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Church, the Press and Abortion:

Catholic Leadership and Public Communication

by

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THE CHURCH, THE PRESS AND ABORTION:
Catholic Leadership and Public Communication

INTRODUCTION

The abortion issue currently exercising the minds and emotions of many Americans is one of the more disturbing moral and political questions of recent U.S. history. This paper addresses the interrelationship of the Catholic Church and the news media in this debate. It is the story of three Catholic bishops, their dioceses and the journalists who cover religious and moral issues in the various media. I will examine how these religious leaders frame their moral teachings for the pulpit and the press. At the same time, I will study the ways in which the media present religious and moral issues in the news. We will see that the interaction of church and media has produced a third dimension—that of theology and politics in the public sphere.

There are a million and a half abortions yearly, and abortion vexes us as a society and polity. It is a subject complex in itself. What makes it even more complex is the extent to which it becomes a political issue and impacts on the lives and careers of churchmen and candidates for public office alike. Clearly, the task of reporting about politically explosive moral and ethical matters is not easy. David Shaw of the *Los Angeles Times* concluded his four-part series "Abortion and the Media" with a quote from *Boston Globe* reporter Eileen McNamara. She says:

> At base, abortion isn't about politics, and it isn't about the law....It's about philosophy and it's about morality and it's about your world view, and newspapers are ill-equipped to deal with those issues.[1]

Indeed, newspapers and journalists have always had a difficult time when pondering the place of religious beliefs and personal morality in the news. To my mind, news about abortion, like news accounts of televangelism, Moslem fundamentalism, liberation movements in Central America or South Africa, the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe and the Civic Forum requires stronger connection to the intellectual, theological and philosophical currents of our time.

Essentially, I am writing an example of media criticism. But it is also about theology and church leadership in a mass-mediated age. My goal is that of explaining the church to the press and, conversely, explaining the press to the church. In effect, both church and press represent competing discourses of communication and definitions of community. It has been my experience that, at times, these two great institutions, both protected under the First Amendment, either subtly deny the existence of the other or harbor historic suspicions toward the other. And, isn't it ironic that both the church and press, so identified with the public debate over abortion, have serious problems of credibility with major portions of their constituents?

In this paper, I will consider key aspects of the press coverage of abortion in the United States and the roles of three Roman Catholic ordinaries of major Catholic archdioceses, Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin of Chicago, Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York and Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland, O.S.B., of Milwaukee. Each give voice to particular themes in the abortion debate from which to examine the church and the press. Bernardin has remained the centrist among the American hierarchy and author of the "consistent ethic of life" approach in matters of public morality. O'Connor, the most vocal politically, has positioned himself as the leader of the church's "pro-life" wing. And Weakland, often perceived as a liberal among the Catholic hierarchy, has expressed his concerns about abortion and sexual morality in a series of public meetings with women in his diocese which resulted in recent criticism from Vatican officials.

In writing about Bernardin, O'Connor and Weakland, I find that as public persons, they use the media differently. Further, I maintain that within American Roman Catholicism there are distinct and sometimes conflicting cultural voices: organizational, political and intellectual. Often, these forms of cultural Catholicism influence the tone, perception and presentation of abortion as a moral concern, and affect subsequent press and television coverage. I am not saying that Bernardin, O'Connor and Weakland disagree on the church's moral teaching about abortion. Rather, I will argue that their individual presentation or style of communication does affect how this teaching is understood.

I limit my study to the period of time since the U.S. Supreme Court decision of *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* in July of 1989. My intention is to come to understand how bishops function as moral leaders in their religious and civic communities. I will consider

factors of personality and leadership skill, focusing on their cultural or "ecological" relationship to the mass media of press, radio and television. My primary consideration will be how the press and television report about them, and their teachings on abortion.

I am grateful for the opportunity to interview Cardinal Bernardin, Cardinal O'Connor and Archbishop Weakland as well as for the kind assistance of their respective diocesan staffs. During the past several months, I have talked to over forty reporters, editors, advocates on the various sides of the abortion dilemma, moral theologians and philosophers. The interviews form the substance of this paper. I want to thank especially Professor Marvin Kalb and colleagues at the Joan Shorenstein Barone Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, the John F. Kennedy School of Government, and Harvard University who have provided me the opportunity to learn about and find a voice in this national debate.

CHURCH AND PRESS IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

At first glance, the church and press represent an odd mixture—one dedicated to faith, the other grounded in skepticism. Often professional journalists and church leaders represent strikingly different perspectives. Uncomfortable though they may be toward each other, together they share a common "public culture." Sunday after Sunday, parishioners leave the sacred space of the church, and walk to the corner store for the Sunday edition of the newspaper, or turn on the car radio for the latest news reports. Appearances notwithstanding, neither church nor press is a monolith; both are richly complex fields for inquiry.

If there is a history that connects the church and press in the United States, it is largely unwritten. To breathe life into this vacuum of historical memory, David Paul Nord in a recent issue of the *Journal of American History* (June, 1990) reminds us of the seventeenth-century religious roots of American journalism. He argues that all four defining elements of news, namely *occurrence, current, public,* and *reporting* were shaped by religious belief, and were public in purpose and importance, and manifestly accessible to people.[2]

One can illustrate the close relationship of religion and journalism in the public sphere well until the Civil War. Consider, for example, Lincoln's use of biblical language and religious imagery in speeches and public pronouncements. After all, America was essentially a Protestant religious culture. However, by the late nineteenth century, immigration produced social changes posing a myriad of new and unexpected problems for the American religious consensus. The influx of the alien religious faiths of Judaism and Catholicism, along with a public culture that included the establishment of the mass circulation press, stimulated the growth of a far more diverse society. In his account of the rise of modern city culture, *City People* (1980), Gunther Barth suggests that the new type of newspapers represented a dramatic shift in public values whereby the editor replaced the minister as the conscience of the community.[3]

When assessing the connection between church and press one must weigh complex variables such as the privatization of the family and its religious practice as well as the secularization of the public culture in the twentieth-century. How to read accurately church and press, and their relationship to the institutions of American social and political culture such as family, work, education and health care is a difficult task.

American culture itself is multi-discursive. There are many levels of discourse in our culture(s). And, according to Robert Bellah in *Habits of the Heart* (1986), therein lies the major source of our problem, namely, the failure of our American tradition to provide us with a coherent language of moral discourse.[4]

Among the more disturbing features of contemporary life may be the inability to talk about abortion, and issues of public morality, in a language that could transcend "radical individualism," and foster what Benjamin Barber calls "strong democracy."[5] This desire for the revival of a strong civic culture may involve a kind of social transformation of politics and special interests unpopular to both the Left and the Right.[6]

Among the most precise statements concerning religion and public life is Richard McBrien's *Caesar's Coin* (1987). In that book, the Notre Dame theologian observes:

> Morality and politics inevitably mix. Both are concerned with justice, peace, human dignity, and the common good. The question is always: *whose* morality, and *by what process* are moral values incorporated by the political community (at what point do they become part of the *public morality*)? Only through public consensus can certain moral values become part of the public morality. Public consensus, in

> turn, is achieved through public dialogue and public argument.[7]

Here one begins to see the connection and the distinction between the church and the press. Churches, synagogues and various religious denominations provide particular visions of the good. Historically religious organizations have often inspired and championed moral and political causes such as the abolition movement and the civil rights movement. In the case of the Roman Catholic Church's stand on abortion, the American bishops have in effect taken on the role of "advocate" or "political player" to persuade citizens about restricting abortions. Thus the perception in the United States is that its laws are rooted in a moral vision.

Where churches, religious groups or political organizations (e.g., Planned Parenthood, the National Rifle Association) forward a particular institutional position, *ideally* the press does not have an institutional position as such. The press makes no claims to a special moral authority. Instead of seeking constituents, newspapers, television and radio news pursue readership or audience whose responsibility is to make their own decisions.

Consequently the press in America has traditionally informed and shaped the political process so dependent upon public dialogue and argument in the so-called "marketplace of ideas." It is in the interest of the democracy and its citizens to stimulate discussion of matters of public concern. Ultimately, the relationship between church and press rests upon the First Amendment, the most distinctly American provision of the law of the land.[8]

In the current standoff over abortion, where conversations often result in "rhetorical gridlock," can the church and press become forum for a healthy and productive conversation about civic virtue? Is there such a role for the church and press in promoting civil discourse and participation? Could such a dialogue over public morality strengthen our democracy? Or, should issues of morality best be kept to a more private realm? In the omnipresent "media state," so central to our lives, can there be a "private realm"?

I don't presume to answer all of these questions. However, I believe that the abortion dilemma might provide an avenue for considering the relationship between the church and press. In an essay, "The Mass News Media" (1989), sociologist Jeffrey Alexander provides a key methodological insight, namely that "the relevant question is not that of primary groups [i.e. the church] versus the mass media but rather the specific function performed by the mass media vis-a-vis primary groups, secondary institutions, and ongoing social events."[9]

In April, 1990, the American bishops hired a leading public relations firm, Hill and Knowlton, to advise them on a forthcoming anti-abortion campaign. Despite the initial furor over this, the motives that brought the bishops to hire professional media counsel simply acknowledged what many insiders have long desired. Namely, church leaders must consider how the church communicates publicly about abortion and a range of other internal and external issues. This implies a recognition of the curious phenomenon that the "world" includes Catholics who largely get their religious news from the secular media of press, television and radio. Even if church leaders wished to deny the existence of the media, the fact is that the church's teachings, or the pope's actions and policies may be bound to perceptions created in large measure by the media. The church cannot escape this aspect of modernity.

Nonetheless, I would have to acknowledge there are genuine historic tensions between the church and press. Commenting on this point, former U.S. Senator Eugene McCarthy writes:

> While both the biology and theology of abortion are difficult to parse, one thing is clear: the ultimate struggle is not between the Roman Catholic Church and public officials, but between the church and the press....In our time, the religious estate has been losing its power in Western culture....Some of these powers have been picked up by the state, and some by the press print and electronic which is well on its way to becoming a secular substitute for the first estate, religion.[10]

Such insights, if accurate, help to explain why the church's teachers and leaders are having such a difficult time having important positions taken seriously by many people. Tensions between church and press may be another example of the competing discourses inherent within post-modern society. Consequently in a "religion of audiences" celebrities have become our "religious" figures: rock stars Madonna and Sting, TV anchorman Dan Rather, pro basketball player Michael Jordan, and NFL quarterback Joe Montana.

In this predicament, nobody is particularly helped when the baker tries to perform the tasks

of the shoemaker. In *The Republic* Plato first enunciated the cardinal principle for the common good: Stick to what you do best! This is a principle worth remembering when the journalist plays a moral authority and the bishop becomes a celebrity newscaster. When this befalls us, stay tuned for problems.[11] Before listening to the individual voices of Bernardin, O'Connor and Weakland on abortion, let us consider the cultural context of the American Catholic Church and the abortion debate.

Today, Roman Catholics in the United States represent the largest single church denomination, with over 53.2 million members, 28% of the American population in 180 dioceses and 19,596 parishes. This is a diverse nationwide communion containing newly arrived immigrants from Asia and Central and South America, and the established ethnic mixtures of Germans, Irish, Italians and Polish, many of whom have become powerful influences in business, education, and politics in America.

The historical legacy of the Church in the United States and the ethnic variety of its leadership and people means the church as an organization and a community of people speaks with several voices. According to historian David O'Brien: "After two centuries of organized existence in the United States, the American [Catholic] church has not evolved a coherent understanding of its public role and responsibilities."[12] This notion has clear resonance in the writings of Thomas Bender of New York University in his book *Community and Social Change in America* (1978) where he examines the conflict of the dual worlds of *community* and *society* (based on Ferdinand Tonnies' understanding of *Gemeinschaft* und *Gesellschaft*).[13] Further, Catholics, like the rest of the population, do not exist in a vacuum. Instead, there are today multiple influences over people's lives which spring from a wealth of commitments and loyalties: spouse, offspring, job, community, country, education and the public media. Remember Catholics are no exception.[14]

The church's "conscious aspects," O'Brien argues, its public culture, or "public Catholicism," has three operative traditions or strategies: *republican, immigrant,* and *evangelical.* Where *republican* Catholicism addresses public policy debates with the notion of accommodation toward the larger culture, *immigrant* Catholicism is more comfortable with power arrangements and American interest-group politics. *Evangelical* Catholicism, represented by Catholics such as Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk and mystic, or Daniel Berrigan of the Vietnam era antiwar movement, often stand outside the institutional structure of the church and prophetically challenge the larger society. It is important to consider how each model implies a distinctive and sometimes conflicting rhetoric or public voice. Consequently, Catholics in general, and bishops such as Bernardin, O'Connor and Weakland, come out of, represent, and often speak from one or more historical traditions or models that are organizational, political and intellectual in nature. Each of these cultural expressions of the American church is distinct, yet each connects to one another like the deeply planted roots of a giant, almost ageless tree.

To provide historical examples to further this thesis, David O'Brien, in his book *Public Catholicism* (1989), contends that the Catholic bishops' pastoral letters *Challenge of Peace* (1983) and *Economic Justice for All* (1986) came the closest to clarifying the role of the public church.[15] Here, the bishops distinguished two styles or "audiences" for their teaching; one addressed to members of the church (*community*), and a second aimed at the general public (society) intended to contribute to the development of a public moral consensus, influence public opinion and help to shape the public debate about policy by clarifying its moral dimension.[16] This was done intentionally by the bishops who wanted to persuade their own faithful as well as draw into the discussion the larger American population. This approach was new and attempted to better integrate ethical and biblical foundations for the purpose of moral teaching.[17]

The Roman Catholic Church, and in particular its leadership, the American bishops, have remained the single most important institution nationally in opposition to abortion-rights since the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. Here the bishops have had a complex task: one of speaking to moral concerns and, at the same time, of morally challenging Catholics, and even of disagreeing with large segments of the American citizenry.[18] Later I will consider how the church's teaching on abortion, rather than clarifying the church's public role, has actually heightened conflict among groups and thus confused many observers. Again, this appreciation may assist us when we consider the church's fundamental and historical differences with the press—much as there has been between church and state.

In my judgment the problem for the church may not be a lack of unity or even a lack of moral consensus, but rather the sustaining and

fostering of a plurality of voices and values as the mark of modern consciousness. Seen in this light, the challenge for the church in general is the establishment of an adequate moral, social and intellectual basis for contact, conflict and communication. All three are essential elements in a social network or organization. Consequently, if the bishops' moral authority is to survive in this "media age," the central challenge becomes how to read the culture today and how to create a persuasive and effective public presence.

Neither can the secular press stand to ignore the church and the religious phenomenon. So often in the past the press did know what to do with the influence of religion upon social upheavals such as the civil rights movement, or the "pro-life" movement, or the political candidacies of Jimmy Carter, Gary Hart or Jesse Jackson. Furthermore, events in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East remind us that to completely divorce religion from public life for the sake of secular objectivity makes it difficult, if not impossible, for journalists to interpret the forces of moral change nationally and internationally. We must remind ourselves constantly that though the church is essentially spiritual, and the press secular, neither can neglect the implications of the moral.

Michael Schudson believes the function of the press is not to change minds, but rather to prepare citizens to understand the connections and relationships among school, church and the structures of power. He adds that the press has the responsibility to make sense of community and provide meaning for readers.[19] Along these lines, James Carey of the University of Illinois writes that it is the lack of community and subsequent loss of moral discourse that best describes our current political dilemma. Carey contends that newspapers and news media must provide more than a transmission of information. Rather, he argues, they should engage the public in a rich conversation for the purpose of stimulating civil discourse and citizen participation.[20]

At times, the abortion debate has tested the limits of civil discourse and has often strained civility. Observers of press performance such as Jason DeParle believe that much of the abortion coverage has not been especially good when it considers morally complex issues; and, according to David Shaw, reporting has been biased in favor of abortion rights.[21] The abortion story is complex and does not fit into neat journalistic categories. Thus, if the press, and the media generally, identify themselves as having the role of stimulating the great public conversation, here the challenge becomes how do the press, television and radio report about and seriously consider issues of public morality in a language that advances our moral and political lives.

CARDINAL BERNARDIN... THE STILL VOICE WITHIN

In this second section, I will treat themes concerning leadership and the American Catholic bishops by focusing primarily on Cardinal Bernardin at the 1989 Baltimore meeting of National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB). I will consider his role in the conference of bishops, his presentation and the floor debate over the bishops' 1989 abortion resolution, and the subsequent press conference.

Joseph Cardinal Bernardin stood at the podium, stage-right, and addressed his fellow bishops for the last time as the Chairman of the Bishops' Pro-Life Committee on Tuesday, November 7, 1989, at Baltimore's Omni International Hotel. His task was to report on an "abortion resolution," drawn up in committee, and answer questions concerning modifications of the text before the final vote by the 300 bishops. In response to the American political climate created by the July, 1989, *Webster* decision of the United States Supreme Court, the statement read "No Catholic can responsibly take a 'pro-choice' stand when the 'choice' in question involves the taking of innocent human life."[22]

The American bishops brought their bi-annual conference to the Baltimore site to commemorate the two hundredth anniversary of the establishment of Baltimore as the first Roman Catholic diocese in the United States. The history of this diocese is the legacy of the church in the United States. In the two centuries, Baltimore was the setting for an array of important church members and leaders: John Carroll, the first American Catholic bishop; Elizabeth Anne Bayley Seton, the first native-born American saint; Cardinal James Gibbons, who in the 1880's defended the rights of workers to unionize; theologian John Courtney Murray, S.J. whose writings on church-state issues forwarded the adoption of the "Declaration on Religious Freedom" at Vatican Council II; the founder of the Catholic Traditionalist movement Father Gommar A. DePauw; peace activists Daniel and Philip Berrigan; and Maryland Senator Barbara Mikulski, who in her early career worked in Catholic social welfare agencies. Each represented

the complex and often contradictory impulses of pastors, prophets, saints and sinners who contributed and gave testimony to the rich fabric of religious life in the diocese and country.

The official Tuesday morning agenda of the bishops' conference was the debate about the abortion resolution. Cardinal Bernardin took his place alongside Archbishop John L. May of Saint Louis, president of the Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Daniel E. Pilarczyk of Cincinnati, vice-president, and Msgr. Robert Lynch, general secretary, United States Catholic Conference. This was a familiar role for Bernardin, having served in the 60's and 70's both as general secretary of the USCC and president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Bernardin more than any other American bishop was the "conference" man. His rise to power from Charleston, South Carolina, *terra incognita* to the powerful north-eastern archdioceses, required an ascendancy in service of the organization which links bishops and dioceses nationally. He was an auxiliary bishop at the age of 38, appointed archbishop of Cincinnati in 1972, at the age of 44, and ten years later became the archbishop of Chicago.[23]

The American Catholic bishops have argued that abortion is a matter of *public* not *private* morality; basically they consider abortion a fundamental human rights issue. The 1989 abortion resolution repeated the bishops' long and short range goals: first, constitutional protection of the right to life of unborn children to the maximum degree possible; second, federal and state laws and administrative policies that restrict support for and practice of abortion; third, continual refinement and ultimate reversal of the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision (1973) and other court decisions that deny the inalienable right to life; and fourth, supportive legislation to provide morally acceptable alternatives to abortion, and social policy initiatives which provide support to women for prenatal care and extended support for low-income women and their children.[24]

Observers of the bi-annual meeting of bishops cannot help but be struck by the long line of 300 or more active and retired bishops seated attentively at tables. They are mostly over fifty years of age, with a reasonably good representation of blacks and Hispanics; all wear black suits and most have gray hair. They are friendly and deferential. It may be the most polite polity in the world. But it's a mens' club; the few women in attendance are either USCC staff members, secretaries or news reporters.

Here consensus is the overriding norm; passage of any proposal or statement requires a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority. Individual bishops are elected to committees which oversee key areas of church life; important issues take the form of documents prepared and written in committee for final approval by the assembly. The Administrative Committee, which has responsibility for the budgets of the NCCB and USCC, is the largest with fifty members and comprises one-sixth of the bishops. The Pro-Life Committee has ten full-members and eleven alternates. Elections to committees and chairmanships take place during the conference proceedings at the national meetings of bishops.[25]

To appreciate Cardinal Bernardin among the assembly of bishops, one pictures him as essentially a *republican*, according to David O'Brien's use of the term to describe "public Catholicism." Bernardin represents the consensus that somehow, even amidst apparent disagreement, conflict might be avoided for the greater good of the whole. Extending this notion to the larger society, he believes in the idea that morality and citizenship teach fundamental lessons to the society. Further, he is mindful of the church's "natural law tradition," which views morality as open to dialogue and reason, and which can be translated for the culture that it serves.

Since the 1970's, Bernardin was attentive to the details of church organization and compromise. He is comfortable with pluralism while recognizing the on-going need for mediation between civic and religious organizations. Not only was his career identified with the bishops' conference but, in fact, he created most of the mechanism such as the so-called "two-audience theory" directed to Catholics and the American society. He also compiled many of the rules for governing the assembly of bishops under the guidelines of collegiality recommended by Vatican II and the "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World."

