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The News Media And The American Mind

John Kenneth Weiskittel

Since it is human nature to be interested in the activities that shape one's world and since today's news-gathering methods have become so sophisticated that there is a glut of information available, we ought to be the most knowledgeable generation in history. In terms of the sheer quantity of data at our fingertips, this undoubtedly is true. One need only visit, say, a well-stocked newsstand to discover hundreds of different periodicals devoted to nearly every subject under the sun.

The problem arises, however, when we consider the *quality* of the media's output. In a bygone era journalists contented themselves with serving as "the eyes and ears of the common man"; today, they seem bound and determined to be the public's heart and soul as well. While pretending to bring the American people a fair and unbiased account of important news stories, most of those associated with the major media are subtly — and sometimes not so subtly — presenting propaganda pieces designed to advance an anti-American, anti-Christian agenda.

The leftist slant of the Establishment media has been assailed by many observers but these criticisms have yet to reach the majority of Americans. Why? (Do we *really* need to answer that?) A recent attack appears in the April 1990 issue of *New Dimensions* (hereafter abbreviated as *N.D.*), a magazine with the subtitle, *The Psychology Behind the News*. In its cover story, "America's Biased and Abusive News Media," *N.D.* asserts:

> . . . Through the evolution of a strange elitist attitude, the media has essentially concluded that the public cannot be trusted to "make the right decision" when presented with all the facts. The public cannot be trusted, that is, to reach the same conclusion that the liberally oriented, corporate media brass wants them to reach, without having critical information deleted or tampered with prior to presentation to the public.

Or to put it another way, if network news anchormen were made to "tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth," they would surely be found guilty of perjury.

But reporters will argue that they are merely engaging in "advocacy journalism." Translated, this means that they are deliberately tilting their articles to favor those policies that, they contend, will best serve the public good. Certainly there is nothing wrong with such advocacy per se; we at *The Athanasian* have always promoted that which advances the Kingship of Christ in both the religious and social spheres — and we have every intention of continuing to do so. There is, however, a vast difference between the two. To begin with, there is the obvious fact that the advancement by the popular media of such aims as abortion, "gay rights," continued aid to bloody Communist regimes, continued sanctions against South Africa and the establishment of a humanist New World Order cannot in any way be squared with the advancement of a Christ-centered social order. Beyond this there is the question of how the articles are presented to the reader. Anyone picking up a copy of *The Athanasian* will have no trouble discerning where we are "coming from," for our masthead proudly proclaims it to be "A publication of Traditional Catholics of America." Such is not the case with the secular media giants. The liberal "advocacy journalist" won't start an article by stating that he favors, say, abortion; rather, he will pose as the objective reporter whose only intention is to give you a balanced picture of the issue. By this deceitful ruse he succeeds in luring many an unsuspecting American into supporting such programs. How does he accomplish this? Read on.

Selling Lies

In modern business a good deal of stock is placed in the notion that in order to beat the competition one must win the advertising war. It is a sad but indisputable fact that an inferior product can sometimes get a lion's share of sales simply by virtue of a superior ad campaign. Consumers can be — and are — subconsciously drawn to commercials that appeal to a range of emotional *triggers*, such as sex, status, power, popularity, self-esteem, patriotism and civil responsibility. Major corporations employ the services of marketing specialists to see that their products are put before the buying public in the best possible light. So precise a science has it become that the successful marketing analyst is able to design ad campaigns tailored to target specific cross sections of the population.

But are political issues to be thought of as *products to be sold*? The liberal news media seems to think so. In *N.D.*'s study we read:

> On an ever-widening array of critical issues, the media has shown itself to be far more interested in skillfully packaging and marketing its favored political ideologies and programs — much as Madison Avenue

> packages and markets products and services — than with presenting all the facts. The resulting abuses of the public trust by the media are seriously impairing the abilities of Americans to make informed decisions, sending the nation into an information crisis.

The "packaging" of ideas or policies is a method favored in the political arena as well. A case in point is the continuing call for a Constitutional Convention. Richard Ward Fatherly, an award-winning radio announcer (*Billboard*, 1983), recorded an expose of this, "Constitutional Convention Con Game," earlier this year for the John Birch Society. In the tape he points out that, while many of the key promoters of a convention have expressed their desire to use such a gathering to totally revamp our nation's cornerstone, they do not openly proclaim such a goal to the American people. Instead, the public is told that the purpose is only to achieve a balanced Federal budget. But the balancing of the budget could be done without a convention. In truth, the budget, because it is a real concern to millions of Americans, is the bait being used to draw forth support for the real aim of Constitutional tampering.

