

Birthmark Catholics

By William A. Borst, Ph.D.

Cartoonist Greg Larson's *Far Side* once portrayed a herd of deer gathered around one of their number with an unfortunate bull's eye on his chest. Another deer remarked *That's a bummer of a birthmark!* Faithful Catholics are like that deer. They have an indelible bull's eye over their hearts because of their assent to Jesus Christ and the teachings of His Church. This should come as no surprise. In all four Gospels, Jesus warned his disciples of *the coming persecution*. As a grim reminder of the ultimate price of being a Catholic, one need only read about the countless thousands of martyrs who shed their blood for their faith over the centuries.

The American Mind

American History has been tainted with an anti-Catholicism that predated the United States Constitution. Its random appearance has been characterized by a loose federation of Bible Protestants, freethinkers and atheists beholden to the anti-clericalism of the French Revolution. Its frequency has permeated what may be called the *American Mind*. Social historians Bernard Bailyn and Daniel Boorstin have presented the country's enlightened ideals as being closely related to a distrust of revealed religion and any undemocratic source of authority. Catholics are targeted on both counts.

A deep-seated animus that often resulted in violence characterized the mass immigration of Catholics in the nineteenth century. A flood of Irish and Italian Catholic immigrants severely disturbed cultural harmony. Their initial inability to assimilate led to the formation of nativistic groups, such as the *Know-Nothings*, a clandestine clique of anti-Catholics who formed their own political party before the Civil War. *NINA* or *No Irish Need Apply* became a standard practice on the East Coast. It was well into the twentieth century before American Catholics bore any signs of public acceptance.

Weapons of Catholic Mass Destruction

The arguments against Catholic Orthodoxy throughout history and even into the present have remained fairly consistent. Penn State Professor Philip Jenkins' book *The New Anti-Catholicism*

provides an overview of this history. He employs an honest exposition and analysis of the usual arguments utilized in this frontal assault on the Catholic Church, such as the Crusades, the Inquisition, and the other past *black legends*.

Jenkins openly explains that the Crusades were a reaction to the Muslim invasion of Europe. Massacres and bloody brutality characterized all religious warfare during medieval times. He argues that to single out the Catholic examples of this brutality is unfair and intellectually dishonest. The Inquisition accounted for the execution of no more than 6,000 people over a period of three hundred years. Secular governments have been responsible for far more murders than any Catholic monarch.

Black legends are old accounts of historical distortions, such as Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* that falsely depicted the Catholic Church as a den of anti-Semitism, racism, and mythological accounts of Spanish colonial greed and savagery. These historical distortions have become polemics that have been consistently used to discredit and denigrate the Catholic Church. Writer Daniel Goldhagen's virulent attacks on Pope Pius XII and the Church are a more modern example of the canard of vilification used against the Church and its leaders. The very mention of the Crusades, the Inquisition and any other of these historical distortions often create a Pavlovian response of distrust in the public and even in unaware Catholics.

A Devout Hobby

Cultural acceptance of Catholics has come at an enormous cost. Membership in mainstream America often required Catholics to distance themselves from the moral principles of their faith. In his comprehensive study, *Catholics and American Culture*, Jesuit Mark S. Massa traced the deep-seated need of America's Catholics to belong to the American social order. This need often resulted in a situation where Catholics considered themselves Americans first and Catholics second. The 1960 presidential campaign of John F. Kennedy illustrated this new pattern. Throughout the campaign, Kennedy danced a secular jig around *the religious question*. He

finally admitted that his Church's teachings would never prevent him from doing his duty for the American people if there were some inherent conflict. His stance was a far cry from that of St. Thomas More who lost his head in 1535 for his refusal to bow to King Henry VIII's demands.

In current times, Catholicism has been Americanized to the point that religion is a private concern, something akin to a devout hobby that should have no influence on how one behaves in the public arena. Kennedy's religious indifferentism has served as a paradigm for *the deadly dozen* United State Senators who have shamefully defended a woman's right to kill her unborn child. These self-professed *Catholics*, such as Massachusetts' Ted Kennedy, Susan Collins of Maine, Maryland's Barbara Mikulski, and South Dakota's Tom Daschle, have heeded the seductive lure of power and prestige in scandalously ignoring their Church's teachings on abortion and homosexuality.