In 1983 he chaired the committee which wrote the landmark pastoral *The Challenge of Peace*. To accomplish this, as with most major addresses and statements, he relied upon carefully worded texts, crafted over months by theological consultants and as a result of extensive public hearings. Typically, Bernardin first tests his ideas with select audiences, usually academics at major universities around the country. His style of communication is based on careful thinking and writing and his audiences provide him with the feedback for improving his case or argument. Consequently, he comes to the media only in the

last stages when he feels ready to inform the general public.[26]

Bernardin is not a man suited for drama; he is not flamboyant. On this particular morning when the bishops took up the abortion resolution, he appeared comfortable, congenial and optimistic. In unemotional and carefully crafted words, he said, "The Webster decision places us in a new and more challenging situation with regard to advancing respect for unborn human life."[27] Bernardin repeated themes taken from his "consistent ethic of life," the 1985 Georgetown speech which considered the importance of educating Catholics and society about the "seamless garment" of life-issues: peace and nuclear arms, capital punishment, euthanasia. In proposing the adoption of the Pro-Life Committee resolution, he reaffirmed previous statements and the bishops' pastoral plans of 1975 and 1985.

Here, his argument centered on the rationale of legal abortion created in the *Roe* decision by asking "who decides?" He reasoned that responses often avoid the central moral question: "*what* is being decided?" Such fundamental questions must be addressed morally, legally and politically. The "consistent ethic" addresses a range of life related issues: who is human, and how do we respond to those who are vulnerable and voiceless? He is concerned about what happens to our moral imagination and social vision if the right to life is not protected, especially for those who do not look fully human at the beginning or end of life. Ultimately, he wants us to consider what kind of society we want to be, one that destroys its "unborn children," or one that commits itself to a decent life for the most vulnerable in our midst, especially women and children?[28]

"This right of the unborn to life," Bernardin concluded, "demands legal protection and we will continue to insist on this. At the same time, let us make sure, as we rightfully engage in this debate that we hear, really hear, the issues, the struggles, and the anguish of women who face issues in a way that we never will....We [must] speak to them a word of understanding and encouragement, a word of solidarity and support both in word and deed. And may we be instrumental in inspiring the entire community to help carry the burdens of our sisters in faith."[29]

Following this statement, the bishops were ready to discuss the resolution. Archbishop Theodore McCarrick of Newark, N.J., came to the floor microphone to suggest that Bernardin's closing remarks be considered for inclusion in the text. With no disagreement on this point, the body moved to add Bernardin's conclusion to the formal resolution.

Bishops Debate the Abortion Resolution.

Given the limited scope of this paper, I cannot cover the wide terrain suggested by the many related themes. One can only say that the mood of the universal church today under John Paul II contrasts with the simple optimism of *aggiornamento* inspired by John XXIII. Where Vatican II in the 1960's placed the church in dialogue with the world, the postconciliar church under the current pope regards Vatican II as, perhaps, too optimistic about humankind, and too willing to make accommodations with the world. Consequently, the present mood of the church is not uniform; some segments are conservative-to-reactionary, while others are moderate to liberal. Consequently, to fully appreciate the abortion debate within the church, one must be clear about two rival camps among the American bishops.[30]

First, there are those moderates like Bernardin and Weakland, who view abortion within the fabric of moral concerns, the so-called "consistent ethic of life." A second, more conservative group of bishops, appointed by John Paul II, believe that placing the abortion issue along with other moral concerns simply slows down the political process and confuses political alliances. The position of conservatives such as Cardinal O'Connor, Cardinal Law of Boston, and Archbishop Mahony of Los Angeles, is that abortion is the church's chief moral concern.[31]

To clarify this from David O'Brien's point of view, Bernardin and Weakland, the moderates, approach the abortion issue from a *republican* stance, one that attempts to consider how this teaching fits within the culture. On the other hand, O'Connor and Law take the more politically aggressive course of action and have challenged "pro-choice" opponents in the public arena. Drawing on historical models, O'Brien calls this approach the *immigrant* stance toward the public culture. Both groups among the bishops also employ, in varying ways, aspects of the *evangelical* or biblically and theologically rooted stance.[32]

From this perspective, the floor debate among the American bishops in Baltimore consisted of a number of tests about the centrality of abortion to their overall moral teaching; and, secondarily, about what tactics would be necessary to best get across their message on abortion to Catholics

and the American society. What was clear from the debate was the fundamental agreement of the bishops about the importance of abortion in their teaching. What remained unclear were the modes of communication and tactics to be employed.

At the outset of the assembly, moderates among the bishops who wanted to change the proposed text began asking Bernardin questions from the floor about the strident tone of the abortion resolution. Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Sullivan of Brooklyn questioned the use of the term "so-called" pro-choice in the text. Sullivan considered the equating of "pro-choice" with "pro-abortion" as too polemical and a potential mistake. His intervention got nowhere. Bishop James W. Malone of Youngstown, Ohio asked: "How do we build a better union between persons who advocate the long-term goal of a constitutional amendment and those who pursue realizable short-term goals?"[33] Bernardin diverted any question of political alliances; he referred the matter to the new chairman of the Pro-Life Committee who would have to take up the problem of rival "pro-life" organizations.

Auxiliary Bishop Peter A. Rosazza of Hartford, Connecticut, warned that some of the wording of the revised text could give the impression that the bishops were fixed on abortion as a single issue. He asked whether this would appear as a departure from the "consistent ethic of life" approach. To the sentence which read, "for us abortion is the overriding concern," Rosazza recommended adding the phase "at this time." Bernardin simply disagreed. As a result, the motion died on the floor, failing to receive a seconding motion.

The bishop who has been most identified with the activist "pro-life" cause is Auxiliary Bishop Austin Vaughan of New York. Having been arrested twice in Operation Rescue's attempts to block the doors of Planned Parenthood clinics, Vaughan was the prelate who, from a jail cell, declared that Governor Mario Cuomo "was in serious risk of going to hell" for allowing state-funded abortions. Vaughan reminded the bishops that despite warnings that they may appear as "fixed on a single issue," they should instead insist that "there is no other issue than the killing of 1.5 million babies each year." He pointed out that eventually the bishops would have to come to grips with those Catholic politicians who take an "aggressively pro-choice position."

Vaughan predicted: "It is obvious, you are going to be pressured, more and more, to respond to the positions of Catholic politicians who are pro-choice. That issue is coming more and more to the fore....Catholics who are practicing Catholics, who could be seen taking holy communion and who very often aggressively push pro-choice positions....We are going to have to make some kind of response to that kind of a situation." This statement became the subject of intense interest at the subsequent press conference, and captured the newspaper headlines the next day.

Archbishop Roger L. Mahony provided the best summary of the situation facing the bishops. His Los Angeles residence had been the site of violent abortion-rights demonstrations; an effigy of a mitred bishop, bearing a close likeness, was burnt at the front door. He said:

> I think that we, as Catholics, in our public moral stance on most pro-life issues, stand increasingly alone. We may be the only major population-segment in our country and the nation-wide institution so fully committed to defend and protect the rights of the unborn. We may, in reality, be the only moral conscience in our country willing to proclaim this publicly. The weeks and months ahead are going to be difficult and painful as we are attacked on many sides by those who look to quick solutions for pivotal basic moral issues. We need to be courageous, and even heroic, in our beliefs and in the proclamation and practice of those beliefs.

Mahony seemed almost defiant as he challenged the bishops to take up abortion as a personal cause. There is a critical departure in his statement which divided those who see the identity of the church as "counter-cultural" from those who view the church in "dialogue with the world." While Bernardin and Mahony would agree on the immorality of abortion, Mahony's notion of church against society certainly contrasted with Bernardin's long-standing advocacy of the civic and religious accord.[34]

Two sentences from the abortion resolution were important indicators of the underlying political arrangements among the bishops. First, the phrase "for us abortion is of overriding concern" joined Bernardin's "consistent ethic" approach to the activist political agenda of the "pro-life" bishops. Bernardin's proficiency in pulling together divided groups brought about an agreement for the sake of consensus. Later events demonstrated, however, that the consensus was not deep.

Second, the sentence "No Catholic can responsibly take a 'pro-choice' stand when the 'choice' in question involves the taking of innocent human life" was a tactical blunder. Instead of viewing abortion as an ethical matter for all citizens, the document focused attention on abortion as the "Catholic issue," a matter of church discipline. Unlike his conservative colleagues, Bernardin had a difficult time explaining the idea especially when asked at the press conference about the possible use of church sanctions toward those who were aggressively "pro-choice" Catholics.

In the end, the abortion resolution passed in a voice vote. Moreover, Cardinal John O'Connor of New York, nationally considered the outspoken advocate for the "pro-life" cause, was elected to succeed Bernardin as Chairman of the Pro-Life Committee. O'Connor defeated moderate John R. Roach, the archbishop of St. Paul, Minnesota, and former president of the NCCB in a vote of 156 to 124. To observers of the conference, this election was not so unusual—cardinals always win elections to key committees by simply outranking opponents or by simple deference. Nonetheless, Roach was a strong candidate and this election was an important political test.

Thus, the so-called "Rose Bishops," who, like O'Connor, wear an embroidered red-rose in their lapel as a symbol of their "pro-life" stance, won the chairmanship and advanced something more than the formal adoption of the abortion resolution. For these bishops like Maher of San Diego, Gracida of Corpus Christi, McHugh of Camden, who represent a minority in the assembly of the bishops, abortion required dramatic, and for some "prophetic," actions. Abortion politics took the form of prohibiting "pro-choice" Catholics from communion, challenging candidates for political office, and formally excommunicating workers in health clinics. Ultimately, Bernardin's style of moderation in public life would give way to O'Connor's politically charged personality, a key factor in understanding how the church communicates its teaching on abortion.

Bernardin Meets the Press

To appreciate Cardinal Bernardin's stature as a "churchman," one must remember that he replaced John Cardinal Cody as the archbishop of Chicago. Cody had been under investigation by a federal grand jury for possible misuse of church tax-exempt funds. Moreover, Cody's posture of omnipotence and knack for being mean-spirited resulted in few loyalties among his clergy who instead were in open rebellion. Even long-time ally Mayor Richard Daley had grown to consider Cody careless, the worst trait for someone who enjoys power in a church system where there is no electorate and little accountability. He governed the archdiocese of 446 parishes and 2.3 million Catholics with a sleight of hand and an unpredictability that kept everyone in suspense. Cody had also become the symbol for corruption among American ecclesiastics, and a big problem for John Paul II.[35]

The ultimate form of accountability, however, came with Cody's death in 1983. Now someone had to pick up the shattered pieces of the archdiocese and bring back order. If Cody was considered unpredictable, his replacement, Archbishop Bernardin of Cincinnati, was known for self-discipline and predictability. Veteran Chicago journalists who knew the details of the Cody saga described Cardinal Bernardin in reverential terms. The religion editor of the *Sun Times*, Roy Larsen, noted how Bernardin turned the Chicago situation around, "City leaders were proud to have a guy of this caliber."[36] Jim Squires, the editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, said admiringly, "If you need someone to be the 'go-between' God and man, Bernardin could be the man."[37]

Nonetheless, Bernardin was never fully comfortable with the combative nature of the media. Perhaps this is more a feature of his personality and peaceful disposition. While believing "good press" to be helpful, he did not consider the press, television or radio central to his own personal mode of communication. Instead, Bernardin relied on his staff to help develop and filter his message to the church organization and general public. To manage the sometimes fractious sides of church disputes, where the center must hold, he practiced a more democratic form of theology. His aim was to get on the record concerning matters of public policy with few surprises. In other words, in an electronic era that demands instant analysis, or "spin," all within the time-frame of a neat "soundbite," Bernardin was not spontaneous.

Bernardin gained almost instant credibility with the press. In an interview with me, he acknowledged: "I don't have any problem with the press. Could 'good press' assist you? Well, the majority of people don't read the *New World* [the newspaper of the Chicago Archdiocese]. Rather, people are guided by television and the daily paper....good press can go a long way!" Concerning press

conferences, he admitted: "[They] are something I have to do. It comes with the job. It's not something I like to do."[38]

From the Omni Grand Ballroom in Baltimore where the bishops had taken a brief recess, the scene shifted to the press center where Cardinal Bernardin faced the sixty or more assembled press representatives. The USCC press spokesman, Father Kenneth Doyle, ran the press conference and recognized each of the reporters as they came to the microphone. The floor debate among the bishops had prompted serious and thoughtful questions from reporters. Of the six questions asked, each sought some explanation or comment about Catholics who took a "pro-choice" stand. While the text of the resolution avoided the issue of penalties, sanctions or excommunication of aggressively "pro-choice" Catholics, this became the subject of the press conference.

The first question came from Peter Steinfels of the *New York Times* who asked: "What exactly is the meaning of the added language in the resolution on abortion that 'no Catholic can responsibly take a pro-choice stand'?" The Cardinal replied: "I would prefer not to discuss individuals" and considered the case of those politicians who claimed to be "personally opposed" to abortion but unwilling to support legislation to restrict legal abortions. He stated, "We expect politicians to act conscientiously, and this seems to me to live up to a conviction you have...ultimately, to protect the unborn."[39] Nonetheless, Bernardin appeared unclear about how individual bishops should respond to the situation of politicians who take an aggressively "pro-choice" position.

The *Boston Globe*'s Jim Franklin moved the discussion to the possible excommunication of "pro-choice" Catholics. He asked: "Your Eminence, I thought I heard Archbishop Pilarczyk say that he thought Bishop Vaughan's proposal that the conference do something about aggressively pro-choice Catholics was worth considering and should be looked into. Some of us were talking to Cardinal O'Connor earlier. He said that if he were elected to the Pro-Life chairmanship, he would ask your advice about such a matter. What would you advise Cardinal O'Connor? Should they, pro-choice Catholics, be excommunicated?" At first, the cardinal hesitated and referred to his 1985 Georgetown speech. Then he mentioned a recent address to the First Friday Club of Chicago.

Finally, he got to the point: "I think you mentioned something about 'excommunication,' did you not? Right. And I think what we are dealing with here is not in this resolution....We are not dealing here in the specific things with the question of penalties. Now, I don't deny that is something that needs to be studied. It needs to be looked at. But rather what we are trying to do is to present as clearly and as forcefully and as credibly as possible the teaching of the church."

Bernardin faced the perfect dilemma. He could not leave an impression that he was unaware of those canons which specifically deal with circumstances of excommunication nor did he wish to appear at odds with O'Connor, Pilarczyk and Vaughan. Consequently, excommunication became a subject for "study." This was Bernardin's diplomatic and polite manner. In hindsight, many agree that greater clarity or simple honesty in admitting that the bishops were divided over tactics would have been the better course. His remarks added to an overall impression of impending public warfare over abortion, and he gave impetus to those seeking aggressive political measures. And at the same time, he reinforced for the larger public the idea that abortion was a "Catholic" issue. He wished to do neither.

A year later, Bernardin reflected on his experience: "The first thing the press focused on was the question of penalties, and really did not let up on it. And, in effect, they were saying this is the first round in an effort to begin penalizing people or excommunicating or to do whatever else. And that was not the purpose of the statement." He added: "I don't believe that this societal problem will be resolved primarily through the use of penalties. That was not the sentiment of the document nor the sentiment of the full body but that became the sentiment of the press." Thus in his attempts at the press conference to represent the range of opinion among the bishops, Bernardin had failed to state his own position adequately.

The most perplexing reactions to Bernardin came from those ultra conservative Catholics who believed the bishops were too soft on abortion. Over the years, some in the "pro-life" movement have taken exception to Bernardin's "consistent ethic of life" because of the linkage of the moral teaching about abortion to issues like nuclear warfare and poverty. To them Bernardin's approach blunted the battle against abortion.

To gauge how centrist figures like Bernardin get battered from both ends of the spectrum, Gary Potter of the ultra-conservative *Wanderer* of Saint Paul, Minnesota, had the perfect ruse. In fierce

words he told Bernardin: "In recent modern history, three years ago in Argentina, another pluralistic democracy, where they have religious freedom, the bishops of that nation publicly announced that any member of that nation's congress that voted for the legalization of divorce would be denied holy communion. Why do the bishops of Argentina see a grave moral problem so differently than the bishops of the United States? It's one church!" Clearly, one could find examples of inconsistent actions and policies among the different national groups of bishops. Where Bernardin may have simply dismissed the question as not relevant, dutifully he proceeded to restate the previous reply about excommunication.

The political consequences of Bernardin's remarks were also reflected in a question from Father Thomas Reese, of *America*, the Jesuit weekly, who asked: "My question deals with political effects of some of the statements here. For example, if there is an election where there is a Catholic candidate and a non-Catholic candidate and both of them favor the funding of abortions and are opposed to any constitutional amendments, it seems what is happening today is that the Catholic candidate comes under public attack and gets the publicity for the position that he or she has taken and the political effect is really to damage that Catholic candidate. Is that what the bishops want? Is your preference for a non-Catholic candidate if both of them in fact hold the same position? Is this going to make it difficult for Catholic politicians to get elected?"

The bishops as a whole had no political strategy toward individual candidates but Reese, a political scientist, saw the clear electoral implications. Also the resolution had the unintended effect of furthering the notion that abortion was a "Catholic issue." In my interview with Cardinal Bernardin, he recalled: "There was a statement in there [the resolution] if by pro-choice you mean that a person is perfectly free morally to take the life of an unborn infant through abortion, then, that is contrary to Catholic teaching. You can't say, in all honesty, that 'I'm a good Catholic and I'm pro-choice' in that sense."

Nonetheless, some bishops took the abortion resolution to be a test of their moral authority in a given diocese. If the idea was that through dramatic political stands, the bishops could seize the moment and have the "whole world watching" on the evening newscast, quickly such ploys failed. San Diego Bishop Leo T. Maher's public denouncement of "pro-choice" Catholic Lucy Killea simply backfired and helped elect Killea, the Democratic candidate, in what was considered a safe Republican district. Ironically, several months later, Killea cast the deciding negative vote in a close contest over an anti-abortion bill before the California State Assembly.

From Bernardin to O'Connor

It is not my purpose here to expose the inadequacy of Bernardin's style with the press.[40] Of course, his press conference did not help matters. Rather, I wish to show how difficult it is for anyone to represent the broad array of Catholic voices, opinions and tactics even in a circumstance where the bishops are solidly united around a specific moral teaching such as abortion. The story surrounding abortion and the church is complex and underscores the historical and social differences within the cultural fabric of the church. Like those giant underground plates the geologists tell us of, the distinct cultures or voices within the church—organizational, political, intellectual—can produce internal friction and forces powerful as an earthquake.

Each bishop comes to the matter of abortion with an individual style and mode of expression. And, in some cases, as with the people from the fundamentalist ultra-right wing of the church, the press conference has become a means to publicly lecture the church leadership. In this situation, exchanges can spark reaction rather than reason. In fact, accredited members of the press corps have complained to the USCC organizers that the press conferences could become hostage to those who represent special ideologies and causes within the church rather than a genuine press briefing for reporters.

The press, too, had its agenda and style of reporting—one that is less interested in theological and philosophical refinements, and more concerned with practical politics. Often stories are written only in terms of conflict between parties: "pro-life" v. "pro-choice." This is a narrow definition of news, considering the complexity of religious and ethical issues involved. Moreover, during the past decade reporters have witnessed sharp debate and disagreement among bishops on the economics and peace pastorals, public statements on AIDS and sex education. Understandably journalists rely upon an American political framework such as "liberal," "conservative," "moderate," "progressive" in

order to describe particular bishops or actions. But at times such political cliches cannot capture the complex political dealings among the bishops.

Bernardin's notions of accommodation did not appear to work in terms of the tactics that some of the bishops were suggesting. Partially, this was due to the fact that even after *Webster* (and even were *Roe* to be overruled) laws restricting abortion must come not from the Supreme Court but from state legislatures. This placed demands on the local bishop and the state Catholic conferences to lobby for such legislation. This occurred at the same time the Vatican asserted its authority, and emphasized the autonomy of the local bishops over the national conference of bishops. Pope John Paul appointed bishops to dioceses some of whom were more conservative, i.e., more "Roman," in orientation.

A handful of these bishops, led by Cardinals O'Connor and Law, had been openly critical of actions taken by the USCC, especially on matters such as AIDS education, and brought about a reversal of the USCC's policy toward public distribution of condoms. At the same time, Bernardin, Weakland and the moderate-to-liberal wing of the church were unaccustomed to working on abortion issues with Protestant fundamentalists of the Rev. Jerry Falwell variety.[41]

When considering Bernardin's performance at the press conference and his lack of spontaneity, one has another impression. As one reporter observed: "He is too programmed sometimes." Bernardin and many of his fellow bishops take great care about what they say in public. Naturally, they know that once in a while they may have to say unpopular things. This is an aspect of their job, that is to take an *evangelical* or biblically and theologically rooted stance on crucial matters. On this point, Robert Bellah told a group of Catholic bishops recently: "[It] may be precisely the responsibility of the bishop or the priest to say things that most people do not want to hear." [42]

Clearly, this requires considerable moral courage. Yet there is another dimension to this problem. Sociologist John Coleman has pointed out: "A large part of the contradiction the American bishops face lies ingredient in a role conflict they face between loyalty to the pope and the Vatican...and the pastoral responsibilities they face as the indisputable first pastor in their own local church. I do not think the tensions in this role conflict...have yet been satisfactorily resolved in either world Catholicism or in the American church."[43] The powerful organizational, political and intellectual forces within American Catholicism are, to use the geological metaphor again, converging to produce the tremors and ground shocks disturbing to bishops and laity alike.