Mr. Fatherly, in the course of his talk, mentioned a book he said is very popular among broadcasters and other media types, as well as among marketing specialists. *Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind* (McGraw-Hill, 1981), by Al Reese and Jack Trout, is worth citing here because it gives us greater insight into the theory behind media practices. In the following quote substitute "issue" for "product" and "public" for "prospect" to see more clearly the application of the principle to the media:

> Positioning is not what you do to a product; positioning is what you do to the mind of the prospect. That is, you *position* the product in the mind of the prospect.

But, you may ask, does this really have much of an impact? If you have to ask, then read what Reese and Trout write:

> Positioning is a concept so simple people have difficulty understanding how powerful it is. Adolf Hitler practiced it. So does Proctor & Gamble, as well as every successful politician.

And, as Mr. Fatherly notes, so too have the Socialists and Communists "built their tyrannies using techniques of positioning." (He reminds us that presidents have brought us increasingly powerful government *not* as Socialism or Fascism but behind such euphemistic slogans as the *New Deal*, the *Fair Deal*, and the *Great Society*.)

A Way With Words

From what we've seen so far, it would appear that the news media's use of positioning could make it as easy to sell Socialism as it is to sell soap. Surprisingly, the answer is that it is even *easier*. *N.D.*'s special report tells us:

> . . . this hybrid news/marketing sales technique is even more powerful than Madison Avenue's marketing approaches. In the retail world, the customer is still somewhat wary of the sophisticated sales techniques being used to "close" him on a given product or service. In watching the news, on the other hand, there is no apparent product or agenda to be sold. Therefore the news "consumer" lets down his guard, not realizing that the news report itself is a marketing presentation for a certain ideology and conclusion.

On its most basic level, this media strategy involves programs and personalities in the most attractive way while maligning all those who stand in opposition.

When the tactics of the enemy are better known, one is better able to defend oneself against attack. So the following "tricks of the trade" are offered to help our readers stay one jump ahead of the news twisters:

The Name Game: Just as politicians are able to call tax hikes "revenue enhancement" and the sellout of South Vietnam "peace with honor," so too do journalists invent or borrow a vocabulary best suited to reach their goal. In an exclusive interview with *The New American* (February 12, 1990), Joseph Farah, a former executive news editor for the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* and currently a syndicated columnist and editor of *Between the Lines*, a media and entertainment watchdog, states:

> . . . the careful selection of words and the framing of an argument are potent weapons in any debate. And the major media seems to have arrrived at the consensus that they are going to frame the abortion debate in favor of the pro-abortion crowd. That is why, invariably, when you see a story in the press or on television on abortion, the two opposing camps are referred to as "pro-choice" and "anti-abortion." This conscious decision to use the preferred term of one side — the pro-abortionist — and to refuse to use the preferred "pro-life" label of the other side skews the debate right from the start. (Farah goes on to cite a Media Research Center survey of evening news broadcasts by the three major networks and CNN over four months, a survey which revealed that the term "pro-choice" was used 97 percent of the time while the term "pro-life" was used only 21 percent. It will be recalled that the Lichter-Rothman survey of 238 of the most influential members of print and broadcast media showed 90 percent of them favoring abortion "rights.")

Other examples of this ruse abound. The media's slant on homosexual-related stories provides some examples. Mention of this detestable sin is usually couched in the very language favored by its practitioners: "gay" behavior is an acceptable "alternative lifestyle" of a "minority group"; it

must be defended against the "prejudice" and "discrimination" of "gay bashers" and others suffering from "homophobia" (Lichter-Rothman found that only 25 percent of the journalists believe homosexuality to be wrong and just 15 percent reject homosexual teachers in public schools. Lee Stinnett, Executive Director of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, describes himself as an "openly gay person." Since AIDS has become such a hot news item, reporters put themselves on the side of "safe sex" for the "sexually active" which, translated, means using means to avoid contracting the disease. This is doubly deceptive. Married couples may be sexually active with each other and, if faithful to the moral law, would be engaged in *morally* safe sex. But the secular media, lacking sound moral values, is really talking about the promiscuous attempting to avoid a deadly physical illness (never mind the more deadly spiritual one). A Communist ruler is never a "dictator" unless, of course, his name is Ceausescu — and, even then, only *after* his arrest and execution. Politicians whom the media admires, whether in the West or in the Soviet Union, are always "liberal," "reform" or "progressive" (occasionally a "moderate" will slip in), while the despised opposition is tagged "conservative," "reactionary" or "ultra-rightwing."