This cultural attitude has filtered down to the pews where many Catholics have become complacent in their practice and defense of their faith. Catholics are fully admitted to the cultural mainstream, to the extent that they accept and approve the cultural and moral decline that has characterized the "progress" of the modern era. The cultural acquiescence of so many Catholics today underscores the fact that this threat has been much subtler than anything ever experienced. The new approach revolves around the *Kulturkampf* and the Catholic faith's consistent opposition to the pathological evils of abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, and pornography.

An Acceptable Prejudice

Father Massa's most recent book, *Anti-Catholicism in America: The Last Acceptable Prejudice* deftly exposes the roots of this new wave of anti-Catholic prejudice that has permeated the social fabric. Mainstream society offers little assistance to Catholics to enable them to dispel the deep-seated bigotry that has no qualms in exposing itself to public view. Attacking Catholics and their Church is an acceptable prejudice because the ruling elite, especially the media, all share the same distrust and animosity toward Catholics. They are especially hated because of their allegiance to a foreign pontiff whose approach to life is hierarchical. This puts the Church and its followers at odds with the growing religious tendencies of the *American democratic faith*. Protestant leaders and their secular allies have always feared Catholic power because of its numerical strength and devotion to community moral principles that run counter to the existential individualism of the country's' religious heritage.

In many ways this attack on Catholicism is an extension of the Marxist plan to subvert and destroy the Church. Liberalism and secularism have used their influence, especially in the media and Hollywood, to portray every flaw in the Catholic public edifice. The

recent clerical sex scandals have rocked the Church to its very foundations. The scandals have been used as a club to bash and confuse its faithful.

The Da Vinci Code

Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* has sold over 4 million copies to an unsuspecting public. *The Code* is a very subtle and dangerous weapon that anti-Catholics can use to undermine and weaken the Catholic faith. It is a dangerous book for mainstream Catholics to read. They simply do not have the historical or theological depth to grasp the full meaning of the book's outrageous claims and egregious errors. According to Brown and his sources, especially the book, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln, the historical search for the Holy Grail which was putatively Jesus' chalice at the Last Supper, was a deception. According to their legend the Grail was not a cup but actually Mary Magdalene's womb, as Jesus and Mary Magdalene had a sexual relationship that produced children.

The myth also holds that Magdalene was not only Jesus' wife but also his favorite apostle, even more important than St. Peter. Christ never died on the cross but escaped with Magdalene to southern France, where their offspring laid the basis for the French Merovingian dynasty (476-751). Since then a secret society, the mysterious Priory of Sion, which has included such luminaries as Da Vinci, Botticelli, Sir Isaac Newton, Victor Hugo, and many others, have preserved this secret knowledge. *The Code* refers to Da Vinci's painting of *The Last Supper*. Brown accepts the unsubstantiated claim that the fair-haired disciple to Jesus' right was not John as most historians agree but Magdalene.

Brown complicates the preposterous plot with an assassin from the organization of Catholics *Opus Dei* which happens to enjoy the favor of Pope John Paul II. The book's character Silas is systematically murdering the modern keepers of the secret. The book's protagonist, agnostic symbologist from Harvard University, Harvey Langdon, is brought in to crack the code's symbols and preserve its secrets. If he fails, knowledge of Magdalene and Jesus' marital union and the importance of women to the Church would be lost forever.

Brown charges that the early Catholic hierarchy knew all of this and covered it up in a *conspiracy of lies* for two thousand years. He angrily contends that the misogynistic Catholic Church, in a dedicated effort to maintain its patriarchal control, has suppressed *goddess worship*, stifling the innate power and implied divinity of women. The only possible conclusion for the reader is that Catholicism is a historical fraud and absolutely worthless as a religious faith.