If the media reacted strongly to Cardinal Bernardin's press conference, the bishops reacted to the press coverage with equal vigor. In an interview, Father Thomas Reese told me that the bishops were frustrated that their message on abortion was not being fully heard and was distorted in the public media. Perhaps this could account for O'Connor's selection to replace Bernardin as chairman of the Pro-Life Committee. The bishops perceived O'Connor to be a louder public voice. Always alert to the political, O'Connor asked Bernardin to be a member of the newly formed Pro-Life Committee. This gesture returned a favor. In November 1980, Bernardin collaborated with the newly consecrated Bishop of the Military Ordinariate, John J. O'Connor, on the committee that wrote the pastoral letter, *The Challenge of Peace*. This was O'Connor's first exposure nationally.[44]

As the meetings in Baltimore came to a close, political activism on behalf of the "pro-life" movement and the emergence of John O'Connor seemed to send Bernardin into eclipse. Over the years, his "consistent ethic of life" theme found few politicians, even Catholic politicians, who would champion legislation that cut across such a wide range of political alliances and issues: abortion, support for women and children, capital punishment, euthanasia, economic justice and the nuclear threat. Nonetheless, he remains the Catholic voice of reason, moderation and accommodation on the American scene.

In March 1990, speaking before an audience at Georgetown University, Bernardin stated: "I have always believed that dialogue with public officials—Catholics and others—is an essential part of the church's social ministry....The church's teaching authority is ultimately a moral authority, a wisdom to be shared with all its members. I believe that the church can be most effective in the public debate on abortion through moral persuasion not punitive measures.[45] While some inside and outside the Catholic church might disagree with Bernardin's "consistent ethic" thesis, especially regarding abortion, his teaching remains an eloquent example of civic discourse in the effort to revive America's moral imagination.

CARDINAL O'CONNOR... INTO THE WHIRLWIND

In this third section, I will examine the political role of Cardinal John O'Connor of New York, the creation of his media-celebrity, his uses of political power and the media to advance the pro-life cause, and the resulting conflicts with politicians and the press. Finally, I will examine the issue of press bias and abortion.

John Cardinal O'Connor appeared grim as he sat on the bishops' throne to the left of the main altar at Saint Patrick's. This day, December 10, 1989, the prelate refrained from distributing holy communion, and instead slumped in his chair and pondered the turn-of-events. Indeed, what was happening around him that morning was the most vocal demonstration by AIDS-activists. In all, police arrested 111 demonstrators. Inside the cathedral, 43 ACT-UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power and WHAM (Women's Health Action and Mobilization) protesters managed to disrupt O'Connor's homily by shouting, lying in the aisles, and chaining themselves to the pews. At the communion of the Mass, several desecrated the communion wafers in public view. For weeks, ACT-UP had publicized their intention around New York City in posters which showed an altered photograph of O'Connor with "bulls-eye" circles around the eyes and bearing the slogan, "Public Health Menace...stop this man!" In the final moments of the Mass, as he stood to impart his solemn blessing, O'Connor declared: "I must preach what the church preaches, teach what the church teaches!"[46]

He and the assembly of vested clerics departed the sanctuary to the loud applause of the congregation, a signal of their strong support. As the procession drew closer to the sacristy, the cardinal eyed Mayor Ed Koch, who had come to the service. Instinctively, O'Connor understood what Koch's presence meant. Prominent New York politicians considered it a political gamble to be seen with O'Connor. The two powers of the sacred and the temporal, O'Connor and Koch, embraced. And then the two most quotable men in Manhattan met reporters for the ritual photo opportunity before New York City's omni-present press corps.[47]

The public response to the siege of Saint Patrick's was immediate. Governor Mario Cuomo told the *Post*: "Even the awful provocation emanating from [the issues of AIDS and abortion] does not justify the outrage of desecrating, egregiously, a religious service and its worshippers."[48] He called the demonstration a "violation of the law" and said the protestors "should be punished." Mayor-elect David Dinkins said of the protestors' behavior: "I deplore it....A peaceful demonstration, an expression of one's views, is one thing, but one ought not disrupt a religious ceremony."[49] Leaders of Jewish religious and civic organizations compared the incident to *Kristallnacht*, the violent destruction of Jewish businesses and homes in Nazi Germany. There was wide belief that the public argument over AIDS and abortion which had resulted in protests and demonstrations during the past year had gone too far.

The editorials in city newspapers reflected a common negative sentiment about the demonstration: "Sacrilege in St. Pat's (*Post*); "The Storming of St. Pat's" (*Times*); "Unjoyful Noise" (*Newsday*); "Civil Disobedience vs. Uncivilized Behavior" (*Daily News*). "The Inquiring Photographer" in the *Daily News* asked "What would you do to anyone disrupting a religious service in your church or synagogue?" The protest even resulted in splitting the ranks of the demonstrators. Andrew Humm, spokesman for the 50-group Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Rights remarked: "It was horrifying. We endorsed the demonstration outside the cathedral but the point was lost by what happened inside. We condemn the acts of people who disrupt worship services."[50]

Since the protest was directed at O'Connor, much of the press and public attention focused on him. *Daily News* columnist Bill Reel wrote:" I did make one vow on Sunday. Over the years I've been critical of Cardinal O'Connor occasionally—I blasted his bland TV show, and needled him for always talking and writing too long for anyone's attention span—but after Sunday I promise never again to find fault with the cardinal no matter how tempted I might be to put in my opinion. His enemies will get no aid or comfort from me. I don't care to be associated with them, however remotely."[51] In a way, the riot had backfired for both the protestors and O'Connor. On the day following the Saint Patrick's protest, O'Connor met briefly with reporters at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel moments before the Archdiocese's annual Christmas luncheon, attended by a large gathering which included Vice-President Dan Quayle, Mayor Koch, Mayor-elect Dinkins, and actress Helen Hayes. O'Connor told the press: "I pray this doesn't happen again....But if it happens again and again and again, the Mass will go on, or I will be dead. It would have to be over my dead body that the Mass will not go on!" [52] Buoyed by

the friendly audience, O'Connor was the center of attention, and resolute in his actions and words.

At a press conference several days later, Mary Ann Staniszekwski of WHAM replied: "I believe if Jesus were with us now, he'd be on our side. The protest was not an attack on the Christian church, but a 'desperate cry—an act of compassion' against the politics of O'Connor, who is an outspoken anti-abortionist and critic of the gay lifestyle." Another leader, Vincent Gagliostro of ACT-UP said: "Do we think what went on inside the church Sunday was a mistake?.... My answer is no.... I'm not afraid of offending anyone. People are dying and I'm going to do everything I can to get this message across: This man (O'Connor) must be stopped!" Because of their refusal to apologize, the *Daily News* called the protesters "defiant." [53]

The strident words on both sides evidenced a growing opinion that Cardinal O'Connor's aggressive words had mixed results. His support of Operation Rescue over the years may have shored up support from his own pro-life constituency, but at the same time, his public pronouncements produced anger among groups in the city and, consequently, may have helped to provoke the protest. Some argued that the impetus for the Saint Patrick's protest had originated back in October 1989, on "Respect Life Sunday," when O'Connor publicly stated at his Sunday press conference that he wished he could participate in an Operation Rescue demonstration at an abortion clinic, and possibly risk arrest. Because of the church's tax-exempt status, diocesan attorneys had warned against such a move. Nonetheless, the cardinal concluded: "Whether this is the way I should go, lawyers or no lawyers, is something I still have to sort out in my own mind."[54] Was O'Connor seriously considering this, or was this another headline grabber? No one was certain, but the idea resonated in the minds of groups and organizations critical of him.

In my interview with Cardinal O'Connor on December 10, 1990, the anniversary of the now famous Saint Patrick's riot, Cardinal O'Connor told me: "It's going to sound too noble to say that I, at no time, felt particularly threatened....I was terribly distressed at what the protestors were doing to themselves. Not just to their public image....More importantly, they were hurting themselves as persons."[55] O'Connor had critical words about the press coverage of the incident. He said: "I thought the whole thing was basically poorly reported. One of the reasons it was poorly reported was that an awful lot of reporters did not understand. They did not have any sense of the substance of what was happening. The host [holy communion] meant nothing to them. And they knew nothing of what it means to Catholics and to church teaching."

About the police action and the need for a restraining order by the courts in case of a repeat demonstration by ACT-UP and WHAM in 1990, he added: "That's no way to have to run a railroad, that's no way a bishop would want to feel, to invoke the power of the law at the cathedral. But it's life at this moment in the city."

O'Connor: Media and Politics

To appreciate John O'Connor one must get in touch with the political roots and social experience of the church in America. Saint Patrick's Cathedral, the epicenter of the Catholic historical presence in New York City, is a religious icon on Fifth Avenue. More than any other church in America, it speaks as few other cultural symbols of the story of Catholicism in the United States. Built in the 1860's by the politically controversial Archbishop John Hughes who had come from the larger Philadelphia diocese, the cathedral was an assurance to the newly arrived German and Irish immigrants that the bishop would vouchsafe them a place on American soil.[56]

The decision to build the cathedral "uptown" demonstrated Hughes' belief in an enlarged, prosperous city whose new citizens would come from the "Catholic countries." Hughes had a reputation for public debate which brought him into bitter exchanges with Mayor James Harper, members of the anti-Catholic Know-Nothing Party, journalists such as Horace Greeley of the *Tribune*, and James Gordon Bennett of the *Herald*, writers of the Irish radical press, and Orestes Brownson, a recent convert to Catholicism and one of the nation's prominent intellectuals advocating the "Americanization" of the Catholic Church. Hughes' political activism on behalf of the immigrant church and his style of leadership and authority made him a formidable national figure. So too Hughes' successor, John J. O'Connor.

Journalist Nat Hentoff wrote in his biography of Cardinal O'Connor that two months after he had been appointed archbishop of New York in 1984, O'Connor was in Rome to visit the Pope. In Hentoff's account, O'Connor came into the Pope's presence, and John Paul II "with a broad

smile" said, "Welcome, welcome to the archbishop of the capital of the world!"[57]

Clearly, the New York see was not Scranton, where O'Connor had been appointed only a few months before. The Archdiocese of New York, spread over 4,717 square miles, consisted of 411 parishes, 12 colleges, 318 elementary and high schools, 16 hospitals and a population of 2.2 million Catholics so diverse that Mass was celebrated in 26 languages. Nor had O'Connor's appointment to New York been predicted, since most well-informed clerical observers considered O'Connor the eventual replacement for Cardinal Krol of Philadelphia. Such an obvious move would have returned O'Connor to his hometown and diocese after his many years on leave to the military.

The untimely death of New York's Cardinal Cooke suddenly changed the political equation and O'Connor, at 64, was appointed to New York. The Pope chose someone who was an authoritative voice for an American church perceived to be adrift. A former Navy chaplain, O'Connor had risen to the rank of Rear Admiral, and from 1979 to 1983 had the responsibility of overseeing the Military Vicariate under Cardinal Cooke. O'Connor understood command and control structures. He received the Legion of Merit for service under fire in Vietnam. His interest in politics (he has a doctorate in political science from Georgetown) and his immigrant roots (Irish-German) help to account for his public persona.[58]

Yet, there was another peculiarly New York factor here which sheds light on O'Connor's selection. Back in 1967, many of the New York clergy were relieved when Cooke took over from tempestuous Francis Cardinal Spellman. They wanted Auxiliary Bishop Terence Cooke, a New York priest, to run the archdiocese. Spellman had come from Boston, never was completely at home with his priests, and had his patron in Pope Pius XII. He had made himself a national figure, the spokesman of the hierarchy and the American Catholic Church. Cooke, on the other hand, ever mindful of Spellman's unpleasant public fights, was not an egoist, and was always mindful of his role as the *"pastor bonus"* who could recede from attention even within the media capital.

Cooke's priestly orientation, while attractive to some, at times may have given the additional impression that he was unwilling to enter into New York's adversarial politics. In a sense, the very attributes the clergy wanted, a more internal ecclesiastical figure, someone who could mind the affairs of the archdiocese was also temperamentally incapable of dealing with the political "street fights" which marked New York City power-politics. From the perspective of those wanting a national voice, as well as a spokesman for "blue-collar Catholicism," to speak up for Catholic interests in the neighborhoods of the city, John O'Connor seemed the perfect selection as the sixth archbishop of New York. Thus, O'Connor stood more in the Hughes and Spellman tradition of New York prelates.

Where Cooke avoided public view, O'Connor relished it. At a press conference shortly after the formal announcement of his appointment, O'Connor told reporters: "I will use you in every way I can. I would like to be able to talk personally and individually with everyone in New York and everyone in the United States but I can't do that. So I will use you. I will exploit you. I will do anything I can to...."[59] Well, the message was clear; O'Connor's intention was to extend the moral authority of his pulpit by using the mass media of television and the press to get his viewpoint across to New Yorkers and the nation. Soon reporters learned that no matter who was in charge of the archdiocesan communications office, O'Connor was his own official spokesman.[60]

And the press followed him: Linda Stevens of the *Post*, Charles Bell of the *Daily News*, Ari Goldman of the *Times*, Mike DiAntonio of *Newsday*, a complement of local and network television news, CNN, the wire-services and international journalists as well. To accommodate the media, O'Connor became available for reporters' questions following his Sunday 10:15 Mass. Historically, this was a throwback to the era before World War II, when city newspapers reported on the Sunday sermons of Norman Vincent Peale and Bishop Fulton Sheen. Eventually, the cathedral had to install special platforms to handle the large number of cameras and reporters. If the small town Scranton-like press remained deferential and simply flattered their religious leaders, the metropolitan press seemed to be in the business of creating controversy.

Soon O'Connor rivaled his friend Ed Koch in being asked for statements about an enormous range of issues in the news: abortion, hostages in Lebanon, racial killings in Bensonhurst and Howard Beach, the trial of organized crime boss John Gotti, Donald and Ivana Trump's separation, the "unnatural and unfortunate" mixup at a sperm bank, heavy metal music, and Satanism. As if caught in scenes from a Woody Allen

movie, O'Connor now appeared to have opinions on everything. His remarks to the press fashioned him into a New York celebrity. Clearly, no rabbi or Methodist minister was afforded such a cavalcade of media attention. Nor were the press conferences an especially good forum for complicated theological ideas. But the creation of media celebrity is only one function of the city press. Another is conflict, the very stuff of metropolitan news.

In a television interview at the outset of his arrival in New York, O'Connor's clumsy comparison of the abortion issue to the Holocaust launched the first of many forays between the archbishop and the editorial writers of the *New York Times*. O'Connor's remarks, according to the *Times*, contained "highly offensive implications" for both the Jewish community and for those women who make the "usually painful choice of an abortion."[61] In a blunt New York voice, the editorial concluded that O'Connor had to adopt "a change of tone" if "he means to instruct the community at large." Those loyal to O'Connor interpreted this to mean that the *Times* considered O'Connor unworthy of New York. In the book, *His Eminence and Hizzoner*, written with Mayor Koch, O'Connor recalled the editorial: "[It] implied that Genghis Khan had been reincarnated and was marching toward the city, breathing fire and slaughter."[62]

But this initial verbal crossfire suggested something much deeper. In the media wars that followed—with the *Times* and other liberal newspapers over state abortion funding, distribution of condoms in schools, gay and lesbian rights,"pro-choice" Catholics—all of them concerned a central issue: whose voice would be heard. O'Connor had entered a mine field. These were intellectual currents not unlike the press battles of the Nixon-Agnew era, namely a cultural-political struggle between the religious and secular realms over the interpretation of issues, incidents, matters of public morality and religious belief.

I asked O'Connor what he believed a newspaper or the press should aspire to. He eagerly replied: "The truth, objectivity, the truth! You are always going to have...a diversity of religious and philosophical opinions and orientations on the part of everybody in every quarter." He added: "To me the most irresponsible thing a reporter can do, or an editor, is not to do his or her homework....lack of professionalism....to take a story whatever the data are, whatever the facts are, and twist it to fit his or her preconceptions. That I suppose with the New York press corps is my most severe disappointment. I would like to see a responsible press that either ignores the story or prints the truth to the degree it came by the truth." In response to questions about the ideological orientations of the New York press, he demonstrated his first hand knowledge. He said: "In the tabloid press, for instance, in the *Post*, and the *Daily News*, for every story that rakes me over the coals there is going to be one that praises me. I don't get a sense with those two tabloids of a philosophical hostility....I think that the *New York Times* has tried harder and harder to be fairer to the church. [But] they are so steeped in that abortion ideology that they're never going to get that right...they're never going to do a decent editorial on abortion. But on the church in general they are trying a lot harder." With a smile, he said: "They still mess it up!"

Indeed, if news itself was the struggle over the interpretation of reality, the conflict between O'Connor and the media became a central feature of the new archbishop's style—a style that was more spontaneous, unplanned, unrehearsed, and problematic when one considers the contentious nature of New York politics. On his own behalf, and in his role as archbishop, O'Connor represented an authoritarian Catholic presence challenging Catholics and other citizens alike. The New York press, in part an elite, intellectual media whose responsibilities included that of managing opinions, perspectives and viewpoints for the citizenry, had its own language of "moral discourse." Conflict between the two forces was inevitable. Consequently, the potential for misrepresentation and distortion abounded on both sides.

Reflecting on his reliance upon the media to expand the reach of his pulpit, O'Connor said: "I think without the media, a huge number of people...in the metropolitan area of New York would not know the church's position on a variety of issues [such as] abortion. And I'm certainly not demeaning our local pastors, and schools and the people they reach....I am grateful for the opportunity through television, radio, and the newspapers to reach the great number of people even though in so many cases, I pay a fairly demanding price. But in many cases, I get more praise than I deserve and I get far more credit than I deserve."

To O'Connor the media had become his means to a larger end; the vehicle of serving notice to local, state and national politicians. In effect, the press became O'Connor's channel to Governor Mario Cuomo and Representative Geraldine Ferraro who later in that year was

selected at the San Francisco convention as the Democratic Vice-Presidential candidate. Many memoirs and accounts of these first engagements with O'Connor have documented the early political contests.[63] The spark that ignited the fires between O'Connor and Cuomo came with the archbishop's first televised press conference on Sunday evening, June 24 on WPIX-TV. Here, O'Connor's expansive replies to reporters' questions on the loyalty of Catholic politicians and the "pro-choice" position on abortion resulted in the national press taking up the story of the potential for "excommunication" of Catholic public officials who support positions contrary to church teaching.

Cuomo, with a public spontaneity like O'Connor's, responded swiftly in the press. Later in September, Cuomo's thoughtful Notre Dame speech addressed the role of the Catholic in public life. During the course of the presidential campaign, O'Connor indicated his displeasure with Geraldine Ferraro's candidacy, which left many to conclude that O'Connor had crossed the line separating church and state. In all of this, the press became the vehicle for O'Connor, Cuomo and Ferraro as they fought in the media spotlight, and debated their public, political and moral points of view.

Since 1984, and the coming on the scene of John J. O'Connor, this almost continuous political conflict, especially with Cuomo, appeared contradictory to outsiders; it seemed the situation of the church against itself. Like those of Hughes and Brownson of the last century, such battles recalled the "immigrant church," a dimension of the contentious public culture of Roman Catholicism. Thus O'Connor and Cuomo represented two forces within the same communion.[64]

O'Connor and Abortion Politics

Unlike Cardinal Bernardin, Cardinal O'Connor took bold moves. As the newly elected Chairman of the Bishops' Pro-Life Committee, he created political alliances with the separate anti-abortion organizations and associated himself with the leaders of Protestant fundamentalist churches. Following the Bishops' November 1989 meeting in Baltimore and the adoption of the "abortion resolution," Cardinal O'Connor told reporters "...there was a great sense of urgency about Catholic politicians who take this 'personally opposed-but...' position regarding abortion."[65]

O'Connor next inserted himself into the New York mayoral race, and expressed his dismay at mayoral candidate Rudolph Giuliani's reversal on abortion. O'Connor said: "I get mad at what I consider political evasion...I get mad at...people who before campaigns for public office say, 'Absolutely, categorically, I am opposed to abortion. I am opposed to the laws that permit abortion, that fund abortions and so on,' and then they throw their hat in the ring and immediately everything changes. I have to get mad at that because it's irrational and it's deceitful."[66] More critical of Catholic politicians who took a pro-abortion rights stand, O'Connor was thought to have provided leverage for the opposition candidate, David Dinkins.