The Vanishing (F)act: In this tactic information vital to the reader disappears into a journalistic black hole before it has a chance to reach him. In previous issues we've shown such to be the case in the media's coverage of the careers of public figures such as Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mikhail Gorbachev. King had a long and undeniable record of close associations with Communists (he ignored President John Kennedy's demand that he sever such ties). If the President of the United States knew about King's subversive friends; if the Attorney General and the F.B.I. knew of them, why didn't the American people know? Simply because they *weren't told*. The media coverup continued after King's death and was a decisive factor in the successful push for a national holiday. Gorbachev, when not in front of the Western media's adoring cameras, has made it clear that he is a devoted follower of Lenin, whose reforms seek not the end of Communism but its strengthening on the road to eventual world domination. Such information is readily available to journalists from such sources as the English language edition of *Pravda* and yet, as was the case with King, only the relatively few Americans who read conservative publications are aware of Gorbachev's real motives. For the rest, Gorbachev (*Time*'s "Man of the Decade") is the hero who presides over the "freedom movement" and the "death of Communism" in Eastern Europe.

Now the media's golden boy is Nelson Mandela and, as usual, the memory hold is already in place. Earlier this year it became evident that unrelenting pressure from the United States and Great Britain was forcing South Africa's President F. W. De Klerk to free Mandela, the "anti-apartheid" leader of the African National Congress (ANC) who had served 27 years of a life sentence for sedition. Anticipating his release, the February 5th issue of *Time* featured a smiling portrait of him on its cover with the caption, "Mandela: Free At Last?". Inside, a feature extolled him as "the aged black revolutionary now endowed with almost mythic stature" who is "expected to lead South Africa to salvation." Two weeks later, after his release had taken place, Mandela was lionized by *Newsweek* in its February 19th issue. The cover headline read "Free! Breakthrough in South Africa" and was dominated by a photo of the still defiant ANC leader, his arm raised in a clinched fist "anti-apartheid" salute (known to us "paranoid" conservatives as the *Communist* salute). The connections between the ANC and the South African Communist Party are a matter of record. The Winter 1990 issue of the authoritative *McAlvany Intelligence Advisor* featured a special report, "Toward a Soviet South Africa: Plunging Down the Slippery Slope of Surrender," in which we read:

> Nelson Mandela joined the ANC in 1944 and became one of the top leaders in the ANC and the South African Communist Party over the next 18 years. He was jailed for terrorism in 1963. He and his fellow ANC/SACP saboteurs were caught red-handed with: 48,000 Soviet-made anti-personnel mines and 210,000 hand grenades and documents, showing proof of the involvement of Moscow, Algeria, China, Czechoslovakia and East Germany in financing and backing a Communist revolution in South Africa. It is often forgotten that Mandela admitted his guilt, was convicted after a free and fair trial, was sentenced to life imprisonment, along with 7 other revolutionaries, and no human rights organization has ever regarded him as a political prisoner.

This report goes on to show that evidence submitted at the trial included a 62-page document in Mandela's handwriting, "How to be a Good Communist," which cited as South Africa's model "(t)he victory of Socialism in the USSR" and other Communist countries and promised that, "(u)nder a Communist Party government, South Africa will become a land of milk and honey." Upon his release, on February 11, Nelson Mandela showed no signs of a prison conversion; rather, he urged continuation of armed conflict, intensified sanctions and release of all political prisoners. Standing in front of a Soviet flag in Cape Town, he said, "I salute the South African Communist Party for its steady contribution to the struggle for democracy," and was "heartened by the fact that the alliance between ourselves and the Party remains as strong as it always was." None of

this appeared on jubilant television reports following his release or in similar articles in the leftwing Establishment newspapers. (This premeditated noncoverage of the Red control of the "anti-apartheid" movement is one of the reasons why, in years past, the South African government was forced to muzzle American reporters.) *Time*'s issue made no reference at all to the matter (aside from a vague mention of "socialist rhetoric") while *Newsweek* brushed away concerns by stating: "From the beginning Mandela has been an African nationalist, not a Communist as his Afrikaner enemies have so often charged." Here we see the name game employed as well, much in the manner that the mass media in the 1940's insisted that Mao Tse-Tung was not a Communist but an "agrarian reformer" and, in the 1950's, assured us that Fidel Castro wasn't a Red but the Cuban version of George Washington. And so it is with Nelson Mandela: a violent revolutionary is foisted on us as an inspirational leader (while moderate black leaders are ignored) and, sadly, pushed on South Africa as its next president.