An Era of Good Feelings

It is not surprising that such a book as *The Da Vinci Code* is so popular today. The culture has been ripe for such a publication for over a generation. Many Americans, including many Catholics, have accepted the New Age religion that endorses feelings of inner spirituality and universal salvation. With personal salvation virtually assured, they have effectively repealed Christ's many warnings of possible damnation. Their feelings of humanistic compassion and concern have effectively replaced religious devotion and a sense of sin. It is now more important to be a nice person than a good person. New Age worshipers are free to foster the *good works* of constructing an idolatrous *universal habitat for humanity* made in the image of man. As St. Louis University professor James Hitchcock pointed out in his column in the *St. Louis Review*, people love *The Code* because it allows them *to be religious without submitting to any of the demands of faith*. In an increasingly hedonistic culture such as America's, people want the good feelings from faith without having to assent to any religious or moral principles.

The media have repeatedly re-enforced this cultural trend *ad nauseam*. Their goal seems to be a systematic dismantling of the basic tenets of the Catholic faith on the Eucharist and the Resurrection. In other venues, scholars and experts explain America's democratic secular faith and its consequences for religious orthodoxy. Jesus was just a man, albeit a great man with the charismatic and moral appeal of *a Superstar*. The unspoken secret is their deep-seated belief that the United States will be much better off once the mystical and sacramental signs of the Catholic faith are discarded for a kinder, more gentle utilitarian system of religious belief.

Another Christ

As Professor Hitchcock opined in another *St. Louis Review* column, Brown's fantasies *are not without foundation*. They are rooted in a philosophy called Gnosticism, which predates Christianity. Gnostics believe in a duality of light and dark that holds there are two equal forces at war within the universe, which will ultimately be separated from each other. Gnostics hold that humanity itself manifests divinity and that man makes God. Whoever receives this *gnosis*, becomes *not a Christian but another Christ*. Gnosticism emphasizes the spirituality of faith that is usually found within the individual, relegating the two thousand years of Catholic history to the status of an annoying historical appendage.

Gnosticism is enjoying a high profile today because so many of its beliefs parallel those of the New Age religion, since so many of its early leaders were women. Gnosticism teaches that the patriarchy of the Church fathers led to two thousands years of suppression of women and their rights, including the right to an abortion. This all

conflates with *The Code* and the writings of feminist scholars, Elaine Pagels and Karen King. This philosophy has also produced a number of *Gnostic Gospels*, such as those according to Mary Magdalen, Thomas, Philip, and Andrew. They are at great variance, in style, content, and inference with those of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Gnostics promote themselves as the true guardians of the Faith.

The Gates of Hell

Faithful Catholics owe a debt of gratitude to people like William Donohue of *The Catholic League* who have served as gatekeepers in defense of the Church. Donohue has wisely recognized that Catholics have been targeted by a culture that loathes the very principles that have characterized the Church's two thousand-year history. Society's contemptuous disregard for Catholic sensitivities in art, theater, and film has reached epidemic proportions. Donohue has tirelessly sought to demonstrate the hypocrisy in modern society that can viciously attack the Catholic speck when it can not see the cinder block in its own collective eye. It behooves every faithful Catholic to put on the moral and intellectual armor of the Church militant, such as Donohue and fight them in every corner of the cultural arena — politics, the media, the pulpit, and the public square. If widespread Catholic complacency continues there will not be much of traditional Catholicism left in this country to conserve. *Birthmark Catholics* have a divine mandate to insure that the gates of Hell do not prevail against the Church in this country.

William A. Borst holds a Ph.D. from St. Louis University. (1972) He is a weekly talk show host on WGNU radio and the author of the book, "Liberalism: Fatal Consequences," available from PO Box 16271, St. Louis, MO 63105, for \$17.50 ppd. (BBPROF@aol.com)

Mindszenty Report Reprints

FATAL TAPESTRY—The new science of "eugenics" is traced from 1883 to today's moral distortions of God's creative powers into a man-made tapestry: egotism, pragmatism, violent death.

Ask for 1/04

A SAINT FOR ALL AGES—From Mother Teresa's early beginnings and her "call within a call" through her life, she served as a living witness to everything that Jesus came to proclaim.

Ask for 12/03

UNHOLY WATER—Editor and talk show host William A. Borst explores the "unholy water" of secular humanism in education and religion.