Consequently on several occasions Dinkins had to vigorously reaffirm his own stance on abortion-rights. At a press conference several days before the election, Ellen Carton of New York state's Abortion Rights Action League endorsed the Dinkins candidacy and stated, "New York City needs someone to stand up to Cardinal O'Connor's blessing of anti-choice terrorists."[67] When reporters asked Dinkins if he really planned to "stand up to" Cardinal O'Connor, he replied, "Well, that's her rhetorical fashion of expressing it....I suspect the Cardinal is a lot less unhappy with me than with my opponent."[68] Again, by inserting his official doctrine into the campaign, O'Connor himself had become a political issue.

By January of 1990, the Supreme Court's *Webster* decision had its effect on legislative activity in New York, Wisconsin, California, Pennsylvania. Both anti-abortion and "pro-choice" organizations brought their message and lobbying efforts to state capitals. In New York, a law was proposed that would have required parental consent for abortions for girls under 18 as well as restricted Medicaid funding. This was the first measure of its kind to come before the New York state legislature in ten years. However, because the majority of New York's political establishment, Republican and Democratic was solidly "pro-choice," the restrictive abortion legislation had only a slight chance of debate on the floor of the State Assembly. Clearly, many politicians, even several considered supportive of the "pro-life" cause, did not want to go on public record and debate the issue. So, there was a sense of avoidance and a "holding action" taking place in New York on abortion legislation.

If politicians were avoiding the issue of abortion, Cardinal O'Connor, in his role as Chairman of the Bishops' Pro-Life Committee, began his own campaign to bring the "pro-life"

cause before the public. From January to June of 1990 he sustained a prolonged series of engagements and verbal exchanges in the New York and national press. He lobbied both in Albany and Washington, D.C., and battled with Mario Cuomo over statements by Bishops Austin Vaughan and Thomas V. Daily, the newly appointed bishop of Brooklyn. In June he published a controversial pamphlet, *Abortion: Questions and Answers*, where the issue of "excommunication" of "pro-choice" Catholics reappeared. Finally, his hiring of Hill and Knowlton, a public relations agency, became controversial, since some critics questioned the methods the church might employ when persuading the larger non-Catholic society about abortion.

To support proposals before the New York state legislature, O'Connor led a delegation to Albany in January for the annual luncheon sponsored by the New York State Catholic Conference. Governor Cuomo did not attend the event, but instead held a one-hour private meeting with O'Connor and a group of 17 bishops at the Executive Mansion at which they discussed the pending abortion bill. Cuomo did not have a press briefing following the meeting.

Several days later Cuomo's actions became a clue to his views. At the time of lobbying by "pro-choice" advocates, Cuomo spoke at an Albany rally where he appeared with Gloria Steinem and many who were publicly critical of O'Connor. According to the *Newsday* account, "Steinem delivered a slashing attack on the Catholic Church's anti-abortion position, comparing it to Nazism.[69] A nurse who administered a Planned Parenthood clinic on Long Island, and who described herself as "devout Catholic who teaches Sunday School," referred to Cardinal O'Connor and said: "He's not speaking for the church...the church to me is the people."[70] In his brief remarks, Cuomo urged abstinence and contraception as an alternative to abortion. He admitted that he remained undecided about parental consent, but he would fight any effort to cut Medicaid funds for abortion. Frankly, whatever Cuomo told the crowd of 1,000, he appeared to be "pro-choice." Shirley Gordon, executive director of the Family Planning Advocates of New York State told reporters: "He phrases things a little differently than I might but I think he's there."[71] Clearly to Cardinal O'Connor and his allies, Cuomo was one of those Catholic public officials who was "personally opposed but..."

Reaction came from Auxiliary Bishop Austin Vaughan, a staunch pro-life activist who, at the time, was in an unusual place for a bishop, namely Albany's County Prison. He was serving a 15-day sentence for trespassing on the grounds of a Planned Parenthood clinic as part of an Operation Rescue protest. In an interview with the *New York Post*, Vaughan suggested to the reporter that Mario Cuomo risked "going straight to hell if he dies tonight," and quite possibly contributing to the loss of his soul."[72] Vaughan added that he would applaud if Cardinal O'Connor refused Cuomo communion. Despite later denials over the precise wording by Vaughan, the perception generated in the media was that Vaughan had put a curse on Cuomo, and condemned him to hell. This was red meat to the New York tabloid press. It was served with a series of delicious quotes for subway reading and generated a series of responses, clarifications and counter-charges. Consequently the *Post* headline, "Judgement by a Higher Authority," ignited a furor that possessed all the solemnity and rationality of theological burlesque.

Cuomo fired back to reporters: "I think my soul will be judged, like yours and like the bishop's, by a higher and wiser power than the bishop." He concluded: "I am the governor of all the people. It is not my place to try to convert all of them to Catholicism and to insist that they live the way I believe I privately should live."[73] When told by reporters of Cardinal O'Connor's assertion that Bishop Vaughan had not condemned him, and was misquoted, Cuomo replied wryly: "The Cardinal says the Bishop was misquoted! I'm glad."[74]

This web of words drew attention from the most unlikely sources including academics and opinion-makers. Even historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., who ordinarily tended to ignore such disputes, became involved in the melee. In a piece on the Op-Ed page of the *New York Times*, Schlesinger argued that "a majority of conscientious and God-fearing Americans fails to regard the advocacy of freedom of choice as a gravely evil course of action." He said that Vaughan and O'Connor "seemed to be doing their best" to verify fears of the No-Nothings of the 1850's and Ku Klux Klan of the 1920's that the Roman Catholic Church "would try to overrule the American democratic process." Schlesinger concluded: "I thank heaven that Bishop Vaughan and Cardinal O'Connor were not holding forth in 1960. If they had spoken as they speak now, John F. Kennedy would never have been elected President."[75]

Schlesinger's comments succeeded in stirring up a storm of opinion on whether Cardinal O'Connor had the right to make public his

political judgements. Columnists and writers from across the spectrum took sides: Hodding Carter, George Will, Michael Novak, Anthony Lewis, Mary McGrory, Anna Quindlen, Sydney Schanberg, Mark Shields, Tom Wicker. One writer summed up the situation: "If the Rev. Jesse Jackson could run for president, I guess so could Cardinal O'Connor."[76]

When asked about his critics in the press community, O'Connor remarked: "If people pay any attention at all, say, well, there's a preacher preaching what he's supposed to preach when he talks about poverty, drugs or U.S. policy in Central America." He added: "No one accuses me of violating this mystical division between church and state except when I'm talking about abortion. I don't think that makes any sense. I think that's not in keeping with the traditions of Americanism, of free speech."[77] Like the politicians before, O'Connor had served notice to the opinion-makers, the establishment press, that his "pro-life" campaign, unlike Bernardin's or Cooke's, was a campaign they dare not ignore.

The contest with Cuomo continued into the following month of February with the appointment of the new bishop of Brooklyn, Thomas V. Daily, another solidly "pro-life" bishop. In an interview with correspondents Peter Steinfels and Ari Goldman of the *New York Times* the Boston-born prelate stated that the governor would not be welcome to speak at churches in his diocese. He believed Cuomo's stand on abortion was "contradictory" and "inconsistent." A few days later, in an interview with *Newsday*, Daily attempted to modify his decision to mean that Cuomo could not speak on the subject of abortion, but as a "civic official" was invited to the bishop's installation as head of the Brooklyn diocese.[78]

By this point the press had it own problems attempting to describe Cuomo's stand on abortion. In an article in the *Times*, one reporter flatly stated, "The Governor's public position on abortion defies easy characterization."[79] Remember before *Roe v. Wade* there was no U.S. legislation so diametrically opposed to official Catholic teaching as the abortion laws that followed it. Consequently in the 1960 presidential campaign John F. Kennedy could tell the ministers in Houston that he could see no way his oath of office would conflict with the enforcing of laws. He was being honest. He did not have to face the kind of dilemma confronting Cuomo and Catholic politicians today.

When asked to explain his position, Governor Cuomo replied, "I can't do it in a phrase. The only way I can do it was by explaining my whole position at Notre Dame." He added, "I hope this is a passing thing" and expressed regret that with "bishops and cardinals shouting" there had been no real effort to sit down and find common ground on the ways to reduce the number of abortions. He concluded: "Most people would agree that there is something sobering about the number. If we could do this it could construct a dialogue and eventually we'll get to other things. If you are ever to construct any consensus in this country intelligently, you 'must make a start'."[80]

In the March 23 issue of *Commonweal*, a weekly Catholic magazine, Cuomo published a 3,000 word letter which repeated his stance that abortion "must be a matter of the woman's conscience" and added: "We shouldn't and don't expect bishops to be politicians. But I don't think we can exempt them from the demands of prudence in the political arena. When the public perception is that they are not simply exercising their teaching role for Catholics, but trying to influence the outcome of an election, there will be publicity."[81] Seeing the flaw in O'Connor's abortion campaign, Cuomo, well schooled in the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, had advice for his old adversary. Interestingly, the same counsel to exercise prudence is given to young priests as they consider the task of hearing confessions and giving absolution to sinners. For Cuomo, O'Connor and his allies did not mistake any eternal truths. Rather, in the political world, they lacked the cardinal virtue of prudence.[82]

O'Connor and the Question of Press Bias

For organizers and those tens of thousands attending the April 28, 1990 anti-abortion rally at the foot of the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C., the size of the crowd and how their cause was reported in the national media were overriding concerns. In describing the speeches of Vice President Dan Quayle and Cardinal O'Connor, Stephanie Saul of *Newsday* reported:

> O'Connor...drew the largest reaction from the crowd when he blamed the news media for not getting the abortion opponents' message across. "I am amazed at the number of TV cameras here, because I have to wonder what will happen to all the footage," O'Connor said, prompting a chant of "Tell the truth! Tell the truth! Tell the truth," from the demonstrators.[83]

Clearly, the "truth" for this audience was that the national media had either ignored them and or desensitized their message. O'Connor's blunt style as well as the reporting of the April 28 rally, especially in the *Washington Post*, had repercussions within the professional journalistic community.

When considering the complex issues of press bias and abortion coverage, one might recall that so many of the routines of American journalism rely heavily upon an event-oriented news gathering and reporting style. Americans have become a nation of media-oriented critics. Television, film, and compact discs are the shared experience of today's electronic culture. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the more modern a society, the more important its media. In any case, we have grown accustomed to newspapers, newsmagazines, and radio and television newscasts where an editor or producer decides which events are to be covered as well as the length and treatment or interpretation of a particular story. Nevertheless, despite our inclinations to chide the press, individuals and groups often either overstate or misunderstand the "power of the media."

One function of the mass media in our society is to provide the framework for a centrist or mainstream understanding of events and issues which affect public opinion and policymakers. In this sense, Jeffrey Alexander defines a news story as a "nonempirical evaluation" by journalists. He writes:

> To focus primarily on the impact of overt political bias on news reporting...obscures the fact that a major function of the news media is actually to produce "bias," to create through the framework of cognitive statements certain non-empirical evaluations....The problem becomes to discover what particular kinds of evaluative judgements the news media produce, under what conditions they do so, and, perhaps to formulate the ideal...conditions for the performance of their task.[84]

Consequently the way the national and local press and electronic media frame a story for the general public can be crucial for those with competing interests. In the case of abortion coverage, where reporters see no "middle ground" between abortion-rights and anti-abortion advocates, a centrist evaluation or mainstream interpretation may be difficult at best. If there was one person who understood the problem, it was Richard Harwood, ombudsman of the *Washington Post*, who provided the voice that stirred the discussion concerning press bias and abortion. His Sunday, May 6, column, "A Weekend in April," blasted his own paper's handling of the April 28 anti-abortion rally. By comparing the Post's coverage to that of other national papers—the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*—as well as the placement (Section C) and the length (16-inch story), Harwood maintained: "The *Post*'s trivialization of this demonstration was to many of the participants, the ultimate and undeniable proof of the paper's 'bias' on the abortion issue." To further his case, he cited the extensive coverage the *Post* afforded to "Earth Day 1990," and the November, 1989 "pro-choice" rally to commemorate the *Roe v. Wade* decision of the Supreme Court.

More important than his comparison among the organizations seeking press coverage, or the often disputed number of participants at these assemblies was Harwood's candor about the reasons for the apparent editorial bias. Harwood claimed:

> There can be no serious debate about the existence of "biases" in American newsrooms. Journalists are opinionated people. Most of them are pigeonholed fairly by the social scientists as "liberal Democrats." But that, in the view of some of us, is less of a problem in the presentation of the news than the "biases" we carry around as members of a social class whose magnetic pole is the metropolitan East Coast and whose residence is inside the Washington Beltway.[85]

Citing the cultural gulf between journalists and members of the anti-abortion movement as a possible reason for the lack of substantive coverage, Harwood continued:

> Journalists here...not only are not part of the anti-abortion movement but don't know anyone who is. The movement is seen as one of those "fundamentalist," "fringe" things somewhere out there in Middle America or Dixie. These are not the circles in which we travel or from which we draw intellectual nourishment.[86]

The ombudsman's conclusion was equally direct: "This affair has left a blot on the paper's professional reputation." The effect of Harwood's piece prompted the first serious public discussion among journalists about the issue of press bias and abortion; the extensive

four-part series by *Los Angeles Times* press critic David Shaw (7/1-4/90); John Leo's column in *U.S. News & World Report* (7/16/90); John Hughes' column in the *Christian Science Monitor* (7/18/90). Of course, Harwood, Shaw, Leo and Hughes had their critics; chief among them was Jeff Cohen of FAIR (Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting), a left-wing critic of mainstream, centrist media.

From my own research, I have found far too little critical analysis about the abortion issue and the news and almost no serious scholarship regarding critical strategies for treating the religious news.[87] This is one of the prime reasons why I write this paper. The national media has always had difficulty explaining complex news in a contentious climate. Clearly, the debate over the press coverage of the Vietnam War comes to mind. Most recently, the war in the Persian Gulf produced the idea that this new conflict would not "be another Vietnam." Hence the Pentagon's placing limits on the press corps and managing news accounts.

Generally, whether on war news or stories on abortion, how the mainstream press framed the story for the public became crucial to interpretation of events and outcomes. In my view, three brief points are worth considering when examining press performance of abortion coverage. First, complex subjects such as abortion require a variety of sources that go beyond the contest between "pro-life" v. "pro-choice" opponents. And despite the difficulties here, there are solid examples of good journalism. Barbara Brotman's work at the *Chicago Tribune* is an example worth considering. She notes: "We've gotten bogged down in reporting the political ups and downs of the sides, like we're covering sports, and we've gotten away from reporting the issues."[88] Her series on women faced with the personal crisis of abortion both clarifies and illuminates the issue for readers.

Second, journalists often come unprepared for the issues of religion or morality. Perhaps, there is too little formal exposure of news people to theological concepts. Also, the range of religious denominations represented in the United States, the variety of the religious practice and precise theology make truly competent coverage arduous. Again, the cultural and educational gulf implied in Richard Harwood's analysis is an important aspect for consideration. This is treated in greater detail in Kristin Luker's *Abortion: The Politics of Motherhood* (1984)—one of the first books which considered the rise of the "pro-choice" and "pro-life" movements as dimensions of the class structure within American society. This often neglected issue of class is the subject of recent works by Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven* (1991), Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye* (1991) and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Feminism without Illusions* (1991).[89]

Third, and most important from the perspective of press performance, is the institutional commitment toward particular areas of news coverage. For example, the *New York Times* religion correspondents, Peter Steinfels and Ari Goldman, are keenly knowledgeable about church affairs and theology. Steinfels is the former editor of *Commonweal* and writes from that vantage point in presenting his readers with key ideas and trends in religion. Goldman, on the other hand, takes a more institutional view of religious denominations and follows key New York church leaders such as Cardinal O'Connor. Both approaches are important for a comprehensive story of local as well as national dimension. Additionally, subjects like abortion intersect an array of distinct fields, including politics and science, whose beat reporters often write stories from well-defined perspectives. All of these voices within a single newspaper add to a comprehensive picture for readers.

Contrast the *New York Times* approach to news of religion with that of the *Washington Post*. In my interview with Richard Harwood, he told me that his newspaper takes an essentially secularized view of religion, and is interested in religious matters or morality only when they affect politics. He admitted that news of religion was not considered a prestige assignment for reporters nor a high priority at the *Post*.[90]

Thus the variety in the forms of journalism—newspapers, weekly news magazines, television and radio newscasts—and the various levels of professional commitment make for an uneven competence in dealing with news of religion and issues of public morality.[91] All of which creates, directly or indirectly, the conceptual framework or "bias" that is operative when the media treat religious news, morality issues and religious leaders such as Cardinal O'Connor and the Reverend Jesse Jackson.[92]

O'Connor Redux

Reflecting on his election as head of the Bishops' Pro-Life Committee, Cardinal O'Connor told me: "I came into the chairmanship in the best of times and the worst of times. In the worst of

times because the situation is so very bad in terms of the number of abortions, higher than ever. In the best of times, in that the bishops were ready for what we call in economics, the 'take off point.' "

In March O'Connor unveiled his program of action to the Administrative Board of the NCCB, the large committee of bishops whose function is the oversight of committees such as the Pro-Life Committee. They unanimously approved the O'Connor four-part plan. An additional fifth proposal by O'Connor concerned the adoption of a formal policy statement by the bishops toward Catholic politicians who supported abortion rights. The *New York Times* reported that, according to sources, in a closed door executive session there was "considerable opposition" to such a statement, and consequently "the cardinal chose not to submit it to a vote."[93]

O'Connor's national campaign had four distinct strategies: a reorganization of the bishops' committee, stronger grass-roots activism among Catholic organizations, the creation of a political alliance among the disparate groups within the pro-life movement, and, finally, the acquisition of professional services from Hill and Knowlton, and from the Wirthlin Group, for a projected national media campaign. The Knights of Columbus, the 1.5 million member Catholic fraternal organization, had pledged a donation of over three million dollars for the public relations and polling effort. This accounted for the quick approval by the Administrative Board of the bishops.

In my interview with Cardinal O'Connor, he outlined his four steps approach:

> [First] We have broadened the components of the [bishops'] committee....I wanted to do that so I could get a much broader representation, a broader ethnic, black and Hispanic...and regional representation so we now have them from Texas, New Mexico, and all over the United States. This makes it helpful in assuring bishops are not left out.

Next he wanted to enlist help from the leaders of Catholic organizations, educators in colleges and high schools, and family-oriented groups such as Marriage Encounter, the Girl Scouts and the Boy Scouts. He said:

> [Second] We have brought together leadership of the lay groups around the country. They reach millions of people. And another potential that we have is to provide [them with the means] to write letters to the local press to answer negative stories and provide information. It's a massive attempt to affect massive communication strategies....An awful lot of it can be done, however, with minimal expenditure....the cost of a postage stamp or a phone call....A very frugal approach that gets people to talk to people, people to write to people....Grassroots is unquestionably the answer.

In his third strategy, Cardinal O'Connor displayed his own understanding of his role as the captain among the leaders of the "pro-life" cause nationally.

> [Third] I'd say that unifying the movement throughout the country is immensely important. I've had meetings with the various major pro-life leaders, Jack Willke of the National Right to Life, Judy Brown [Americans United for Life], a number of others. I've asked them to come together with me to discuss how we can resolve differences and function in a united form....My next move is to try to bring about a loose federation; it would be an umbrella of all the pro-life organizations, Jewish, Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, leaving each autonomous.... but at least there will be a sense of solidarity and an exchange of information...a further view toward...working together. But their [individual] potential isn't being actualized. I'm convinced there are not thousands, or even hundreds of thousands, but millions of people across the United States who view this.

Lastly, O'Connor addressed the hiring of Hill and Knowlton, the public relations firm, and the Wirthlin Group, the conservative polling organization most closely associated with Ronald Reagan's political campaigns. They had the task of addressing the fundamental problem of why church leaders were not moving the "already committed" middle-group of Catholics to do something coherent and politically effective. O'Connor continued:

> [Fourth] In a recent Wirthlin Group study for example, we learned that there are a huge number of people who think that there are fewer than 100,000 abortions annually. And far more who think there are 500,000 or less annually. It's the exception who know that there are 1.5

> million or more abortions annually. We have begun to recognize the ignorance, when I say "we" I am speaking of the bishops....And, I think, we are beginning to educate more and communicate more. This is the real reason for contracting with the Hill and Knowlton agency. It's not again, contrary to what some people think. It's not an effort to change legislation....It's not an effort to elect any particular candidates or knock any office-holders out of office. It's an effort to educate, to communicate, to raise consciousness, to get people aware of what abortion really is!