(Because the survival of South Africa — with its vital strategic minerals and equally important sea lane to Middle East oil — is crucial to the survival of America, we feel it advisable to part from our usual practice of avoiding endorsements and we encourage our readers to order one or more copies of the excellent McAlvany 20-page report from which I have quoted. The cost is $1.00 per copy, plus postage. Orders may be placed by phoning 800-525-9556 or, in Colorado, 303-758-8536.)

Either/Or: This method of deception is less easy to document — though it is every bit as prevalent as the others — simply because it tends to be the end product of the rest of the propagandizing. The "either/or" trap is the framing of an issue according to the manner it is depicted in the news media. Generally, then, we're talking here about how the minds of those who rely solely on the mass media become reshaped into something resembling what they've seen, heard or read. The terms set down by the media become the rules in this game. Suppose, for example, that an associate asks you what you did to celebrate Earth Day. Nothing, you reply, explaining that you have serious problems accepting a day that has New Age and New World Order links (not to mention the fact that it happens to fall on Lenin's birthday). "Oh," he responds, "so you *don't care* if we have a clean environment?" This comes out sounding more like an accusation than a question. Put simply, his response comes down to this: *either* you accept the media-hyped Earth Day, no matter how radical its proposals, *or* you are an enemy of conservation. It makes no difference to those adopting this line that you *do care* about the quality of life since they have been conditioned to see only two sides to every issue. Similarly, anyone who raises questions about King's pro-Communist activities and affiliations risks the "racist" label. This type of argumentation turns on the kind of half-truths at which the media are past masters. King used the legitimate aspirations of black Americans to further his radical aims. White racists, who resented advancement by blacks, attacked King. All of this is true. What isn't true, however, is that race is the *only* ground on which King may be attacked or that to attack him is to attack blacks. Today, to question Mandela and the ANC will prompt charges of being pro-apartheid. Questioning how the AIDS issue has become politicized leads to being accused of hating "gays" and wishing to see them dead.

The "either/or" mentality is, of course, not absent in the newsroom. Cynthia Grenier, a former *New York Times* reporter and a contributor to the *Wall Street Journal*, exposed an example of this in her article, "Self-Appointed Guardians of the Nation's Virtue," in the December, 1986 issue of *The World & I* magazine. Reports of "necklacing," the ANC-sponsored practice of executing moderate black South Africans by placing a gasoline-filled automobile tire around the victim's neck and igniting it, have been extremely rare in the media. Grenier mentions an exception which took place while she worked for the *Times*. The piece was done in 1986 by Alan Cowell, who reported that hundreds of deaths had resulted from this "black-on-black" violence in the preceding two years. But, Grenier notes, "Being in apparent sympathy with this singularly barbarous practice, Cowell devoted seven paragraphs to statements by defenders of 'necklacing,' thus justifying this kind of savagery." For those with the "either/or" mind there can be no question of human rights violations when it comes to the ANC; they are held up as the liberators of their people and can do no wrong. What is particularly frightening about this tactic is that it breeds a kind of totalitarian thinking. All facts are thoroughly laundered before reaching the people and then only opinions conforming to the "party line" will be tolerated.

Button-pushing: Although the media seeks to reprogram the minds of Americans to accept the tenets of liberalism, there are times it is found advantageous to bypass rational considerations altogether. This is done by "pushing buttons," pop psychology slang for producing emotional responses. How is this used in the media? Returning to *N.D.*'s report, we read:

> Because the overwhelming statistical and empirical evidence on gun control is diametrically opposed to the media's predominant bias, the media resorts to emotion-based appeals rather than logic and facts to persuade the public. This is the same strategy that Madison Avenue uses to sell a product that people don't need. Where there's little substantive fact, use emotion.

