommendation

One of my former professors recommended this book to me. .... By Frank Frey (1 comment)

Christmas: a time for peace, a time for war

Cross-posted from Biblical America Resistance Front (barf.org) 'Tis the season when it's not unusual to receive a holiday card inscribed, "Peace on Earth." It's easy to sometimes assume that this sentiment is a universal..... By Mike Doughney (0 comments)

CNN picks up the Christian Embassy video story

The story of the Christian Embassy video showing generals in uniform proselytizing within the Pentagon was spotlighted today by CNN. I posted clips from the film on YouTube until the Campus Crusade For Christ..... By Shockwave (4 comments)

A Modest Christmas Gift For A Christian Crusader ?

As Blue NC reports, at a North Carolina Rotary Club last weekend US Representative Robin Hayes ( R-NC ) made a startling and radical proposal to 'solve' the mess that has become the US..... By Bruce Wilson (1 comment)

Dembski Boasts of Political Clout

Richard Dawkins has just made public an email he received from Intelligent Design exponent William Dembski in 2003: ..... By Bartholomew (1 comment)

LaHaye on Violence and Violent Video Games

In 1981, Tim LaHaye turned his attention to violence in society and in US culture: ..... By Bartholomew (3 comments)

Gingrich v The Separation of Church and State

Newt Gingrich is launching a new and ambitious committee aimed at re-making American society in the neoconservative image. But just below the surface lurks an assault on the doctrine of separation of church and..... By mick arran (1 comment)

Sunday Radio Show On Evangelical Recruiting in the Pentagon

Here's the Interfaith Alliance press release on this Sunday's upcoming show with Mickey Weinstein, on the scandal surrounding the discovery of an evangelical recruiting video filmed inside the Pentagon. .... By Bruce Wilson (0 comments)

Manhattan Institute Joins "War On Christmas" Conspiracy

Based on their latest season's greeting email, the conservative Manhattan Institute appears to now be a part of the nefarious war against Christmas --1 ----Original Message----- From: Manhattan Institute [mailto:mi@manhattan-institute.org] Subject: We wish you..... By Bruce Wilson (1 comment)

Jay Sekulow says "Buy "Left Behind" game"

The Left Behind video game (LBVG) was the lead item on Jay Sekulow's radio show yesterday, in which he decried the campaign to get Walmart to stop carrying LBVG. Typical Sekulow comments were that..... By NancyP (1 comment)

Time Publishes Dobson Lies: Take Action!

Dobson is loose again - on this occasion in Time magazine , using the Cheney pregnancy as a springboard to spread more misinformation about gay families (ht Aravosis ). In this latest assault, rather..... By Psyche (3 comments)

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But all they seem to accomplish is to occasionally get themselves excommunicated.  
 I apologize for this whining rant. But I love the Church, (even if I'm not a part of it) and it hurts me that I can't bring myself to raise my children as Catholics.  
 Is there anything to be done, other than pray for a liberal Thomas Monaghan to buy some change?

by mkerby ON Sun Jan 21, 2007 at 02:42:00 PM EST

**Agitate, Agitate, Agitate. (none / 0)**

- Isn't that what Frederick Douglas said when asked something quite similar?
- Here is what I do:
- A) Go back to your church, raise your kids Catholic and be active in your parish. Remember: their whole gameplan hinges upon them *driving us out of the church*. Don't let them do that. Your continued presence alone frustrates that tactic.
- B) Do some homework. Read whatever you can about *aggiornamento*, Vatican II Catholicism. Fr. Charles Curran's *Loyal Dissent* is an excellent place to start as is Thomas Cahill's biography of Pope John XXIII. Read Sister Joan Chittister's *NCR* columns. This will give you the vocabulary to make your arguments within a Catholic framework--something way more effective than screeding or ranting whatever comes to mind. Then with this knowledge become more active in your parish.
- C) Remember: practice self-discipline. If an Opus Dei priest or someone from Priests for Life comes to your parish and gives an extreme homily, at the end--**in a very dignified manner**--say, "I loyally dissent." See if he engages you. Remember: Jesus also dissented, as did Thomas Aquinas, Rev. John A Ryan and Hans Kung.
- D) Learn everything you can about IRD/EPPC Neocon Catholics such as George Weigel, Michael Novak and John Neuhaus. Explain to fellow Catholics how these smorgasbord Catholics pick and choose what they believe on a much grander scale than any liberal Catholic.
- E) Give strong, vocal support to groups such as SNAP and Voice of the Faithful. Defend them from the lies of the Catholic Right. It is the former, not the latter that will restore the good name of the Church.
- F) When a gasbag such as William Donohue or John McCloskey goes on a cable news show or one of the morning news programs, call or send an E-mail to the show's network **telling them that you are a Catholic and that this man does not speak for you**. It wouldn't hurt to ask that a more enlightened Catholic voice (Fr. Curran, Diane DiNocala from the Opus Dei Action Awareness Network, Sister Joan Chittister) be given the chance to provide a counter argument.
- How's that for a start?