The cardinal's explanation to me was lucid and straightforward. The first revelations of his plan, however, in April of 1990, came as a thunderbolt to people within the church and to several executives at Hill and Knowlton. It was as if people on the street forgot that John O'Connor lived at 425 *Madison Avenue*! After all, O'Connor was taking advice from a neighbor, John L. Dilenschneider, the president of Hill and Knowlton. Dilenschneider was the former altar-boy from Our Lady of Victories parish in Columbus, Ohio turned public relations chief, who had credited his Catholic boyhood and good relations with the nuns and priests as his principal teachers in the art of persuasion. Nonetheless, his skill in crisis management at Three Mile Island and the Kansas City Hyatt disaster in 1981 did not prepare him to foresee an immediate crisis at Hill and Knowlton over taking O'Connor as a client. As a result of this initial fumble, the agency lost two managers, who resigned in protest, as well as one account.[94]

Church members also reacted. The articulate, Catholic psychologist and former priest, Eugene Kennedy, on the Op-Ed page of the *New York Times*, decried the idea of church leaders taking lessons from those skilled in the manipulation of public opinion. He called the public relations plan: "a substitute for genuine moral and ethical sense....The implications of this issue abortion] are too deep to be handled like Coke-Pepsi wars." Kennedy warned: "Good shepherds do not invite wolves to help them tend flocks."[95]

The interesting historical irony here was that few recalled that as far back as 1919 the American Catholic bishops had hired a New York public relations firm to assist them in presenting Catholic viewpoints on social teachings to an American public dominated by the prevailing Protestant culture.[96]

The Jesuit weekly, *America*, defended the bishops as having: "...a right to speak out publicly and forcefully....There can hardly be any question that the public is being 'educated' by those who champion abortion rights. For years now, Planned Parenthood had been buying space in national magazines to run its slick ads promoting abortion-rights—slick because they are full of sympathy for the women who face this 'tough choice' while they fastidiously refrain from mentioning, as if it were tasteless or antilibertarian, that the choice for abortion means killing."[97] Clearly, neither church members nor Hill and Knowlton were ready for the adverse reaction the announcement of the public campaign provoked. It was a good test of Admiral O'Connor's ability to sail full-rigged into a hurricane and emerge with sails trimmed but steady on his course.

From O'Connor to Weakland

From Spring into Summer of 1990, O'Connor was hounded by bad press. During TV sweeps-week, he agreed to appear on an WNBC-TV series, entitled, "The Troubled Priesthood." This was the kind of "fast journalism," however well-intended, which simply created anger among O'Connor's defenders and resulted in a letter writing campaign aimed at NBC reporter Mary Civiello. In May, Charles Bell, the *Daily News* religion editor, wrote an extensive four-part series, "The Ship-Shape Shepherd: Prince of the City," which included extensive polling on O'Connor's controversial style and moral teachings.[98] Next the cardinal's nineteen-thousand word pamphlet *Abortion: Questions and Answers*, published in June, while overall a compassionate and humane statement, opened once again a round of hostile charges about the possibility of excommunication and penalties for "pro-choice" Catholic politicians.[99]

This time Congressman Charles Rangel rose to the bait; yet another Catholic New York Democrat caught in the net of being "personally opposed but..." The Catholic magazine *Commonweal* concluded:

> The fallout from the cardinal's statement overshadowed his words. The response of Catholic politicians to the cardinal's use of the E-word was the universal reaction to someone wielding a club: first duck....How this contributes to the stated objective of the bishops' Hill and Knowlton ad campaign to persuade

> the wider public of the church's views is hard to fathom.[100]

Finally, there appeared in the August issue of *Vanity Fair*, the most unlikely source for a story on religion, Leslie Bennetts' strongly critical profile of O'Connor entitled, "God's Man in New York."[101] One prominent New York reporter said: "If anyone had the idea that O'Connor was a 'media manipulator,' this piece demonstrated that John O'Connor has no media plan; it was like walking into a buzz saw!" When asked his reaction to the *Vanity Fair* article, O'Connor admitted: "I can say without paranoia I have been pilloried, lampooned, ridiculed. But the essence of the message gets out there....I must admit I don't consider *Vanity Fair* important."

O'Connor's symbiotic and often impulsive relationship with the media remained his greatest problem. Thus the hiring of Hill and Knowlton may have marked a turning point for John O'Connor. He, too, might have to change. For the successful politician, and O'Connor is no exception, the recasting of the public persona may be crucial for the success of the campaign. The cardinal had always believed that he could talk above the media to his own constituency in New York, but now as the chairman of the Pro-Life Committee, he had to account to his fellow bishops. For someone who had been considered an "outsider" to the NCCB and the organization of the national conference, he needed their solid support to assure his own success. This required careful planning, strong organizational skills, able staff, less spontaneity in public, and for him, the unaccustomed position of being the "point-man" among his colleagues, the bishops.

The liberal *National Catholic Reporter* echoed a common complaint: "There's a growing annoyance among some U.S. bishops that the New York media in general, and the New York Cardinal John O'Connor in particular, are all too frequently determining the church's public agenda."[102] In effect, bishops around the country were in the situation of having to explain and, at times, defend O'Connor's actions and statements. Since O'Connor had so identified himself with the East Coast media, both were obvious targets. Clearly, those many combative moments between O'Connor and the media, and between O'Connor and the politicians, so much the O'Connor style, had to be tempered and attuned to new realities.

No Catholic bishop had exposed himself more to the media than O'Connor. His critics within the church asked: after all the public fights, what's the result? To what end? If the goal is to move the citizenry to a greater appreciation of the Catholic position on abortion, why has the total number of abortions continued to increase? Is not the manner of the presentation, the way we speak to one another, also important to the truth of the message? Curiously, should the political aims of O'Connor's anti-abortion campaign fail—and in many state legislatures this has already been the case—there are some who believe that O'Connor has no alternative but to return to a more centrist stance like that of Cardinal Bernardin.

Already, there was some evidence to suggest compromise and a more muted tone. From his standpoint O'Connor surveyed for me what he believed to be the realistic limits and possible political moves for the "pro-life" camp:

> The probability of a radical turn around so that all abortions would be abolished by way of legislation is very, very highly improbable. So, if you can get legislation through a state legislature that will reduce the number of abortions, restrict the abortions to rape, incest and the proved danger to the life of the mother....while making very clear that you don't accept this legislation [from a moral standpoint]. This is not your goal. [But] you will settle for the best you can get at this point on the demonstrated grounds that you can't get any better....Moral theologians would say you certainly have the right and maybe the obligation to work to support that particular kind of legislation.

To my mind, this stance sounded familiar: not compromise but rather a reluctant accord between the religious and the civic. Was this yet another version of the Hatch Amendment for the state level? This legislation was supported by the bishops in the late 1970's. However there were strong critics among the bishops, including Cardinal Humberto Medeiros of Boston, who called any compromise on abortion a "cooperation in evil." Nonetheless, this is what O'Connor seemed to imply in our interview.[103]

By September, O'Connor had suspended his weekly press conferences. He told me: "Every Sunday after my 10:15 Mass, there was a press conference....that was for six and a half years. In June, I made a decision that I would give that a rest for a while....I told them I would always be available. I would never avoid them. And, yes, I'm quite friendly with some of them....Some of the toughest are the most amiable....One of the

toughest—Gabe Pressman—and I have a very amiable relationship." O'Connor sounded regretful that a stage in his stewardship over the New York Archdiocese has passed. In the words of St. Augustine: "We have not here a lasting city." He too would one day have to pass on the most metropolitan of dioceses to a successor. O'Connor's seventy-fifth birthday, the age of compulsory retirement for bishops, is January 15, 1995, four years away.

In the end, O'Connor had hired Hill and Knowlton to tell him what people were thinking and saying. Perhaps, priests can lose touch—years of schooling, rectory life surrounded by petty privilege, no children or wife. The old precinct politicians that had dominated the immigrant church—those busybodies who attended all the wakes and funerals, and knew who needed help, got people jobs—they told the pastor what was going on.

Faithful voices still speak today: the voices of youth, of the well-educated, of the new women and the old-timers as well. The dialogue between the church and society, and among the various voices within the church continues.

In her WNBC-TV news series on the church, correspondent Mary Civiello directed a series of pointed questions to couples attending a Pre-Cana Conference, the program required of Catholics prior to marriage. One good-looking, university-educated, young Wall Street executive-type, obviously in his twenties, responded respectfully and candidly to Civiello's questions:

> Reporter: Do you think it's all right for a woman to have an abortion?
>
> Executive: It's their bodies, isn't it?
>
> Reporter: But you're a Catholic? Do you consider yourself a Catholic?
>
> Executive: I still do. It [abortion] has nothing to do with my faith!
>
> Reporter: But Cardinal O'Connor says if you don't do what the hierarchy, the church says, you should reconsider whether you should be a Catholic.
>
> Executive: That's his opinion. He's entitled to it![104]

In my interview with John Leo, a columnist for *U.S. News & World Report*, he advises:

> Because they [the bishops] are resurrecting the idea of an authoritarian medieval church that excommunicates, I would have to stress American values and the moral sense of people....I don't think O'Connor has offended on that front.... But I would lose the pugnacious tone. If 60 to 70 percent of the American people have profound moral problems with abortion, speak to that. Say, look we are not looking to ram any legislation through, and our job is to talk to our people, and their job is to talk to you. And, here is what I happen to think. It's profoundly disturbing. It upsets our tenets, and here is why it should upset yours. It should be suggestive and indirect, and not the language of power.[105]

Still another voice is that of Sister Susan Maloney, S.N.J.M. in an article in the *Christian Century*, she writes:

> The real problem for the bishops...is the dominance of men in the public debate on abortion. It is almost trite to write that only women can have abortions....The bishops need to retreat from public debate for a while, not out of a sense of having lost the moral debate, nor to become a sectarian church, but rather to foster an ethos where genuine moral discourse may occur between them and women. The bishops should provide an institutional example of leaders who counter the yelling and screaming in the public square....It is time for moral listening.[106]

ARCHBISHOP WEAKLAND...A TIME FOR LISTENING

Having considered the roles of Cardinals Bernardin and O'Connor in the contemporary Catholic Church, I turn now to Archbishop Rembert Weakland of Milwaukee, because he represents another distinct voice in the church today. Here I will examine his spiritual and intellectual roots and then move on to his ideas on abortion, women, and the press. To fully appreciate him, one must recall Weakland's formation and life as a Benedictine monk, trace his close association with journalists and editors, and probe the conflicts resulting from his public statements in the mass media.

"How is this going to sound in Milwaukee? Is that really going to convert anybody? No, there's something missing."[107] These were the thoughts of Archbishop Rembert Weakland as he listened

to his fellow bishops debate the "abortion resolution" in Baltimore in November of 1989. He felt apprehensive about the aggressive political stance of some of his fellow bishops and the shrill tone of the document.

He left the floor of the assembly in order to return a telephone call from Marie Rohde, the *Milwaukee Journal* religion reporter. In the telephone interview, Rohde asked about the resolution. He replied: "This was a very difficult statement...I mean, we're a bunch of men, you know?"[108] He acknowledged that the statement might be considered the "starting point for renewed discussion about abortion."[109] But he believed that making abortion a political test for Catholics was not a good thing and greater consideration had to be given to the many dimensions of the issue.

Then Weakland disclosed to Rohde that he would initiate in Milwaukee a series of public meetings with women on abortion. He explained: "We have to begin to see where the problem is that we are not being convincing on this [subject]....I feel rather uneasy putting out a statement just among us bishops without consulting the women of the diocese."[110] When criticized for this later, Weakland said he believed that listening to women in a public forum was just "part of my job." This in turn might lead women to consider church teaching on abortion and sexual morality more seriously. Also, this process could begin an innovative moral discourse for Catholics: not men talking about women's issues; nor the deadlock rhetoric of "pro-life" or "pro-choice"; but rather new grounds for dialogue within the church.

Weakland thought church officials who uttered political threats and advocated excommunication of "pro-choice" Catholics were misguided. To him actions like these would alienate sincere Catholics who had problems with church teachings. In my interview with Marie Rohde, she told me:" [At the time] I had the impression [Weakland] was thinking out loud."[111] Over the years, those close to Weakland, including Rohde, had grown accustomed to his candid remarks as well as his instinct for bringing serious issues to public attention.

After speaking to Weakland, Rohde next phoned Maureen Gallagher, the head of the Archdiocesan Office for Parishes, and leader of the group who would be responsible for preparing the sessions. Gallagher's initial comment was: "He's going to do what?"[112] In the supercharged political climate which marked the abortion debate, even Weakland's staff was caught off guard. He had taken a daring step. Editors at the *Journal* placed Rohde's article on the front page with the headline: "Weakland to Hear Women on Abortion."

There are several factors that make Rembert Weakland unique among American Catholic bishops today. His intellectual abilities, musical talent and Benedictine background contribute to his personal appeal. Moreover, among the top leadership of the American church, he personifies and keeps alive an intellectual heritage of thinkers such as Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, John Courtney Murray, Frank Sheed and Maisie Ward.

When one considers his role in the archdiocese and the Catholic Church nationally, it is important to note the historical, social and ecclesiastical context that he inherited when he took over the archdiocese in 1977. Here he benefitted from a liberal political climate in Wisconsin, a church of German immigrants, and exceptionally talented predecessors: Samuel A. Stritch, Albert G. Meyers, and William E. Cousins. Rarely does a diocese have such succession of strong, progressive leaders. Both Stritch and Meyer were promoted to the Chicago Archdiocese, and later became Cardinals. Cousins and Weakland were considered models of the "pastoral bishops" whose primary task was the implementation of Vatican II reforms.

Dialogue and lay participation were the hallmarks of the Vatican Council II. Under Weakland's leadership, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee moved away from the tradition of a clergy-dominated organization to one of active collaboration with lay people. This new governance might be called a "populist" church in which the laity participated in decision-making on financial, liturgical, spiritual and social-justice concerns. In the so-called "Age of the Laity," Catholic organizations in the United States such as the "Call to Action," and biblically-based spiritual development programs like "RENEW" recommended new governing bodies such as parish and diocesan councils to replace the older autocratic style of pastors and bishops.

In this new circumstance, everybody had something to say. Consequently, dialogue and active participation did not necessarily translate into greater efficiency nor did it make the bishop's job easier. Some of the voices in the Milwaukee Archdiocese, especially those of the more conservative members, were dubious of a democratic or a participatory lay-run church, and some elements were openly hostile to Weakland. His actions and broad-minded opinions angered

elements within the archdiocese, especially those in the "pro-life" movement of whose aggressive tactics Weakland was sometimes critical. Over the years, the ultra-right wing Catholic newspaper, the *Wanderer*, campaigned vigorously against Weakland and continually brought him to the attention of authorities in Rome.

In such a fractious climate there is evidence to support the notion that the church has greater difficulty today when clarifying its stands, especially on social and political issues. American Catholics represent such a broad range of political and social commitments: civil rights, anti-war and anti-abortion movements. On the subject of abortion, while there has remained a strong consensus among active lay Catholics regarding the immorality of abortion, nonetheless there are significant differences as well as internal conflict of opinion and approach.

This expressed itself in Milwaukee as it had in other parts of the country. For example, at Marquette University, the Jesuit institution in Milwaukee, the abortion issue had polarized some faculty along "pro-choice" and "pro-life" sides. Theologian Daniel Maguire was among the Catholics who signed the 1984 *New York Times* advertisement supporting abortion-rights; he was among the founders of "Catholics for Free Choice."[113] Also, at Marquette, Quentin Quade, the executive vice-president and professor of political science, had taken an active role in the Wisconsin "pro-life" movement and was openly critical of Weakland's public meetings with women on abortion.[114] Curiously a reverse phenomenon at Catholic colleges and universities across the country may be in evidence today. Faculty have avoided the subject of abortion because of potential conflicts over academic freedom and political reprisals from the Right and the Left.

Thus in the religious and political whirlwind surrounding the acrimonious abortion debate, Archbishop Weakland's willingness to open the discussion about abortion is well within the American traditions of free speech and the freedoms related to religion and the press. Nonetheless, for many within the Catholic Church, especially the leadership in Rome, these remain foreign and even dangerous American ideas. What motives prompted Weakland to hold hearings in the first place? What were the sources of his own spiritual and moral authority to take such a controversial course of action? His Benedictine spiritual and intellectual foundations, family history, and Vatican experience provide insights.

Weakland and the Order of St. Benedict

No single factor better explains Archbishop Weakland's decision to invite discussion about abortion than the fact he is a monk. Monks have a tradition which values community life, and when the monastery is forced to make difficult decisions, listening to one's fellow monks becomes a means of discernment. Little in Weakland's early career could have suggested that he would one day assume the role of an archbishop. As a monk and priest of Saint Vincent Archabbey in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, his was a life of community prayer, teaching, liturgical music and intellectual pursuits. In the Roman Catholic practice, priests of religious orders (for example, Franciscans, Jesuits, Dominicans, Benedictines, etc.) usually forgo advancement to episcopal rank.[115] Additionally, Benedictine monks promise a vow of "stability," wherein they choose to stay within the walls of the monastery to the benefit of community life.

When Pope Paul VI appointed Weakland as archbishop of Milwaukee in 1977, Weakland became an exception to the rule. At the time of Weakland's selection, the pope confided in him and fellow Benedictine Basil Hume, the newly appointed archbishop of Westminster in England, that: "What the people are looking for today is not a bishop but an abbot!"[116] Unlike the bishop's studied bureaucratic style, the role of the abbot was that of a father fostering community among members and addressing the spiritual and personal needs of the monks. Also, bishops are appointed by Rome, whereas abbots are elected by their community. Thus the Pope was indicating that modern times demanded that church leadership be drawn from religious models concerned for the pastoral, and spiritual well-being of the people they served.

The founder of the Benedictines, an early religious order, was Benedict of Nursia (c.480-547) who is considered by the church the patron saint of Europe, and rightly so. In the founding of monasteries throughout Europe, Benedict and his monks helped shape Western Civilization in art, architecture, music, science, theology and philosophy. In the process the spiritual and intellectual groundwork of monasticism has always been a powerful religious and cultural force especially in the so-called "dark ages." As with Luther and the later Reformation period, the religious and political role of the monasteries often acted as a counterpoint and check on authority powerfully vested in the local bishops. Tension between the autonomy of the monks,

and the authority of the bishop are not dissimilar to quarrels between the Vatican and a particular diocese, bishop or outspoken theologian of today.

As far back as the sixth century, Benedict and his monks understood the difficulties associated with religious life. The *Rule of Saint Benedict*, the laws and program of spiritual formation written by Benedict, governed the lives of the monks. From a modern standpoint, the rule possesses remarkable common sense, simplicity, and a compassionate awareness of the individual monks' contribution to the community. For example, Benedict told the monks how to deal with the individual differences among their members, how to cope with the customs of a particular abbey, and about the quality of leadership expected of an abbot. The third rule or chapter provided a means to deal with those conflicts that inevitably occurred. In this situation a "counsel of the brothers," a discernment process, or in today's jargon, for "conflict resolution," Benedict prescribed: "Whenever an important matter is to be undertaken in the monastery the abbot should call the entire community together and should set forth an agenda."[117]

Thus the use of dialogue to settle community problems was part of the tradition and an important feature of Weakland's spiritual formation. Commenting on his attraction to the Benedictine life, Weakland told me: "It's a very beautiful way of life. I think there is something to be said about the way the monks are to relate to one another in the Rule....Maybe Benedictinism isn't what people are looking for today. Instead, they are looking for heroic things. And Benedictinism is moderation, balance, which is what people need today. And the Rule has a lot of that built into it."

Weakland's straightforward personality, intellectual curiosity and range of talents also can be traced to his family background and education. He was born in 1927 in the small mining town of Patton, in western Pennsylvania. He was one of six children. His father died at an early age which left his mother as the provider of the family. Like so many other families of the Great Depression, the Weaklands were forced to go on welfare. Two things that defined their lives were the Catholic Church and the Democratic Party. Weakland's grandfather had been a coal miner, a loyal Democrat, a staunch supporter of John L. Lewis.

Active involvement in the parish community and local politics was typical of families in the coal towns. Rembert was a young lad when his mother, Mary Kane Weakland, ran for public office. In an episode reminiscent of a Frank Capra movie, Weakland recalled:

> I must have been...eight or nine. My mother had run for tax-collector....she decided to run for office and failed.... And I will never forget that because those [incidents] make great impressions on you. I had gone to school that day waiting for the results and, of course, my class had voted for my mother. [It] was so hard to go to school the next day when she had lost....But I remember the man that won and I remember my mother saying, and crying: "It's a man's world and a woman still doesn't have a chance."

These earliest recollections of his mother's failure to win acceptance, the handicaps placed on women's aspirations, and growing up in difficult times had profound influence over him throughout his life. In 1986, Archbishop Weakland was chairman of the bishop's committee which wrote the pastoral letter, "Economic Justice for All," which considered questions of the relevance of morality to economic policy. In the document, the bishops addressed the needs of Americans who suffer unemployment, poverty and discrimination based on race, ethnic origin and sex. Clearly, his childhood was a reminder to him that people have similar problems today.