Television is the most powerful "button-pusher." Take the January, 1989, killing of five children at a California playground. Is there any heart so hard that it remains unmoved as the camera zooms in on the lifeless little bodies and as the microphone picks up the wails of grief and mourning? Now the picture switches abruptly to the murder weapon and the reporter informs us that it is a high-powered military assault gun. Little emphasis is placed on the

perpetrator's long arrest record or on the fact that he could not legally own the weapon. Neither is the focus on the judicial system that routinely sets dangerous criminals back on the street. The newscast, monitored by *N.D.*, continued with "a tearful plea to ban guns from Sarah Brady, head of Handgun Control, Inc., and wife of James Brady, former President Reagan's press secretary who was shot in the head during the assassination attempt on the President." And, as if to wring the last ounce of pain from the tragedy, interviews were made of families of the felled students. The effect, of course, is overwhelming (as the shameless network intended it to be). As *N.D.* put it, "Their (the families') pain becomes our pain. We identify with their sentiments." And so it was throughout the media. For several months following the shootings, the journalistic establishment and their liberal Congressional cohorts made the control of semiautomatic weapons the center of a high-pitched hysteria campaign. On July 17th, *Time* featured a 28-page cover story, "Death by Gun," profiling 464 Americans who were killed by firearms during one week in May. *N.D.* made this observation:

> . . . The emotional impact on the reader of seeing and reading about these violent deaths is powerful. However, the article neglected to mention the estimated 19,230 Americans who were not injured or killed by criminal attack during that week, and every other week in the U.S., because they were able to protect themselves with firearms . . . Whether *Time* favors gun control or not, it has the professional obligation to report all the facts, not to emotionally manipulate the public with partial information into coming to *Time*'s conclusion.

It is to the credit of *Time* readers that a vast number of them saw through its tricks and bombarded the editor's desk with an unprecedented volume of protest mail. But *Time* refused to budge. Instead, it shifted gears and switched to the "either/or" ploy. Concerned readers received a form letter that read: "The time for opinions on the dangers of gun availability is long since gone, replaced by overwhelming evidence that it represents a growing threat to public safety." (The exact opposite is true for, as *N.D.* points out, "There are currently over 20,000 gun control laws in the U.S., and . . . every objective study has shown that they do not reduce crime.") Other examples of "button-pushing" may be seen in such areas as exploiting the plight of the homeless to demand more Federal housing or showing footage of South African police beating demonstrators to promote Mandela's ANC (no film, however, of "necklacings"). Oh, yes, and does it *work*? Well, consider: few remember the name of the child killer (Patrick Purdy) but the fact that he used an AK-47 assault rifle to commit the crime is common knowledge!

There are other media tricks we could consider. *Spiking* (rejecting) news stories that don't fit the liberal mindset or burying such articles deep within a newspaper so they will be seen by the reader as being less important. *The Numbers Game*: Increasing the alleged size of, say, a pro-abortion rally while decreasing the number of people attending a pro-life rally. Or claiming Americans overwhelmingly support abortion by slanting a piece on a survey that shows a majority of those polled being against abortion on demand and only for it when there has been rape, incest or health risk. *Counterfeit Conservatives*: The prime offender in this self-explanatory heading is William F. Buckley, Jr. Although a member of the One World-promoting secret society, the Council on Foreign Relations, Buckley continues to pose as a conservative and even a devout Catholic. Yet, the December 22, 1989 issue of his magazine, *National Review*, carried an article by contributing editor Ernest van den Haag that not only defended the Supreme Court's pro-contraception decision (Griswold v. Connecticut) but advocated that states allow use of the French abortion pill, RU-486. Whatever the trick used, the goal is the same: destroy the traditional values of the American people to make way for the new "ethics" of the liberal's global utopia.

Selling Out America

The preceding study is only a sample of the ways our mass news media consistently fails to live up to its journalistic responsibilities. It is an unfortunate reality that the majority in that media vested with those responsibilities show themselves at every turn to be worldly and irreligious swindlers of the public trust.

Are we talking of a conspiracy here? Certainly there are media critics who suggest that the liberal reporters only *happen* to think alike and that there is no *conscious* attempt on their part to *plot* the distortion of the news. This may be true up to a point but, once we get to the level of editorial board rooms where the hiring and firing is done, the idea of a deliberate course of action seems inescapable.

