

**The Sleepers Awake**  
*by B.R. Strahan*

When we awoke from this dream  
we found every thing changed.  
Not one color or name  
that we knew remained.

All the trees had turned to stone,  
while every stone grew tongues to speak.  
And each thing we heard was wonderful  
and terrible, and beyond bearing.

So we laid ourselves down once more  
In hopes of a better awakening.

**Quatrains for a New Year**  
*by B.R. Strahan*

I

Roll up the map  
and put the clocks to sleep.  
Send the hunchback home  
and close the cathedral up.

II

No symphony so round or slow  
as steps go marching here.  
The long face of the year  
rounds on us and lays us low.

III

We snatch at sleep,  
hoping for forgetfulness.  
Harms we did lie folded away  
like old letters in a box.

IV

Now we are ships clawing off  
the rocks we stormed to reach.  
On the beach the Sirens  
have turned Harpy.

V

Another actor shuffles off  
leaving us to examine  
the stuck rhyme of our days,  
the unlive*d* lives.

# *Ecrasez L'infame*

## The Persistence of Christophobia

by Tom Piatak

Imagine a magazine that argued that the central symbol of Judaism was inextricably bound up with monstrous evil, claimed Judaism's holy writings were lies, criticized what Jews believe and demanded they change their beliefs, attacked Judaism's most important holidays, asserted that Judaism was directly responsible for one of the most horrific slaughters in history—and declared that anyone who questioned Judaism's responsibility for that great crime was a liar or a bigot. An impartial observer would be forced to conclude that such a magazine harbored an animus against Judaism.

It is difficult to imagine such a magazine even existing in the United States, much less garnering any respect or prominence. If one substitutes *Christianity* for *Judaism* in the preceding paragraph, however, he will have to admit that there are magazines that publish all those arguments. Indeed, they are among our most prominent and respected journals of opinion: the *New Republic* (the fountainhead of neoliberalism) and *Commentary* (the fountainhead of neoconservatism).

Examples of Christophobia may be found in many other precincts of opinion journalism. Just before Christmas, in a column criticizing Episcopalians intent on maintaining orthodox Christian teaching on homosexuality, the *Washington Post's* Harold Meyersohn attacked "the Catholic Church's inimitable backwardness." *Slate* has observed Christmas by describing the Gospel accounts of the Nativity as "legendary, contradictory, and ahistorical"; enumerating such "perennial yuletide joys" as "harried trips to mobbed shopping malls, wasteful spending on pointless presents, spikes in depressive and suicidal feelings"; and prominently featuring a column by Christopher Hitchens describing Christmas as "vile and insufferable." There probably is no more zealous Christophobe in opinion journalism than Hitchens, who remains faithful to the Bolshevik ideal precisely because the Bolsheviks were so good at killing Christians. As Hitchens told PBS, "one of Lenin's great achievements . . . is to create a secular Russia. The power of the Russian Orthodox Church, which was an absolute warren of backwardness and evil and superstition, is probably never going to recover from what he did to it."

Precisely because of their intellectual prominence, there is no denying the important contributions to Christophobia made by *Commentary* and the *New Republic*, especially the latter. Indeed, even as *Commentary* has begun to tone down its Christophobia in recent years, the *New Republic* has gone in the opposite direction, enthusiastically spearheading the campaign to censor Mel Gibson's *Passion of the Christ*—which was, in essence, an attempt to censor the public expression of Christian beliefs—and observing Christmas this year by republishing on its website economist James Henry's 1990 essay

"Why I Hate Christmas," which argued for "an experimental two- to three-year moratorium on the whole affair." And the *New Republic's* owner, Marty Peretz, just cannot seem to restrain himself. On October 9, 2006, he published an online essay attacking Norman Finkelstein, which, because Finkelstein is a professor at DePaul, also included Peretz's claim that all Catholic colleges are mediocre, his observation that fascism was "a recognizable Catholic tradition," and his assertion that the Catholic Church was complicit in the holocaust. Characteristically, Peretz began this offensive column by stating, "Please, I don't mean to offend anyone."

The claim that the Catholic Church was complicit in the holocaust is perhaps the cornerstone of contemporary Christophobia. Indeed, it has become a commonplace in our culture. As Sir Martin Gilbert observed in an essay in the July/August 2006 *American Spectator*,

That the Pope and the Vatican were either silent bystanders, or even active collaborators in Hitler's diabolical plan—and "rabidly anti-Semitic" . . . has become something of a truism in Jewish educational circles, and a powerful, emotional assertion made by American-Jewish writers, lecturers, and educators.

There is reason to believe that the KGB was responsible for these smears. A high-ranking defector from Rumanian intelligence, Lt. Gen. Ion Pacepa, recently alleged that Rolf Hochhuth's play *The Deputy*, which first popularized these charges against Pius XII, was part of a KGB plot to discredit the wartime pontiff and the Catholic Church.

If the KGB wanted to blame Christianity for the holocaust, it was hardly alone. In the early 1980's, *Commentary* printed essays by Henryk Grynberg, Ruth Wisse, and Hyam Maccoby arguing that "The plain fact [is] that the Holocaust was prepared and caused by Christian anti-Semitism" and that "The delegitimation of the Jews has become one of Christianity's most lasting legacies in the modern world." The most radical of these essays was Maccoby's, which argued that "the Nazi episode" was part of "an unbroken historical connection in Christendom," that "the metaphysical hatred of Jews" was "endemic in Christendom," and that the antisemitism in Christianity derives "from its central doctrine and myth, the crucifixion itself." Maccoby thus became one of the first (if not the first) of many writers to blame the Cross for the swastika.

Maccoby even blamed Islamic antisemitism on Christianity: "It is true that in recent years Muslims, out of political motives, have begun to demonize Jews, but in doing so they have had to draw their material from Christian sources." Similar arguments have been made by the historian Bernard Lewis and the Anti-Defamation League's Abe Foxman, who has claimed that

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