Weakland entered the Benedictines in 1945 and was ordained a priest in 1951. His theological training brought him to universities in Rome and Paris. Later, his talent for the piano brought him to New York's Juillard School of Music and Columbia University. Like a modern day Palestrina, Weakland was a priest and concert musician conversant in the worlds of music and philosophy as well. He lectured, wrote about liturgical music, and collaborated with W.H. Auden on a production of the ancient *Play of Daniel*. From 1957 to 1963, he taught music at St. Vincent College. Then, in 1963, he was elected abbot of St. Vincent Archabbey. Four years later in Rome, he was elected Abbot Primate of the International Benedictine Confederation. Thus, at forty, Weakland had become the titular head of the Benedictine order worldwide.[118]

Weakland's fluency with languages—Latin, Greek, German, French, Italian—and his ease of movement in various artistic, religious and intellectual circles was extraordinary. His career may be best described as rooted in these differing yet complementary worlds. He served on many

Vatican commissions and synods, and became Chancellor of the College of Sant'Anselmo in Rome, famed for its liturgical education. It was while in Rome that Weakland came to understand the leadership of Pope Paul VI and the complexity of governing a trans-national church with peoples and dioceses on every continent. At the same time, he observed first-hand the Vatican's meddling in Italian politics that convinced him of the importance of the separation of church and state. This experience taught him about the problems created by the clash of cultural and political systems.

The European notion of an "official church" as the "custodian of the community values" contrasted greatly with the American experience which separated religion and the secular. For Americans, and Weakland is no exception here, religion is a matter of personal decision. In his writings and public speeches Weakland reveals his understanding of the inherent contradictions when churches pursue aggressive political policies. For him, the church should not be active politically in support of particular candidates or attempt to dictate specific government policies even in matters as legalized abortion.[119]

In my interview with Archbishop Weakland, he spoke about abortion from the perspective of the American political culture:

> I'm inclined to think that the church has minimized the difficulties. So the question of two values is constantly being brought into question. The one being the value of human life in the womb. The second being the value of choice....I don't think we have thought out clearly the relationship there between the church's doctrine and the legal or civil question.

How should the church proceed in attempting to influence public opinion on abortion?" I asked. Weakland responded:

> I have met so many women—and I'm sure men as well—who were morally "pro-life" but also wanted to leave open the option of choice, feeling that they had two values here they did not know how to put together. There's also a fear that if you say that you want to take away the right to do wrong in that sphere, then will the church say the same thing down the road in a whole list of other issues? That leaves people very nervous.

Regarding the dilemma of political coalitions with fundamentalist Christians and the potential risks to the Catholic Church of political activity, Weakland counseled:

> To me [anti-abortion activism] is the one area in the conference of bishops where we are totally involved in politics. And we're not clear how we're involved....It struck me that suddenly the voice of the Catholic Church is being carried by many political lobbyist groups over which I have absolutely no control or say as a Catholic bishop. And so, even though it's the area where we are most involved, I think it's the area we least control. And that's a strange situation to find oneself in. Probably because we have done it with coalitions of one sort or another.

Weakland's lively mind and biographical background provide an insight into a man of intellectual and spiritual vigor. A leading American theologian told me recently that Weakland may be the model for bishops today. His decision to have public meetings to listen to women was for him an appropriate course of action. This was an example of his theology and style of Benedictine leadership—a vision of a church and world in dialogue.

Listening Sessions, March/April, 1990

Weakland's decision to "go public" and have a series of meetings with women on abortion rested on years of experience in parish and diocesan-wide councils, consultations and synods. The growing phenomenon of lay-run church organizations along with the severe shortages of newly ordained priests and religious sisters to staff parishes was fast changing the character of the American Catholic church. For example, Maureen Gallagher, who chaired the coordinating committee to plan for the listening sessions, was the head of the Department of Parishes for the archdiocese. In this capacity she oversees the offices of liturgy and education as well as other programs offered to the 286 parishes of the diocese. She has a central office staff of 50 of which there are 33 professionals including priests and religious sisters who report to her, a lay woman.

In January of 1990, plans were announced for six listening sessions in late March and early April. The committee charged with the planning of the listening sessions included Judy Gillespie, the director of the Office of Pro-Life Activities; Gregory Bell, the director of Communications

responsible for press and media relations; Peg Flahive, the director of the Human Concerns Office; and Betty Jean Jezo, the chair of the Archdiocesan Commission on Women. Later, Maureen Gallagher brought in Mary Feeley, the director of campus ministry at Marquette University, who had the task of writing the final report.

The meetings were designed to give women an opportunity to talk and be listened to. Each session was aimed at a particular audience in the various locations around the archdiocese. Three invitational meetings drew women from the professions: women in public office, medicine, health care and hospitals, law, college and secondary school administration, teaching and parish ministry. The public sessions were open to all Catholic women of the diocese. In all over 900 individuals participated in the six sessions. Each of the two-hour meetings included a welcoming talk by Weakland, followed by a process of information and opinion gathering from group leaders who directed the discussions among the participants seated at tables.

The stated aim of the meetings was to provide the archbishop with "feedback," in order to develop a major pastoral statement on abortion which would appear in a final report later in May. At each of the sessions, Weakland's comments were brief. He told the audience of women:

> There is no doubt that [the church's] stance is clear: from the moment of conception, life begins, and that life is sacred to us. On the other hand, I would not be honest with myself if I didn't say that there are many people, I'm sure Catholics as well, who are not completely convinced of that position. There are also many Catholics that both seek abortion and provide abortion. So, it's important for us to ask the question about our own teaching....Perhaps we failed in our teaching...perhaps, we have not made that teaching clear or have argued so much about possible exceptions that we lost the main thrust.[120]

Weakland saw his job as that of going into the crowd, meeting the women, and most of all listening to them. In groups of ten to twelve participants, discussion leaders had a series of questions which included:

> What are the ways in which Catholic women interpret the phrase "pro-choice?" Has abortion become primarily a women's issue? Have you found that there are some who believe that circumstances exist that could warrant an abortion? Do you feel there are points of compromise morally/medically/politically?[121]

What did Weakland hear? To my mind, two primary considerations of his stand out. First, he indicated that he generally agreed with some feminist scholars and others that women's moral reasoning differs from men's.[122] He told me:

> Having heard that female voice I sense their approach is different. And it ties in so much with the whole question of feminism today. Also, the relationship between male/female in today's society...the abortion issue becomes a symbol for so many larger issues.

Second, Weakland acknowledged that historically the church has made exceptions in its moral teaching when recognizing the rights of the state in capital punishment cases and in times of war. Nonetheless there was little by way of exception in Catholic moral teaching regarding sexual morality or the possibility of abortion in cases of rape, and incest. He explained:

> The church's...presumption is always for life. That's fine. The church will make an exception for a just war, proportionality, etc...The Church will say fine. Capital punishment shouldn't be used but the church has always admitted that a state has that right. Proportionality again. In a case like this [abortion], they [women] feel that because it involves them, the church will not make an exception. So that those so-called "exceptions" are where the debate has to wrestle a bit more.

To Weakland, because women are not represented in the top leadership of the Catholic church, it is politically difficult for them to open a debate on exceptions to the moral law regarding rape, incest, and circumstances that threaten the life of a mother. He concluded: "And I think those are the areas that we have got to listen to in the abortion debate. Because there is something about the logic of it that isn't totally solid until then." Hence Weakland acknowledged there was something to talk about. In this sense Weakland was unlike O'Connor and Bernardin, neither of whom would have opened to public discussion the matter of church teaching on abortion.

Under guidelines of confidentiality, news reporters were allowed to cover the six sessions.

Stories appeared in the Milwaukee and national press that reflected many of the opinions, concerns and criticisms of church leadership and teachings on sex. Perhaps the idea of Catholics even talking about abortion and sexual matters may have seemed different. Nonetheless, even in the fairly controlled setting of the listening sessions disagreement surfaced between those who favored discussion on abortion and those who considered the church's position closed.

At the sessions for women professionals, the notion of discussion received approval. One women commented: "To me, [the Listening Sessions] modeled a correct sense of church, that people can have ethical differences and they don't have to cast each other out of the church because of them."[123] At these sessions, few women were politically "pro-choice" adherents. However, women considered the matter of abortion an open question for the society as a whole and a matter worth discussing for Catholics.

Among the women the Vatican's ban on artificial birth control came into serious question and was considered a strong factor in weakening the bishops' credibility on the abortion teaching. One college professor stated:"If the pope or the male clergy had to deal with children for any length of time or finance their college education, the views of contraception would change."[124] Later, Archbishop Weakland told me: "The phrase that one of the women used that got quoted a lot...was: 'We want our choice before conception.' And that this is pretty much where women are....How can I say this?...We haven't thought out our teaching in terms of their [women's] receptivity." Again, to be fair to Weakland, he was not advocating moral teaching set in terms of audience appeal, but rather showing the need to develop the church's moral reasoning with the help of authentic feminine discourse.

In contrast to these closed sessions, the meetings which extended invitations to all Catholic women had a different message. The sessions were dominated by members of the "pro-life" movement. Some of these participants saw legal abortion as the central issue and test for American Catholics. Some were long-time protesters who wanted the opportunity to demonstrate strong convictions on abortion to their co-religionists. There was less tolerance concerning abortion as a public matter, some confusion, and even resentment directed at Weakland for having initiated the discussions.

Leaders of the anti-abortion movement present asked reporters: What were Weakland's motivations in calling for discussion? Typical of the comments from these participants underscored a belief that the sessions played into the hands of "pro-choice" forces within Wisconsin a the expense of the work of the "pro-life" movement. One woman stated:

> I think our children in our schools can't depend on pro-life groups going around saying it's wrong. I think they've done so much. It has to come from the school, from the clergy, from the priests. The evangelical churches aren't afraid to say abortion is a sin. They aren't afraid to offend people in their congregations.[125]

Clearly, Weakland understood that his decision to open any conversation about abortion was going to be controversial. He had hoped to encourage those women in the middle, free from the extreme positions, to enter into the public discussion. Weakland explained:

> There's a tremendous potential of wonderful women in the middle and they're the ones we have to listen to. And I find their judgements prudent and sagacious....The problem we face, it seems to me, is that the longer we wait on this the more bitterness invades the middle group. Then, the harder it is to open any kind of dialogue.

What Weakland had attempted in the listening sessions was difficult indeed. One observer in Milwaukee told me that for Weakland it was like "riding two tigers." He had to confront the twin problems of the polarization within the church over abortion and sexual morality and, at the same time, deal with political forces external to the church. Again, this was a matter of two audiences: discussion within the church community in order to contribute to the debate in the larger society. The inclusion of press coverage meant that forces internal and external to the archdiocese—Catholic bishops, women's organizations, "pro-choice" and "pro-life " advocates, conservative and liberal forces within the church—were watching.

Consequently, how effective Weakland and his staff handled the press was crucial to set the record straight in the public forum about official church teaching, and, at the same time, open the discussion about sexual morality within the church. For conservatives within the church, these were contradictory impulses. Thus how the press performed its tasks, forming positive or negative perceptions, had a bearing on

Weakland's ability to carry out his experiment in church dialogue. Clearly Weakland and his organizers would have to give it meticulous attention.

Weakland: Media and Message

From April to late May, Archbishop Weakland received over 250 letters from women expressing a range of opinions about the listening sessions and personal beliefs on abortion. During this period he generally refrained from making much public comment on abortion or about the listening sessions in order to allow Mary Feeley enough time to study the record of the six sessions and write the final report. Both Weakland's twenty-one-page statement on abortion and the forty-page final report, sixty-one pages of text in all, were ready for publication on May 24. During this period, news articles and interviews with Weakland appeared and stimulated controversy. Four considerations are important: first, Weakland's relationship to and assessment of the Milwaukee press; second, the circumstances surrounding the timing of the press release, and, in particular, Weakland's May 21 interview in the *Milwaukee Sentinel*; third, the substance of Weakland's comments about the "pro-life" movement; and finally, the public response to Weakland and his views.

Milwaukee is among the few cities in the United States that has competitive morning and evening newspapers, oddly enough both owned by the same corporation. Marie Rohde of the *Milwaukee Journal* and Mary Beth Murphy of the *Milwaukee Sentinel* are reporters on the religion beat. In a city such as Milwaukee, a place of strong family, ethnic and religious ties, readers take the news of religion seriously. Archbishop Weakland acknowledged the unique place the news of religion has in the Milwaukee press:

> I'm privileged, in a way, but also condemned here in Milwaukee with two daily papers. Both of them have full-time religion editors....Both of them are women. Both of them are Catholics.... This is an interesting moment for Milwaukee but not every city is in the same situation. But, for Milwaukee, the religious community here is newsworthy.

Most Catholic dioceses around the country have Offices of Communication with the task of dealing with the public media on behalf of the bishop. While reporting structures vary from diocese to diocese, and little in Canon Law provides guidance, there appears to be a solid collaborative working arrangement between Weakland and his Communications Director, Greg Bell. As chief spokesperson of the archdiocese, Greg Bell has the responsibility of press and media relations and planning. He and a staff of six have organized their efforts along the lines of a college or university public relations department. Bell's approach is based on relating to specific audiences or segments of the public that make up the archdiocese. Bell, a layman, may be among the few communications directors with a background in marketing. Occasionally, he will employ informal polling and formal research as well as monitor telephone calls to the chancery office which make comment on Weakland.

Bell is knowledgeable about theology, church affairs, and the print, television and radio press corps that serves the market. His is a planning-based approach to offices and agencies within the diocese for the purpose of providing support for public outreach. This contrasts to the reactive style that so often characterizes church-press relations on the local level. Nonetheless, Bell's job is often driven by inquiries and events in the archdiocese, and he has had to contend with unexpected and sometimes controversial news. For example, in 1988 he handled press relations in a much publicized case of a priest accused of pedophilia. Because of these and other cases, often involving complicated legal matters, Bell told me that this situation has brought about greater professionalization and clarification of church policies. Bell has lectured to university classes and public relations seminars on how religious organizations handle controversial news.

If the church and press are frank about their relationship, the news of religion must primarily be news. Newspapers should not be expected to accept press releases uncritically from diocesan officials. In contrast to this, both the *Journal* and *Sentinel* place stories in the run of the newspaper competing for space and importance among the other news items of the day. Sometimes these are stories of conflict within the structures of organized religion.

For example, in June of 1986 at the bi-annual meeting of Catholic bishops which took place in Collegeville, Minnesota, Mary Beth Murphy broke the story in the *Sentinel* of a secret letter sent to the American bishops by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. In the letter leaked to Murphy, the Vatican official and close advisor to the pope stated that the official NCCB policy concerning

AIDS education had "caused confusion" among American Catholics. Newspapers throughout the country carried Murphy's story. Thus, neither church members nor its leadership are immune from the problems created by a reliance upon the mass media.

As the release date for Weakland's abortion statement and final report of the Listening Sessions approached both local and national news organizations wanted access to Weakland for interviews and copies of the text. There was significant interest and pressure to report on Weakland since his was a different style from that of New York's Cardinal O'Connor. In a series of miscalculations, the decision to grant interviews before the formal release of Weakland's statement and complete report may have influenced how the story got reported around the country. Internally there were disagreements among Weakland's key advisors concerning which news organizations should be given priority. A few argued that before interviews on the subject took place, the complete text and story should appear in the *Catholic Herald*, the archdiocesan newspaper.

Instead, Weakland agreed to give an exclusive interview to the *Journal* with the understanding it would be a front page story that would run Sunday, May 20. Consequently, this was published four days before the actual release of the complete text in the *Catholic Herald*. Marie Rohde's story headlined "Abortion: Weakland Rejects Tactics of Pro-Lifers" contained an interview with Weakland which explained his position regarding abortion with particular emphasis on the Church's relations with "pro-life" groups. Bell made a similar offer to Peter Steinfels of the *New York Times*. Steinfels preferred to wait until the next day, Monday, May 21; his piece appeared on page 12 under the headline, "Flexibility Urged On Abortion Issue."

In the *Milwaukee Journal*, Weakland explained that while he strongly endorsed Birthright, a counseling and support service for women, nonetheless he had misgivings about the tactics of the "pro-life" movement. He stated: "Some of the rhetoric and literature seems ugly and demeaning." Also, Weakland speculated that the association of the movement with fundamentalist positions was not in the interest of the Catholic Church. Consequently, he would have to talk with priests and other pastoral ministers about "this unwholesome influence and what it means."[126]

Because of the competitiveness between the two Milwaukee dailies, the coverage in the *Journal* required the *Sentinel* to have a second-day story. Knowing that she had been scooped, Mary Beth Murphy requested an interview with Weakland, which Bell arranged for Sunday morning, May 20. The following day, Murphy's piece was published with the headline: "Weakland: Pro-choice Could Be OK: Stance at Odds with US Conference of Bishops." In the opening paragraphs of the article, Murphy recast Weakland's interview:

> Asked if one could be a good Catholic and still hold a pro-choice opinion, depending on the definition used for "pro-choice," Weakland said: "Yes. There are possibilities there. One could reconcile their stance with a church position. I think that a possibility. That's why you have to talk to each one."[127]

Reactions to Murphy's article were immediate. And, if these initial reactions were typical, then the controversy surrounding Weakland had begun. In Milwaukee and around the country individuals began to take sides either in praise or condemnation of the outspoken archbishop. To some, he had been perceived as "breaking ranks among the Catholic bishops on abortion." Frances Kissling, the president of Catholics for a Free Choice, called Weakland's statement a "real breakthrough...It gives a lot of hope to Catholic politicians who have only been hearing criticism."[128] Others looked unkindly on Weakland's statements about the "pro-life" movement. Monica Migliorino of Citizens for Life said: "I find it ludicrous that he [Weakland] would criticize the movement when he hasn't done one darn thing to advance the cause."[129] Matt Trewhelia, a spokesman for Operation Rescue in Milwaukee, called Weakland "a perfect example of a man who has been educated beyond his intelligence."[130]

Because few people had read the text of Weakland's statement and the final report until it first appeared in the *Catholic Herald* on Thursday, May 24, more people reacted to the coverage than the text. So much so that the *Journal* decided to print the complete statement and text on Sunday, May 27. On Sunday June 3, they published a full page of letters that had been received. Editors in Milwaukee understood that news of religion was NEWS!

In my interview with Weakland several months later, he commented on the press's role in reporting and the *Sentinel* interview: "My problems came mostly with the *Sentinel* headlines. People don't read, they read only headlines. And those

headlines influenced how it was picked up by *USA Today*, and other papers."

Weakland believed that because of the headlines and the changing of his meaning, two conflicting impressions of his opinions on abortion got out: one was a carefully-stated theological view that included as Catholic teaching those exceptional cases of rape and incest; and a second view that Weakland's opinion was reducible to a "pro-choice" stand. He told me: "If they read the *New York Times*, then they got one impression. If they read *USA Today*, they got another impression." He lamented: "How do you ever get anything under control after it's out there. That's one of the major things with regard to the media. You can correct it in the local paper but it only has a small environment that is affected by it. We as a church haven't learned yet how to deal with all of that. I don't think we know how to do that effectively."

Regarding coverage of the March Listening Sessions, he told me: "I thought the media were good on the listening sessions. I have no objections to the way in which the local and national press handled it. They were very respectful. They certainly did not intimidate any dialogue....We had a rule that they could not cite anybody without asking that person ahead of time....And they kept that." Weakland enjoys the company of journalists, and has written occasionally for the *New York Times*, *Commonweal*, and the *London Tablet*. He is also very knowledgeable about how newspapers and journalists influence opinion. He is an occasional guest before editorial boards such as those of *Time* and *Newsweek*. He makes clear distinctions between the editorial policies of Milwaukee's politically liberal *Journal* and those of the more conservative *Sentinel*. He told me: "I enjoy talking to the *Journal* editorial boards....the *Sentinel* I find more ideological. And that's a harder group to deal with....I know how to deal with the secular mind. I went to Columbia University, so my background permits me to do that. But I have much more difficulty dealing with the *Sentinel* which claims that it's their job to keep the city ethical. And so they tend to appear self-righteous and you're always guilty."

Within days of Weakland's public statements on abortion and the publication of the final report of the listening sessions, newspaper editorials appeared in the Milwaukee press. The *Journal*'s lead editorial entitled, "Weakland's Call to Reason," championed his cause:

> He listened to what women had to say about abortion. Now, in his remarkable response to what he heard, Weakland may well have provided a glimpse—for all Americans, not just Catholics—at how the two sides in this polarized debate could be moved toward the middle....All in all, what Weakland has written is remarkable...because it counsels both sides in the debate to really listen to each other. Together, perhaps they can move toward a more civil discourse.