by Frank Cocozzelli ON Sun Jan 21, 2007 at 03:33:01 PM EST  
 [ Parent ]

**Re: Agitate, Agitate, Agitate (none / 0)**

Thank you! This gives me some hope. I'm still not sure that laypeople can accomplish anything in this church, because so much has been done specifically to prevent it. But at least my children can say I tried...

by mkerby ON Sun Jan 21, 2007 at 04:17:04 PM EST  
 [ Parent ]

**Just Remember This... (none / 0)**

Only after years and years of agitation did the floodgates open up with Vatican II. Our system of government developed only after a revolution and years of Enlightenment principles were digested by great minds. Change often requires patience and time.

Whether it be the Catholic Church or safeguarding American Liberal Democracy two things are required--constant effort and knowing your opposition inside and out.

by Frank Cocozzelli ON Sun Jan 21, 2007 at 04:45:26 PM EST  
 [ Parent ]

**exactly right & well said, Frank (none / 0)**

It also takes time for us all to learn; and to learn to get better at what we do; and to gradually become greater than the sum of our parts.

by Frederick Clarkson ON Sun Jan 21, 2007 at 04:54:31 PM EST  
 [ Parent ]

**A Powerful Story, A Powerful Warning (none / 0)**

**Dobson Entertains Michael Medved**

James Dobson continued his trip around the corridors of Republican punditry this week with a two part interview with Michael Medved, a radio talk show host and regular outspoken critic of American popular culture.....  
 By [tactitus](#) (1 comment)

**"Pastor Quits" and "Gay Evangelicals." 2 interesting stories?**

Two stories in The New York Times, "Pastor Quits After Revealing Same-Sex Relations, and "Gay and Evangelical, Seeking Paths of Acceptance," (the former story blogged earlier on No God Zone), may be of interest.....  
 By [IseFire](#) (2 comments)

**Kansas Right-wing Pastor joins with Amusement Park**

Terry Fox, a Wichita icon for the rabid right, announced in today's edition of the Wichita Eagle that he has an anonymous donor in the wings ready to pony up one million in matching.....  
 By [Pauljaxon](#) (3 comments)

**Must Read New York Times Today**

The title of today's front page article in the New York Times, Religion for a Captive Audience, Paid For by Taxes, gives you a taste of what we're in for. It's a thorough, comprehensive.....  
 By [Joan Bokaeer](#) (4 comments)

**Left Behind Eternal Forces Hits UK**

The London Times reports that Left Behind: Eternal Forces is appearing in British stores in time for Christmas. ....  
 By [Bartholomew](#) (0 comments)

**The Fight for The Soul of The GOP Is On!**

U.S. Senator Sam Brownback (R-KA) is forming an exploratory committee to run in the 2008 GOP presidential primary. "Brownback seeks something far more radical [than George Bush]: not faith-based politics but faith in place.....  
 By [Joan Bokaeer](#) (11 comments)

**He Went To The Mountain And Found a Molehill**

The midterm election is barely over and the religious far right is already acting out over incoming Minnesota Democratic Congressman Keith Ellison's stated intention to be sworn in using the Koran rather than.....  
 By [BobHiggins](#) (1 comment)

**Advent: taking time for pondering**

So, Christmas is coming again, huh? I was just remarking to my EM group last night that I don't think I've experienced a single Christmas where I wasn't either a teacher or a student.....  
 By [Renee in Ohio](#) (0 comments)