Ask for 11/03

1 copy	\$.50	100 copies	\$20.00
20 copies	\$5.00	500 copies	\$85.00
50 copies	\$11.00	1000 copies	\$160.00

CMF Conferences in 2004



You, your family and friends are invited to attend CMF's excellent Conferences on **FAITH, FAMILY, FREEDOM** as follows:

• DALLAS, TX—FEBRUARY 28

Hotel Inter-Continental
Chairman Carmen S. Glenn, tel. 214/459-4312
Hon. Chrm. Susan Heller Stanzel, tel. 214/521-8779



Speakers:

Phyllis Schlafly
The High Costs of Illegal Immigration
Rev. George W. Rutler
Superstition and Providence
Austin Ruse
UN Threats Against the Vatican
Robert R. Reilly
Operation Freedom Iraq

• CHICAGO/OAKBROOK, IL—MARCH 20

Drury Lane Oakbrook Terrace
Chairman Dorie Gruss, tel. 630/932-7796



Speakers:

Anne Applebaum
GULAG: What We Know
and Why It Matters
Robert R. Reilly
Operation Freedom Iraq
Panel Discussion
Culture of Life and the UN
Rev. James Gould
The Subculture that Threatens the Family
The Da Vinci Code

• ANAHEIM, CA—APRIL 24

Sheraton Anaheim Hotel
Chairman Marge DeClue, tel. 714/838-5289



Speakers:

James L. Hirszen
Tales from the Left Coast

The Mindszenty Report is published monthly by the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation, 7800 Bonhomme Ave., P.O. Box 11321, St. Louis, MO 63105, 314-727-6279, Fax 314-727-5897.
Subscription rate: \$20.00/year, \$36.00/two years. Outside the U.S.A. \$28.00

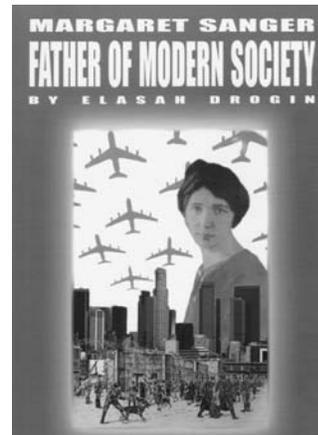
The Mindszenty Report is not copyrighted, and subscribers are invited to have it printed in their local newspapers.

Eleanor Schlafly, Publisher

web site: www.mindszenty.org / e-mail: info@mindszenty.org

Contributions to the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation are tax deductible as allowed by law.

MARGARET SANGER: FATHER OF MODERN SOCIETY



Margaret Sanger: Father of Modern Society by Elisah Drogin is the definitive book exposing the strange and dangerous philosophies of Margaret Sanger, founder of Planned Parenthood. Her cause was the international birth control movement to create a "breed of thoroughbreds" and to accomplish her vision through abortion, euthanasia and genocidal sterilization. Her impact on our contemporary world cannot be underestimated.

CMF has previously recommended this book and is pleased that the publisher, Catholics United for Life (CUL), has edited and reprinted a new edition. It is a valuable tool, especially during this election year when pro-life issues are in the forefront. Order from CMF: \$10.00 per book (includes postage and handling).

ROME, ITALY – October, 2004

GREETINGS FROM CMF COUNCIL FR. CHARLES REPOLE, O.E.M. CAP. OF YONKERS, NY WHO WAS IN ROME FOR THE POPE'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION AND FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF BLESSED MOTHER TERESA OF CALCUTTA.



Here is the astonishing photograph of Pope John Paul II greeting, Fr. Repole! Fr. Repole has celebrated 58 years as a priest including 19 years as a missionary in Nicaragua, serving the Miskito Indians. He traveled by horseback and canoe, slept on floors and in hammocks, sometimes went to bed hungry. "It was a divine adventure...any missionary could write a book." He did write a book: the first trilingual dictionary (Spanish, Miskito, English) in Nicaraguan history. When he returned to the U.S., he served as chaplain for 15 years at the Women's Prison on Rikers Island, East River, NY. Two of Mother Teresa's nuns helped him every Saturday; one day Mother Teresa visited the prison and Fr. received from her a medal which she unpinned from her habit for him. At 85 years young, Fr. Repole continues to conduct retreats and missions in Spanish throughout the U.S..