In a final paragraph, the *Journal* added what might have been on many minds:

> It would be sad indeed if the extremists at either end of the spectrum distorted the archbishop's remarks to suit their own purposes. That is less likely to happen if more moderates join the debate, instead of leaving it to the militants.[131]

The *Milwaukee Sentinel* editorial agreed: "Weakland's statements last weekend established significant distinctions between what is deemed morally wrong and what is realistic.... Weakland has injected a new element, and broken some new ground."[132]

At the same time, the *Sentinel* conducted a survey of the 385 active priests in the Archdiocese to gauge their assessment of Weakland. Over 80 percent of the priests responded "excellent" to the question: "Would you say Archbishop Weakland's overall job performance is excellent, good, not so good or poor?"[133] More important, several days after the release of the abortion statement, at the Spring Assembly of the Milwaukee priests, Weakland was greeted with a standing ovation. One senior priest, John Luksjewicz, told me: "Weakland came to Milwaukee a citizen of the world...he's winning people for God. He's not here simply to win arguments."[134]

Reaction and Reason

Marie Rohde suspected trouble. Over the years, Rohde had not made it a habit to cover Weakland's Sunday Mass. However, on the morning that the *Journal* broke the story of Weakland's abortion statement, she decided to go to his public Mass at Saint John's Cathedral. While sitting there listening to his sermon in a church crammed with worshipers, she had bothersome thoughts. She told me: "He's so vulnerable. He's taking on sometimes crazy people. And he's telling them that they are crazy!"[135]

In Rohde's article of May 21, under the caption, "Abortion: Weakland Not Looking for a 'Holy War,' she reported on the impact of fundamentalism on Catholics. Weakland had become a favorite target of Milwaukee fundamentalist broadcasters, among them Tom Phillips, president of "Catholics Serving the Lord." He once told listeners to a cable television call-in program on WVCY-TV, a Christian broadcasting station, that Weakland was "morally corrupt and spiritually bankrupt."[136] Another zealot, who often joined Phillips on radio programs, was Michael Schwartz, Director of the Catholic Center in Washington, D.C., and former Milwaukee native. Calling for Weakland's removal because of his "pro-abortion betrayal of church teaching," Schwartz began collecting signatures for a nation-wide petition to Archbishop Agostino Cacciavillan, the newly appointed papal pro-nuncio to the United States. Schwartz claimed to have received over 25,000 endorsements.[137]

The week following the release, Greg Bell's office received 133 telephone calls: 31 supported Weakland, 20 were very negative, 39 had questions about Weakland's statement, and 44 were requests for interviews by reporters from national newspapers and ABC's "Nightline with Ted Koppel."[138] Naturally, most of the attention had been the result of the *Sentinel* interview. At this point both Weakland and Bell agreed that control over the situation might be required in order to forestall misinterpretations and thus create greater problems. Consequently, Bell turned down requests for interviews, including "Nightline." And Weakland mailed to the Catholic bishops in the United States his complete statement and text of the final report, alerting them to potential misunderstandings in the press.

Finally, Weakland wrote a reaction piece for the *Sentinel* which took exception to the paper's characterization of his opinion as "pro-choice." In a column that appeared on April 26 entitled, "Respect for Life Still Is Our Priority," Weakland explained: "The terms 'pro-life' and 'pro-choice'.... at times, do not mean what they say: Too often 'pro-life' has become 'anti-abortion' and 'pro-choice' has meant 'pro-abortion.'" Again, he called for all citizens to consider the potential for common ground on abortion which was: "Working to eliminate the root causes of abortion, such as the large number of teenage pregnancies, poverty, especially among single mother households, permissiveness and violence toward women and children." To leave no question about his loyalty to the church, he added: "I also staunchly uphold Catholic teaching, and that certainly includes the church's teaching on abortion. Abortion is the taking of human life and therefore is morally wrong."[139]

All along Weakland had hoped that other bishops around the country might follow him and initiate discussions with women. Despite reassuring words from several colleagues, including Archbishop Thomas Kelly of Louisville, Kentucky, and Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Gumbelton of Detroit, most bishops resisted public comment about Weakland. Instead the news was more dynamic than anyone's ability to bring things under control. In an interview with Mary Beth Murphy, Bishop James T. McHugh of Camden, N.J., the first director of the bishops' pro-life office, stated: "I think Archbishop Weakland has reacted kind of strongly to some of the more radical groupings within the overall pro-life movement." He did not share Weakland's view that fundamentalists have an "unwholesome influence" on the anti-abortion movement. "Having worked with evangelical Christians," McHugh added,"I found them to be very rational and perceptive about the whole thing." He concluded that the "only definition for 'pro-choice' is to be blatantly pro-abortion."[140]

The most unsympathetic critic was Father James T. Burtchaell, C.S.C., a conservative member of the Notre Dame University theology faculty, who called Weakland's statement: "biased and ignorant." He was both critical of the "theological competence" of the report as well as Weakland's judgmental treatment of members of the "pro-life" movement. In heightened rhetoric, Burtchaell concluded:

> What is Weakland's own teaching? His letter is entirely concerned with the plight of mothers, but it never once speaks on behalf of children at risk. It is as if one were to write a letter on the injuries awaiting illegal immigrants—after listening with sympathy only to the grievances of their employers. Nowhere—nowhere—does he speak on behalf of the ultimate victims. It is not surprising, then, that the first request for a copy of the archbishop's response is reported to have come from the office of New York Governor Mario Cuomo.[141]

Burtchaell saw the potential political implications of Weakland's stance. If Weakland's counsel were taken, this could open the gates to more Catholic office-holders and candidates declaring

themselves "pro-choice." Moreover, the June publication of Cardinal O'Connor's statement on abortion, brought to public attention the obvious comparison between the respective styles of Weakland and O'Connor. Curiously, what Weakland had done in public, namely the listening sessions with women, O'Connor at the time was doing in private. O'Connor had hired Hill and Knowlton, who were conducting focus groups with women on abortion.

At a New York press conference, O'Connor indirectly criticized Weakland's portrayal of the "pro-life" movement. This received nation-wide comment in the press. Father Thomas Reese, the Jesuit expert on the Catholic hierarchy, told reporters: "Bishops don't normally criticize each other in public....This is a sign that the bishops have failed to use the USCC to resolve an issue of national importance that has an effect beyond their individual diocese." Commenting on the implications for the laity over a possible split among the bishops on abortion, Reese concluded: "What that says to the public is that if the bishops can disagree over these issues, certainly the faithful can also....It's showing that we're not dealing with simple answers."[142]

Several months later, on November 2, when I met with Archbishop Weakland for an interview, the controversy about his statements and the Listening Sessions appeared to be behind him. Among the questions I asked was whether the impasse among the bishops concerning the tactics and approach of the anti-abortion campaign could be remedied by employing the so-called "two-audience" approach used for the peace and economics pastorals. He replied:

> That's a hard one to answer because I don't think that it's ever been tested, even though it's probably the one issue that has come up at every meeting since I've been a bishop. It's not an item that has been frankly debated. And I think it's the one where, if you're a dissenting voice, you would really stand out, as I well know....I feel, people [the bishops] would be frightened to get up and take a position contrary to that [Pro-Life] committee which is one of the most powerful committees in the conference.

At another point in our discussion, he told me frankly:

> I would love to see the possibility of opening this debate up in a good way. I can't see it happening, though. I think there is too much bitterness....How we bishops could arrive at some kind of consensus model on this given that history and given also the strong Roman positions, I just don't know right now. At this moment of history, I don't know what would be possible.

I asked him about the role of the public media in presenting theological opinions. He replied:

> I am not a "yes" or "no" person....I hate that style. And especially in religion. I find I like to nuance everything and to me the subordinate clauses are as important as the the declarative sentences and I like to leave doors open. So that's always hard for me because the press will cut out all my adjectives, all my clauses and leave me bare.

Spokesmen for religious groups whose official teachings are not easily reducible to the brevity journalists favor are understandably cautious about how their statements will appear on television or in print. Weakland commented on this dilemma:

> I don't know how we as teachers are going to deal with that in the church....I find it difficult because the main theme I want to teach about...when I do a document or statement has to always be filtered through another person before it gets out. Now, I'm lucky. I have my own [diocesan] newspaper, so at least it's somewhere out there. But I often think about others, the mayor or whoever, who don't have another vehicle....I get amused often at the press people. There's a certain arrogance there as if we [the press] know what the people want to hear, you don't. So we're going to take out of what you say not what you think is the principal message but what we think is newsworthy. I find the church suffers from this over and over again. I don't know how you solve that...It's the soundbite problem. And I find it worse with television.

Then he shifted the focus, and added:

> We are concentrating too much on the news media, and television....I find other things happening. So for the first time now you are getting some of the major magazines...whether it be the *Atlantic Monthly* or the *New Yorker* carrying a totally different kind of analysis of church affairs. They are willing to get someone knowledgeable to do a full piece on an

> aspect which you cannot expect a newswriter to do. And I see more hope there.

Regarding bias in the coverage of abortion, Weakland observed:

> The [*Los Angeles Times*] Shaw report on abortion is very interesting. Somebody should do the same thing with regard to the Catholic press. I find the Catholic press just as biased as the secular press. For example, the *Tidings* of the Los Angeles Archdiocese...would print Burtchaell's article from the *National Catholic Reporter* against what I had written, and would never print anything of mine. At least the *NCR* was more fair in printing both.

To Weakland, how print and television journalists reported on religion and issues of public morality directly influenced how these matters were understood by people as well as the leaders of various religious denominations. The controversy within Weakland's church—critics, supporters and the Vatican—once again took over the headlines.

Repercussions and Vatican Reply

During our conversation Weakland had thoughtful and constructive ideas regarding the media as well and a realistic outlook on the difficulties of stimulating dialogue within the church. Unknown to me at the time, on Weakland's desk was a series of letters and notes of telephone calls from Father Damian Byrne, O.P., the Master of the Dominican Order in Rome. In the correspondence of October 21, Byrne had the unpleasant task of confirming that the Vatican had rejected Weakland's name for an honorary doctoral degree from the theological faculty of Fribourg University in Switzerland. The university was celebrating the centennial of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical letter "*Rerum Novarum*" ("On the Condition of Labor") and had decided to honor Weakland for his work on the economic and social justice pastoral which had received world-wide acclaim.

To protest the Vatican's intervention, three Swiss bishops and the Secretary of the Swiss bishops' conference came to Rome for a discussion with Archbishop Pio Laghi, who was the former papal pro-nuncio to the United States and recently had been appointed to the position of Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education. The Vatican's action was a serious matter since it had aggravated the relationship between the theological department of Fribourg and the state-run university, particularly in the areas guaranteed under codes of academic freedom.

In the customary fashion that marks Vatican disfavor, Laghi did not communicate directly with Weakland. Rather in a letter to Byrne Laghi explained his reasons for denying the doctorate to Weakland:

> With regard to Archbishop Weakland, this prelate has recently taken certain positions relative to the question of abortion which are not without doctrinal importance and which are causing a great deal of confusion amongst the faithful in the United States. The granting of a doctorate "*honoris causa*" by a prestigious Faculty of Theology would only add to the confusion.[143]

In turn Byrne relayed Laghi's message to Weakland and in his letter concluded: "I am sorry that I am the bearer of this news but I can assure you that your activity as a Pastor is highly appreciated and is a stimulus to many."[144]

This would have been Weakland's sixteenth honorary degree. Ironically, the citation as planned would have underscored not only the content of the American economics pastoral but also the method, namely that it had been worked out "through a process of public hearings, often in secular terms, which the church had to learn before it could teach." Weakland was cited as someone who stood for a "just, humane and free society as well as a church that is believable."[145]

Weakland released the story to Peter Steinfels of the *New York Times*, whose article appeared on November 11.[146] Again, Weakland was in the headlines. This time, however, the pressure was on Laghi. By November 22, Laghi sent to Weakland an unprecedented letter which complained about the "complex and ponderous" procedures for approving an honorary degree. He added that time was so limited that he had to deny permission for the degree "without any contact with you." Laghi concluded: "I deeply regret the pain that you have suffered, I share it with you, and I sincerely assure you of my prayers that the wound so inadvertently caused will be healed." In disclosing the contents of the letter, Weakland told reporters: "I greatly appreciate Archbishop Laghi's words of clarification and support. With this correspondence, I consider the matter closed."[147]

Most read Laghi's statement to mean an apology. In Rome, Laghi insisted to reporters: "It

was not an apology. It was a clarification. Why are people calling it an apology?" Weakland's release of the Vatican documents to the press greatly distressed Laghi. The episode had backfired on him. The papal diplomat was flustered. He complained: "It's easier to let the channels go in the appropriate ways rather than letting the media get at it!"[148] Thus Weakland had turned to the power of the *New York Times* and international public opinion. His years in Rome taught him important and skillful tactics when dealing with Vatican bureaucrats. Commenting in the United States, Father Reese told reporters: "I can't remember something like this ever happening."[149] Catholic observer and professor of psychology Eugene Kennedy quipped to reporters in Chicago: "This is the kind of thing that could have saved Galileo!"[150]

A few days after the public disclosure, Father Richard McBrien, the Chairman of the Theology department at Notre Dame, spoke before the delegates to the November meeting of the "Call to Action" organization in Washington, D.C. In McBrien's key-note address he talked about conflict and authority in an "adult church," and mentioned the flap between Weakland and the Vatican. He said:

> [Church] structure without credibility... cannot survive. That structure will come down just as surely as the Berlin Wall came down a year ago....In the meantime, however, the Church must go on. What did Archbishop Rembert Weakland do when he learned that his honorary degree had been withdrawn by Vatican order? Did he sulk in his episcopal tent? Did he indulge himself in spiteful and recriminatory rhetoric? No. He simply changed his plane ticket. Instead of travelling to Switzerland next week, he will lead a delegation to El Salvador to participate in a memorial for the six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper, and her daughter who were murdered last November 16—martyrs of justice.[151]

At a press conference on his return from El Salvador, Weakland had hoped reporters would ask questions about the situation in Central America.[152] Instead one of the local television reporters persisted about the Fribourg incident and Laghi's reply. According to Marie Rohde's account:

> Weakland treated the Vatican topic with a light touch. "I have to admit I didn't take it as seriously as most people did"...."I must admit I'm probably too up beat about it," he said of Rome's action. "Maybe that's not good. I don't expect it to alter my style....I can't imagine [I would] unless you take my tongue out," he said smiling....
>
> Weakland did not find the Vatican action discouraging. "It won't change my procedure, I'm sure, in dealing with any topic. I'm not concerned about that," he said.
>
> He added that the loss of the award was insignificant when compared to the insight he gained from discussing abortion with women.[153]

Later that day, at her desk in the newsroom, Marie Rohde got Greg Bell on the telephone and read to him the Associated Press story coming off the wire. The lead read: "Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland, who has been censured by the Vatican, for listening to women, has said 'unless you take out my tongue, I will continue to speak!'" Both the inaccuracy in the use of the term "censure" as well as the inflammatory tone of the article caused Bell to call the A.P. reporter immediately. Editors agreed that the story was inaccurate. As a result, the A.P. sent an advisory to editors around the country that killed the story as written. Two versions later, another story went out correcting the inaccuracy and cooling the tone.

CONCLUSION: CHURCH, PRESS AND MORAL DISCOURSE

In this paper I have discussed three bishops, Cardinal Bernardin, Cardinal O'Connor and Archbishop Weakland, and their respective approaches to abortion as reported in the media. By closely following them I have provided a sample of three distinct voices in Catholic leadership today and their individual efforts to speak to two audiences—the community of church-members and the larger body of American citizens. In the final analysis, I am forced to ask how proficient were Bernardin, O'Connor and Weakland in advocating their respective positions on abortion, and how well did each manage the media that surrounded them? How well did the press, radio and television perform in providing a forum that might inform as well as test the church's positions before a readership of Catholics, policy-makers and voters? From this examination of church and press, I believe

that despite the examples of inadequacy and mistakes on both sides, this aspect of American journalism—whereby newspapers, magazines, television and radio provide a forum for citizens—works far better than most critics admit.

Weakland for me represents the best of the Catholic episcopal tradition. He is the abbot, the father of the community. He is the "listener." He respects the contribution of each person who wishes to address the topic, any topic. He stands by his principles but is patient enough to give everybody time. He does not initiate the dialogue by announcing its conclusions. In my opinion, his method will have the greatest impact in the long term because it addresses the whole person, not just the intellect or the will. In the short term it might not show too many results and will draw fire.

Bernardin is the kindly, resourceful "churchman." He is the architect of the structure of the NCCB/USCC. For him process is very important. He too respects the opinion of others. He seeks to build a type of "consensus," a meeting ground wide enough for all to stand on without shouting or rancor. Each side would have to compromise. I believe in the long and short run, this is the weakest position. The issue of abortion is not purely academic or political, and this approach is better geared to such questions. Bernardin is fated to draw the fire of both extremes. In an *ideal* world, all sides would come together for rational discussion on a wide meeting ground, but this is the *real* world,

Cardinal O'Connor is the man of "confrontation." Perhaps his naval background, perhaps his personality makes him such. Abortion is not the only question on which he finds himself in the midst of controversy. In any event, his style is to announce unalterable principles and to demand conformity from all. In a highly charged black/white situation, he has a chance of some success. This success, in my opinion, will be short term. He may succeed in advancing some of his legislative goals but his methods and some of the supporters he attracts and the legislation he desires might produce "a last state worse than the first."

Ultimately Bernardin, O'Connor and Weakland draw from and represent those distinct voices—intellectual, organizational, and political—deep within the American Catholic tradition. My study of these church leaders simply confirms the point made by David O'Brien that the American Catholic Church does not have a coherent understanding of its public role. Rather it is a community trying to come to terms with its size, influence and vision of the American moral landscape.

In Bernardin, O'Connor and Weakland one sees an almost continual interplay of church and press, for better or worse, which defines their individual public, civic and religious roles as moral teachers and community leaders. This connection between church and press is not simply an extra feature extending their message and influence. Rather it is the pervasive culture in which their messages and moral teachings are understood.[154]

Any attempt to consider the connection between church and press must contend with formidable obstacles concerning the Roman Catholic Church's historical distrust of the press and the popular media of television and film. Church history is replete with examples of papal disfavor toward the press whose freedoms have been associated with the Enlightenment and the French Revolution and so alien to conservative European sensibilities.[155] To give a more recent example, at the closing session of the October 1990 Vatican synod devoted to a discussion of priestly celibacy, Pope John Paul II insisted that his position on celibacy had not changed despite "hostile propaganda." The *New York Times* noted that the Pope did not identify who was responsible for such propaganda but added that, according to the Pope, the advocates of change in the celibacy rule "find support and complicity from some mass media."[156]

Consequently why should it come as a surprise that the Vatican continues to warn theologians about speaking to the mass media? There is a presumption here that journalists simply do not have the intellectual capacity to read theological texts. Even more presumptuous is the idea that somehow the church could filter and block dissenting and controversial theological opinions from the public. Such an approach is in direct conflict with what the media regards as their prime role. Furthermore, these Vatican warnings simply amplify how some church leaders have failed to come to terms with communications in the modern world.[157]

One year after the bishops' meeting which passed the "abortion resolution," on November 11, the bishops met again at their bi-annual meeting in Washington D.C. This time conversations in the hotel corridors concerned new matters: the impending war in the Persian Gulf, the recent public disclosure of Archbishop Weakland's trouble with the Vatican over the Fribourg incident, and the passage of a document concerning sex education. In reply to reporters' questions about Weakland, Cardinal O'Connor was generous in his personal comments and added, "I have no question in my mind at all

about Archbishop Weakland's support of church teaching."[158] Falling short of a specific statement on the matter, the assembly of bishops gave Weakland a standing ovation in a closed-door session.

On the bishops' public agenda for Wednesday, November14 was a discussion on proposed guidelines for sex education. During the debate, Bishop Kenneth E. Untener of Saginaw, Michigan told the bishops:

> On page 261 [of the document], we restate the teaching on birth control and say,"We hope that the logic expressed here is compelling." I wonder how we can claim credibility when we make a statement like that knowing in fact that the logic is not compelling? It is not compelling to people in general, not compelling to the Catholic laity, not compelling to many priests, and not compelling to many bishops. When we know this, and don't say it, many would compare us to a dysfunctional family that is unable to talk openly about a problem that everyone knows is here.[159]

Untener took exception to the document's assertion that "God is acting through its official teaching," rather he spoke about the "*sensus fidelium*," or the "sense of the faithful" found in the minds of Catholics as a whole which "acts through the entire people of God in developing doctrine." He called for a widespread consultation or a process of internal communication among church members to reconsider matters such as contraception. He continued:

> On page 261 [of the document] we call for those who dissent to study and pray over their position. Could they not say to us, "We will...if you will and let's do it together?" Would such a process weaken the authority of the bishops, or would it in fact strengthen our authority.

Untener concluded:

> Those are my questions, and I pose them as questions. I ask them up front and out loud, in the conviction that if we do not ask them, we are unintentionally causing great damage to the credibility and the unity of this church that we love.

Later, Untener told Peter Steinfels of the *New York Times*: "[The present teaching on contraception] has us on the brink of irrelevancy in sexual matters and seriously damages our credibility on the abortion issue." The matter of public credibility and the need for a listening process brought agreement even from among several of the most conservative bishops. Most startling was New York's "pro-life" Auxiliary Bishop Austin Vaughan who told his colleagues:

> We're all celibate. None of us are parents. By U.S. standards we are aging and probably have little contact with the youth culture. Few of us could name the major rock stars with major rock bands.[160]

The guidelines for sex education were approved in a standing vote. According to the *New York Times* report: "No vote count was taken though there were many dissenting votes including those of Bishops Untener and Vaughan." The need for credibility in public communication on sexual teachings remains a central concern of the bishops and cuts across the spectrum of opinion—liberal, conservative and moderate.