**Wiccans Seek Justice: Religious Liberty Is Still Not Secured For Minority Faiths**

Yesterday, December 2, 2006, I published part 1 of a series I am writing for the First Freedom First blog discussing how the case relating to the VA's refusal to recognize the Wiccan Pentacle ties in.....  
 By [bethanyaradia](#) (2 comments)

**Evangelical Pollster Learns Major Christian Leaders Are Widely Unknown**

George Barna is in a snit again. The title of the Evangelical pollster's latest report tells why: "Major Christian Leaders Are Widely Unknown, Even Among Christians." Earlier this fall Barna, president of The Barna.....  
 By [forthwrite](#) (9 comments)

This one film encapsulates many of the on-going struggles that exist both within Catholicism as well as within the greater secular society. Joe Cultrera's film clearly illustrates why the Church's hierarchy requires more input from the congregants and why we as Americans can never let any denomination become the sole arbiter of morality.

by Frank Cocozzelli ON Sun Jan 21, 2007 at 01:51:32 PM EST

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**Frank, I have to ask this question. (none / 0)**

I've asked it of Catholic friends and never gotten a satisfactory answer. I've been reading your posts and haven't found an answer there either - in fact have become more puzzled. Why do Catholics put up with this stuff?

There are a lot of Protestant denominations, major divisions within Judaism, the same for Islam. This makes some sense since, even within a religion, people have different beliefs, goals, and theology. At times, members have left a particular denomination or group because they don't agree with the hierarchy or beliefs espoused by current leaders. This occurred, certainly, within the SBC, after reactionary leaders staged a coup. People who leave may start their own groups or join other existing denominations.

There is also the issue of international control - a big problem for the ECUSA right now. Is it reasonable to assume that people living in very different social, political, and economic circumstances will see their religion in the same way?

Do Catholics really need a pope? Why is one human being invested with so much power? Would it be a better investment of time and energy to form a new church, say, Catholic Church USA, rather than constantly doing battle with a recalcitrant, reactionary behemoth that has shown little desire to adjust to the modern world? Are there enough Catholics who would support ordination of married priests and women, liberalizing of views of women and reproductive choice, etc. Have Catholics been so thoroughly conditioned to obedience that they can't even consider these options.

I'm not a Catholic (as you may have guessed). In fact, I was raised in a liberal Protestant denomination that gives a lot of autonomy to local churches so it is very difficult for me to understand why bright, liberal, thoughtful people continue to support a church that is so authoritarian in nature and so disrespectful of the wishes and needs of many of its followers. Of course, some of them haven't - the numerous "lapsed" Catholics. Perhaps you can help me to understand this dynamic better.

by Psyche ON Sun Jan 21, 2007 at 06:26:25 PM EST

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**For a Multitude of Reasons. (none / 0)**

First and foremost, I believe that Catholicism's track record is not all that bad. For example, on issues of science we accept evolution. In Catholic School I was taught to read much of the Bible as metaphor and not literally.

True Catholic notions of economic justice--Monsignor John A. Ryan's formulation of the minimum wage, the living wage and distributive justice capitalism for example, are very much progressive concepts--folks like Santorum, Weigel and Deal Hudson are the ones that get it wrong. My church is that of Sr. Joan Chittister, Fr. Curran, Yves Conger and Hans Kung. And if Catholics work hard enough the latter, not the former will be Her future face.

I also know that the Church will not go away and in fact when She is on course--as She was during the reign of John XXIII--She can do wonderful things. During the Cuban Missile Crisis John XXIII was key in being a backdoor conduit between JFK and Krushchev. While I do not believe in Papal infallibility (only decreed approximately 135 years ago), pontiffs can be strong voice for morality. The task is get Her back on course where She is lost.

Catholic Charities does an awfully lot of good work.

As an Italian-American Catholic the Church is culturally important for me and my family. My mother-in-law is a 78 year-old woman who goes to Mass every day and still supports birth control, embryonic stem cell research and choice. Perhaps more importantly because of my Southern Italian heritage I can separate the hierarchy from the message. We Italians and Italian-Americans have learned how to find the good folks and deal with the bad ones.

I'm not a quitter and I love my Church. Besides, aren't the most difficult endeavors the ones that are really worth doing?

by Frank Cocozzelli ON Mon Jan 22, 2007 at 10:15:46 AM EST

[ Parent ]

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