There can be no question, however, as to whether the media conspires to keep vital facts from the people on the subject of Communism. When Pope Pius XI wrote more than 50 years ago, in his encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*, of the "conspiracy of silence" of the Western press on the atrocities of Communists, he could just as readily be addressing the current situation. Let us not be deceived by the so-called collapse of Communism. Our nation is in graver danger today than ever before and if, God forbid, we fail to this satanic menace, then a large share of the blame will go — along with the equally disreputable political clique now lording over us — to the men and women of the controlled news media who have made their reputations by regularly coming down against the side of the angels. May God forgive them! †

Unless The Truth Prevail . . .

Fr. Francis E. Fenton

The mind or intellect is a part of the standard equipment of every human being created by God and, together with the will, distinguishes man in the natural order from the brute animal. From this it follows that every person in his right mind has the obligation to employ this God-given faculty for its proper end, namely, the pursuit and possession of truth — primarily, divine or revealed truth. The first and foremost purpose of the human mind is to know God, the Ultimate Truth. And, since all truth derives from God and has its origin in Him, it is the duty of man diligently to engage himself in the pursuit and attainment of truth and to abhor falsehood in whatever form.

And so it is that we Roman Catholics have the duty, first, to know our Faith to the best of our ability and, in addition, to strive to become as rightly and well informed as we reasonably can on matters of importance, to make a sincere and persistent effort to seek out the truth on the vital issues of our day. There is no question but that the lack of knowledge, the ignorance of truth on the part of multitudes of good people is a major reason for the grossly immoral and exceedingly chaotic current state of affairs — a steadily deteriorating condition which, if it continues its present course, will surely result in the enslavement of this nation to the godless tyranny of the masters of the One World Order. If only enough of those good people had known what was and is in store for them, if only they had known the awful truth over the years of the sinister plans and workings of satanic powers towards their subjugation, how different the picture might be today from that of the dismal future that now confronts them.

Ignorance, then, is one of the root causes for the present degenerate condition of the USA in nearly every sphere of human activity, abysmal ignorance of truth on a rampant scale on the part of a vast majority of the rank and file of the citizens of this country — and this ignorance continues despite the persistent efforts of conscientious and knowledgeable individuals effectively to counteract and to dispel it. The generality of people (again, I refer to the good, the sincere, the well-meaning, not the immoral, the riffraff) are the victims of massive and subtle deception emanating primarily from the mass media and from their lying and hypocritical alleged leaders in religion and civil government — and it seems impossible to get through to such people with the truth on even the most fundamental issues of our day (Communism, Socialism, the New Age Movement, the National Education Association, the One World Order, Gorbachev, Bush, John Paul II, etc., etc.).

So far advanced now is the spiritual and moral destruction of the USA that the chances of its survival seem slim indeed. Perhaps the point of no return has already been reached. In any case, if America goes down, assuredly one of the principal causes of that tragedy will have been the lack of knowledge, the ignorance of multitudes of the American people who neglected or refused to face up to the truth and who consistently rejected the efforts of their concerned and informed fellow citizens to alert them to the impending dangers. "Therefore is my people led away captive because they had not knowledge . . ." (Isaias, 5, 13) How truly may these words of the prophet Isaias apply in the days ahead to the people of this nation who, for whatever reason, remained deaf to the truth until it was too late.

But, even though the hour is very late, is it possible that enough of the stark truth can still be gotten to enough of the good and honorable (but uninformed) citizens of this nation so as to turn the tide and to save the USA from the catastrophe that presently appears will quite surely materialize? Is it possible? Yes. While, in my opinion there is little likelihood of this, yet its possibility cannot be discounted. One thing's for sure, unless the truth prevail in time, in vain is any hope for victory. It is imperative, then, that those knowledgeable and conscientious men and women, who have labored so hard and so long to disseminate the truth to their fellowmen, continue their valiant efforts with zeal and determination and that they reject pronto all temptation to discouragement or despair. A thought which one of our newsletter subscribers expressed to me some time back is worth noting here: When, please God, we will one day appear before Him to render an account of our stewardship, He is not likely to ask us what results we achieved from our efforts or what we have to show for them — but, rather, how hard did we try. In other words, before Him it is the intention and the dedication that counts. So, where there's life, there's hope. This is God's world and, despite any and all appearances to the contrary, He is still in charge. "Even to the death fight for truth . . ." (Ecclesiasticus 4, 28) †

"The unholy trinity":

George Bush
Mikhail Gorbachev
John Paul II

Through Christ Our Lord

Of the literally billions of people who have inhabited the earth since the dawn of human history, one Person stands out above all others. No one ever spoke as He spoke; no one ever made, and incontrovertibly confirmed with miracles, the claims which He made; no one, before Him or since, has left a more indelible mark upon the world; no one has had a more profound effect upon the lives of multitudes over the last nineteen-and-one-half centuries. Although most of His life was lived in relative obscurity and although He was put to death in the manner of a common criminal of those days, His was the greatest life ever lived, and His death the most significant single event in the history of the world.

That Person, we know, was Jesus Christ Whom we believe to be God as well as Man, the Word Incarnate, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity in human form. Indeed, the entirety of the Faith we profess stands or falls upon this belief of ours, the divinity of Jesus Christ. Though He be the greatest Man Who ever trod this earth, though He taught the most beautiful and sublime doctrine the world has ever heard, though His life and teachings exerted an unparalleled, a unique influence upon the human race, yet, if Christ be not God, our Faith is devoid of its very foundation and the Roman Catholic Church is essentially no different from the many hundreds of other religious bodies around the world. But we believe and we know that Christ was and is God and we worship and adore Him as such. As a matter of fact, so strong, so unshakable is our belief in this most fundamental truth of our Faith that, with the grace of God, we would readily sacrifice life itself rather than deny it.

Further, as Catholics we believe that God became incarnate in the Person of His divine Son, and like unto us in all things but sin, in order to atone for the sins of the world and to reopen for man the gates of Heaven. By His life, passion and death the Son of God acquired or regained for us the indispensable means to attain Heaven which had been lost through original sin. Through His teachings He showed us the path we must follow — what we must believe and how we must live — in order one day to realize the ultimate purpose for which we were created: the perfect happiness of Heaven, eternal union with God, the Beatific Vision.

It follows, then, that the only sensible, reasonable way for man to live his earthly life is with an eye ever on eternity, to be ever aware that the supreme goal of his sojourn on this earth is the glorious Kingdom of Heaven and, hence, to live accordingly. If one succeeds in attaining that goal, his life has been a crowning success; if one fails in this, his life has been an utter, total irredeemable failure. †

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Examine Your Conscience

Fr. Oswald Baker (England)

The least popular of the seven Sacraments is confession. The more distasteful we find the process of going to confession, the more profitable and the more necessary it is likely to be. Confession satisfies a deep-rooted human need. No treatment can be more necessary to us, for this life and the next, than to cleanse the soul of any guilt of sin.

To acknowledge any wilful moral offense on our part is essential to a normal, healthy relation with self, with nature, with our fellowmen and with God. Suppression of the voice of conscience or disregard for moral right and wrong in order to permit untrammelled self-indulgence, this is undoubtedly one of the principal causes of present-day mental disorders. Such disorders have increased so steeply that one half of England's hospital patients are mental cases. The increase is bigger in the USA. The population of the USA is seven times higher than it was about a century ago but the number of mental patients in its institutions is more than two hundred times higher.

Many mental cases are treated by psychoanalysis, the practice of mental exploration and bringing to the level of consciousness what is submerged in the unconscious. This is a treatment which the Church readily admits can be necessary and useful at times. But it can never be a substitute for one's own examination of conscience which enables us to see self, not as we are in our own eyes (with our customary conceited illusions), not as our associates see us, but as God sees us, that is, as we really are.

There can be no doubt that in a high proportion of mental cases patients would be cured more quickly on their knees than on their backs. Examination of conscience, with confession, prevents sins from seeping into the unconscious and degenerating into melancholy, neuroses, or psychoses. Confession gives us an increase in self-knowledge, perfects us in humility, facilitates a more sympathetic understanding of the failings of others, and strengthens our will, thereby increasing our self-control. If we make a thorough, honest and enlightened examination of conscience, we shall probably discover that our inner self is not very lovable. But we shall not be despondent if we concentrate, not on loathing self but on loving God; if we see sin, not as breaking a law but as breaking our relationship with God; if we feel sorrow, not because a law has been violated but because love has been wounded. Then the practice of confession will never induce despair but always hope. It still may not be pleasant or easy to go into the confessional — but it will be a wonderful feeling to come out. †

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