Ironically, at the same time Bishop Untener was calling for greater credibility and more openness to outside perspectives, the November bishops' meeting took on greater secrecy in a closed-door "executive session" which excluded both the press and the public. Some observers believed that the bishops were fearful of being misquoted or misunderstood on a number of potentially explosive subjects. Among the items discussed in private were the plans developed by Hill and Knowlton for the forthcoming anti-abortion campaign, the current status of a "women's pastoral" letter, the proposal to allow laity to preach at Sunday masses, and, the most sensitive issue of all, how the bishops would respond to the impending war in the Persian Gulf.

Several months later, the war now over, there appeared in the *New York Times* an article by Peter Steinfels entitled, "How Do You Tell A Victorious War From a Just One?" Steinfels concluded:

> Most Catholic bishops disappointed war opponents by withholding any definitive judgement and disappointed war supporters by continually warning about the need for restraint.
>
> On the eve of the fighting, Mr. [Michael] Walzer concluded that the war would be "just but dangerous." Father [John P.] Langan called it "an imperfectly just war." Father [J. Bryan] Hehir called it "just but unwise."

> Are such conclusions properly modest, or do they land policy makers and citizens in a twilight zone of morality that paralyzes conscientious decisions?[161]

To my mind the war and the international situation have demonstrated the need for significant public discourse about the United States and its role in a "new world order." Since the start of the war in the summer months of 1990, other public issues such as education, poverty, housing, have been treated with "benign neglect." So too with abortion. Nonetheless, what is at issue here are the appropriate roles for the church and the press in helping to animate public conversation about war, peace and public morality. The war in the Persian Gulf and the apparent difficulty to publicly and responsibly question military actions, even those directed at innocent Iraqi civilians, remain among the most frightening features of our times. This may be the most vivid example of our nation's loss of moral discourse. At the same time it signals the power among certain forces within our country to paralyze moral reasoning with appeals to loyalty, flag and fears that serious discussion might harm the morale of our military personnel.

Public morality requires public discussion and argument in churches, synagogues and in the press. Abortion as a moral and ethical question may never find a satisfactory resolution to either "pro-life" or "pro-choice" advocates. In the end the political realm may not provide the legislation that some advocates seek. Science itself may supply new medical answers not yet dreamed of which may alter the course of the debate. Nonetheless, it may be a good sign that among certain elements within our society there still continues the struggle with the vexing philosophical problems created by "sanctity of life" issues today.[162]

Clearly, the role for the American press, so diverse in newspapers, magazines, television and radio news, is to get at issues, to appreciate moral arguments as the "common ground" in order to better equip citizens to make more informed choices. This would be the kind of critical journalism that would forward what Robert Coles calls "moral literacy." This may appear too idealistic for today's newspapers and television so caught between professional duties and the marketplace. But our times give us little recourse!

During the past several months the coverage of the war in the Persian Gulf invited several comparisons about press performance. The most perceptive of these was analyst Peter Braestrup's comment that: "To reporters, 'the military' is an alien culture."[163] The same could be said about the church and especially its bishops whose emphatic clerical state seems distrustful of the press. One cause of this alienation may be an "uneven competence" among journalists who cover the news of religion and public morality. At the same time church leaders have often failed to adapt—to better cope with today's media culture.

The central challenge for church leadership today is how to create a persuasive and effective public presence, a presence that distinguishes between matters of public policy and religious belief. If there is a "Catholic moment" today, it would be the church's public commitment to enter into the conversation about the moral crises of our times—one that brings to the discussion not an imposition of moral authority with threatened sanctions, but rather the sharing of the moral wisdom of its peoples, drawing from its wealth of organizational, political, intellectual and spiritual resources, a wisdom that could benefit Catholics as well as the nation.

Finally church leaders and laity must continue the work of reform begun at the Second Vatican Council. In a church which champions human rights today and where religious freedom is essential to its world-wide operations, there is virtually no understanding or appreciation for press freedom, the place of public opinion, or how "loyal dissent" might actually improve the position and moral authority of the church. This is not to say the church should embrace necessarily a democratic governance but rather a process for productive internal and external communications. The so-called "two-audience" approach, an essentially American contribution to Catholicism, may be the first step toward acknowledging communications as a foundation for authentic leadership and moral authority. To me this is the unfinished legacy of John Courtney Murray.

This requires greater understanding of the new media culture and the modern means of social communication—a world-wide network of cameras, computers and presses which, functioning like an x-ray eye, sometimes sees through fake politicians and phony religious leaders. Nonetheless, at certain moments, almost mysteriously, a Gandhi, a John XXIII, a Martin Luther King, a Mother Teresa of Calcutta, have caught the world's spiritual imagination and have possessed the moral authority to truly challenge the minds and hearts of millions.

Endnotes

1. David Shaw, "'Abortion Hype' Afflicted Media After Webster Case," in "Abortion in America" series, *Los Angeles Times*, Wednesday, July 4, 1990.

2. David Paul Nord, "Teleology and News: The Religious Roots of American Journalism,1630-1730," *Journal of American History* (Vol. 77, No. 1), June, 1990.

3. Gunther Barth, *City People: The Rise of Modern City Culture in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 59.

4. Robert N. Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985).

5. Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1984).

6. E.J. Dionne Jr., *Why Americans Hate Politics* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991).

7. Richard P. McBrien, *Caesar's Coin: Religion and Politics in America* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1987), p. 205.

8. Garry Wills, *Under God: Religion and American Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990).

9. In Jeffrey C. Alexander, *Action and Its Environments: Toward a New Synthesis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), pp. 107-52.

10. Eugene McCarthy, "New York Forum About Religion—Abortion Pits Pulpit Against the Press," *Newsday*, Thursday, June 28,1990.

11. Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death—Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985).

12. David O'Brien, *Public Catholicism* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1989), p. 7.

13. Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1978); and Thomas Bender, *New York Intellect: A History of the Intellectual Life in New York City from 1750 to the Beginnings of Our Own Time* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987); also, Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991), Chapter 4.

14. Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since World War II* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988).

15. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1983); *Economic Justice For All: Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1986).

16. Harvard political philosopher Michael Sandel states: "At its best, democracy fosters argument and debate and political discourse about the good life and the common good....For example, [when] the Catholic bishops spoke, when they appealed to their own religious traditions but made arguments directed toward the larger public on issues of nuclear deterrence or economic justice or abortion. We would appeal without embarrassment to moral and religious traditions in the hope that they might inform public debate, rather than contaminate it with intolerance." in *Bill Moyers: A World of Ideas II: Public Opinion from Private Citizens*, Andie Tucker, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1990), p. 149; Michael J. Sandel, "The Political Theory of the Procedural Republic," in *The Power of Public Ideas*, Robert B. Reich, ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990). Also see Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (New York: Basic Books, 1987).

17. Rembert Weakland, "Church in the Market-Place," *The Tablet*, May 19, 1990.

18. According to the Gallup organization, three-fourths of U.S. Catholics rely on their conscience rather than on the Pope when making moral decisions. Catholics' positions on legal abortion do not vary much from those of Americans generally. In 1988, Catholics like most Americans, were more or less evenly divided on whether there should be any more legal restrictions on abortion. William Saletan in the *Wall Street Journal* (April 26, 1989) summarized a CBS/*New York Times* survey: "Two-thirds of Americans believe abortion generally should be decided by women, but most think it should not be allowed in the less severe circumstances; and despite widespread reluctance to enforce the law in such cases, about half want barriers to discourage women whose motives are less than compelling." E.J. Dionne of the *New York Times* concluded that Americans remained "deeply ambivalent" over abortion (April 26, 1989). Also see William Schneider, "A Debate—Abortion: The Partisan Consequences: Trouble for the GOP, *Public Opinion*, May/June 1989. Everett Carll Ladd, "The Partisan Consequences: Trouble for Both Parties," *Public Opinion*, May/June 1989. George Gallup, Jr. and Jim Castelli, *The People's Religion* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1989); and William D'Antonio, Dean Hoge et al., *American Catholic Laity* (Kansas City, Missouri: Sheed & Ward, 1989).

19. Michael Schudson, "American Mass Media, Past and Future: Celebrating 300 Years of American Newspapers," American Antiquarian Society lecture, Worcester, Mass., November 12, 1990.

20. James Carey, "The Press and the Public Discourse," *Center Magazine* (Vol. 20), 1987, pp. 4-16.

21. David Shaw, "Abortion in America" series, *Los Angeles Times*, July 1-4, 1990. Data cited in this series was taken from S. Robert Lichter et al., "Roe v. Webster: Media Coverage of the Abortion Debate," *Media Monitor*, Center for Media and Public Affairs, Washington, D.C. (Vol. III, No. 8), October, 1989; Jason DeParle, "Beyond the Legal Right," *Washington Monthly* (Vol. 21, No. 3), April, 1989.

22. "Resolution on Abortion," U.S. Catholic Bishops' Meeting, *Origins*, November, 1989.

23. Eugene C. Kennedy, *Cardinal Bernardin: Easing Conflicts and Battling for the Soul of American Catholicism* (Chicago, Ill.: Bonus Books, 1989).

24. "Abortion, Religion and the State Legislator after Webster," The Park Ridge Center for the Study of Health, Faith and Ethics, 1990.

25. Thomas J. Reese, S.J. (ed.), *Episcopal Conferences: Historical, Canonical and Theological Studies* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1989).

26. If Bernardin's hallmark is an effort to present clear, informed and consistent theological statements on public policy issues, then Father Michael Place, a moral theologian, may be unique among high chancery officials in the United States. His task is to oversee the broad conceptual aspects of Bernardin's public statements. In this capacity Place works with Bernardin's speechwriters on the various drafts of important speeches, and often will act as the "pointman" for reporters' questions concerning church doctrine and policy. In the role of "press secretary" to Bernardin and the archdiocese, Sister Joy Clough, the director of the Office of Public Information, has the day-to-day responsibilities of keeping editors and reporters informed of Bernardin's activities, as well as coordinating news and information about the large diocesan structure of offices, parishes, and schools. She has a staff of three professionals. In the current organizational plan of the archdiocese, Sister Joy does not report directly to the Cardinal; however, her office at the chancery is strategically located on the same floor. They meet on an "as needed" basis.

27. "Debate and Vote on Abortion Resolution," NCCB/USCC, Official Proceedings, Catholic Television Network of America, November 7, 1989.

28. Thomas G. Fuechtmann, (ed.), *The Consistent Ethic of Life: Joseph C. Bernardin* (Kansas City, Mo.: Sheed & Ward, 1988); Thomas H. Stahel, "Cardinal Bernardin on the 'Forgotten Factor' and Other Gaps in the Abortion Debate," *America*, April 7, 1990.

29. "Debate and Vote on Abortion Resolution," NCCB/USCC, Proceedings, op. cit.

30. Margaret O'Brien Steinfels, the editor of *Commonweal*, writes: "Key Catholic leaders have been frightened by the inability of the postconciliar church to reverse the rising tide of secularization in Western Europe....These leaders appear to be convinced that a dialogical stance will lead to accommodation, assimilation and further secularization.... Common ground is feared as so much quicksand. Today, instead of confronting this fear at the heart of its self-understanding, the church is garbing its own reversal, its turn away from dialogue with the declaration that it is 'countercultural.'" From "The Church and Its Public Life," *America*, June 10, 1989.

31. Timothy A. Byrnes, "The National Conference of Catholic Bishops and Public Policy on Abortion, Post-Webster," Paper, Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, August 30-September 2, 1990. Byrnes' recent book *Catholic Bishops in American Politics* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991) considers the complex political arrangements of the church today. For example, O'Connor and Law who came on the scene during the Reagan era are associated with Republican Party members especially on anti-abortion policy. In contrast Bernardin and Weakland represent those bishops from the previous era of a strong, centralized Catholic Conference that grew into prominence during the late-60s under the social legislation of the Democratic Party.

32. If there were a moment in time when things began to unravel, one incident from the 1987 visit of Pope John Paul to the United States gets at the heart of the matter. In his long speech—behind closed-doors—to the bishops at the San Bernadino seminary, the pope addressed many subjects but he never mentioned by name the "United States Catholic Conference," nor the "National Conference of Catholic Bishops." The pope might have appeared even ungracious before his hosts who had paid a handsome sum for the costly papal tour. Most obvious, however, the pope did not acknowledge the bishops for the recent pastoral letters on peace and justice. Why? To conservative Vaticanists, the pastoral letters as well as the process of hearings, the so-called "two-audience" theory, represented a departure, and perhaps a challenge in the form of democratic collegiality that might undermine papal authority.

33. "Debate and Vote on Abortion Resolution," op. cit.

34. The Catholic Church's official teaching on religious liberty and matters of church and state is contained in the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Religious Freedom (*Dignitatis Humanae*) and in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium Et Spes*). Both are available in *The Documents of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbott, ed. (New York: America Press, 1966). Jesuit theologian John Courtney Murray was the chief architect of the Council's teaching on religious liberty. In his classic work *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960), Murray advanced the idea the church should present its positions on the basis of moral values and reason and thereby try to influence both its own members and society at large. Ones sees here the beginnings of the so-called "two-audience" theory. For a more complete analysis of Murray's contribution to the church and state discussion, see McBrien, *Caesar's Coin*, Chapter 4. Father J. Bryan Hehir, whose work with the USCC helped to draft the bishops' pastoral on war and peace, is a primary interpreter of Murray's thought today. Hehir's writings include: "Papal Foreign Policy," *Foreign Policy*, (No. 78) Spring, 1990; "Vatican II and the Signs of the Times: Catholic Teaching on Church, State and Society," Conference on Religion and Politics in the American Milieu, Notre Dame University, February 10, 1986.

35. In one of those rare ironies of political life, just as Cody seemed to be out of the picture Karol Wojtyla, the cardinal archbishop of Cracow, became pope. Over the years, because of strong ethnic ties in Chicago, Cody had sustained his power base by giving to the Vatican large sums of money for bishops and diocese in Eastern Europe, and Poland in particular. No moment was more triumphant for John Cody than the day in October of 1979 when Pope John Paul visited Chicago's Holy Name Cathedral. Seated next to the Pope, and looking out over the congregation, Cody listened attentively to the melody of the *Ave Maria*, sung by opera-star Luciano Pavarotti. Thus the pope had come to repay a debt, and even Cody could laugh with his enemies that day. See Charles W. Dahm, *Power and Authority in the Catholic Church: Cardinal Cody in Chicago* (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

36. Roy Larsen, Interview, November 26, 1990; and Roy Larsen, "Cardinal Bernardin: The Pope's Man in the Middle," *Chicago*, September, 1987.

37. Jim Squires, Interview, November 13, 1990.

38. Cardinal Bernardin, Interview, November 26, 1990; all subsequent quotations in the text to Cardinal Bernardin were part of this interview.

39. "Press Conference with Cardinal Bernardin," NCCB/USCC Official Proceedings, Catholic Television Network of America, November 7,1989.

40. Over the years press conferences have been problematic for Bernardin. In *The Bishops and the Bomb* (Garden City, N.Y. Doubleday, 1983) Jim Castelli writes:"In light of the publicity surrounding Bernardin today, it's easy to get the impression his ecclesiastical career has been flawless. It hasn't, and that makes his success more impressive—it shows that his many skills include knowing how to survive." Castelli recalls Bernardin's weak performance at the 1976 press briefing when as president of the NCCB, he responded to reporters questions about a meeting with Democratic Party candidate Jimmy Carter. Bernardin inadvertently stated that he was "disappointed" in Carter's unwillingness to support an anti-abortion amendment. Washington political writers picked up on this and later concluded that since Bernardin was "encouraged" by President Ford's support of a states' rights amendment, that the bishops had endorsed Ford on the abortion issue. The furor over this verbal misfire haunted Bernardin throughout the Fall campaign.

41. Richard J. Gelm, "The United States Catholic Bishops: A Survey Research Perspective," Paper, Annual Meeting of American Political Science Association, San Francisco, August 30-September 2, 1990. Richard Gelm of the University of California, Davis is about to publish a political survey of Catholic bishops. He contrasts those bishops appointed under John Paul II to those who were named under Paul VI. Gelm's data represents approximately 43 percent of the bishops (150 out of 350 active and retired bishops). The findings show that 95 percent of the bishops appointed by John Paul favored stronger abortion laws. U.S. bishops were split evenly between Democrats and Republicans, compared with a 60 to 40 Democratic majority among those bishops named by Pope Paul. Not surprisingly these bishops took more liberal stands on a number of economic and social issues. 64 percent favored school busing for integration purposes, 56 percent backed allowing gays to teach in public schools, 80 percent opposed the death penalty, 79 percent favored a nuclear weapons freeze, and 82 percent opposed sending troops to Central America.

42. Robert N. Bellah, "Leadership Viewed from the Vantage Point of American Culture," *Origins*, (Vol. 20, No. 14), September 13, 1990.

43. John Coleman, S.J., "Dimensions of Leaderships," *Origins*, (Vol. 20, No. 14), September 13, 1990.

44. When Archbishop John R. Roach of St. Paul-Minneapolis, the president of the NCCB, asked Bernardin to chair the War and Peace Committee, additionally he wanted social-justice activist Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit and Bishop John O'Connor to serve on the committee. In Jim Castelli's *The Bishops and the Bomb*, Roach commented on their selection, "I wanted articulate people at the extremes, and I don't mean that pejoratively." See Castelli, op. cit., p. 68.

45. Joseph L. Bernardin, "The Consistent Ethic after Webster," *Commonweal*, April 20, 1990; also see Joseph L. Bernardin, "Vatican II's *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World—25 Years Later.*" Address to the Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, December 7, 1990.

46. Linda Stevens and Rocco Parascandolo, "Protests Rock St. Pat's: 111 Arrested in Protest Rally at Cathedral," *New York Post*, Monday, December 11, 1989.

47. In his recently published book, *The Search for God at Harvard* (New York: Random House, 1991) Ari Goldman, the *New York Times* religion correspondent, has written an engaging profile of Cardinal O'Connor. Goldman, who has reported on O'Connor since his appointment to New York, has fascinating insights about the archbishop and his relations with Koch and the New York Jewish community.

48. Linda Stevens and Richard Steier, "O'Connor Digs In: Vows to Safeguard Sanctity of St. Pat's with His Life," *New York Post*, Tuesday, December 12, 1989.

49. *Ibid.*

50. Charles W. Bell, " 'Mass Will Go On'...O'Connor," *Daily News*, Tuesday, December 12, 1989.

51. Bill Reel, "The Answer to Sunday's Blasphemy," *Daily News*, Tuesday, December 12, 1989.

52. Ellis Henican, " 'Over My Dead Body,' Angry O'Connor Says He Won't Allow Protestors to Disrupt Mass," *Newsday*, Tuesday, December 12, 1989.

53. Joel Benenson and Adam Nagourney, "Mass Protestors Not Sorry," *Daily News*, Thursday, December 14, 1989.

54. Ji-Yeon Yuh, "O'Connor Longing to Enlist with Anti-Abortion Militants," *Newsday*, Monday, October 2, 1989.

55. Cardinal O'Connor, Interview, December 10, 1990; all subsequent references and quotations from my interview with Cardinal O'Connor took place on December 10.

56. R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Richard Shaw, *Dagger John: The Unquiet Life and Times of Archbishop John Hughes of New York* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977).

57. Nat Hentoff, *John Cardinal O'Connor—At the Storm Center of a Changing American Catholic Church* (New York: Scribner, 1988).

58. Dale Mezzacappa, "O'Connor—The Pope's Man in America," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Sunday, July 13, 1986.

59. Cardinal O'Connor, Interview, December 10, 1990.

60. Joseph Zwilling is the current Director of Communications for the New York Archdiocese. He is the first layman to fill this post having succeeded Msgr. Peter Finn. Among Cardinal Cooke's last important initiatives was the hiring of veteran newsman Gerald Costello as editor of a newly revamped weekly diocesan newspaper, *Catholic New York*. It may be among the model diocesan newspapers in the country and provides Cardinal O'Connor with an important forum. Occasionally O'Connor's weekly column or stories spark the interest of reporters and editors of the city's newspapers and generate further attention. Recently Costello retired, and Anne Buckley, a longtime writer and news editor in the Catholic press, was named editor. She is the first woman to hold this position in the New York Archdiocese.

61. Hentoff, op. cit.

62. Edward I. Koch and John J. O'Connor, *His Eminence and His Hizzoner* (New York: Morrow, 1989).

63. See Mario Cuomo, *Diaries of Mario M. Cuomo: The Campaign for Governor* (New York: Random House, 1984); Geraldine Ferraro with Linda Bird Franke, *Ferraro, My Story* (New York: Bantam Books, 1985); McBrien, *Caesar's Coin*, op. cit.; Chapter 5.

64. Recently, Cuomo, aspiring to the 1992 Democratic presidential nomination, sent his wife, Mathilda, as his substitute to the annual Al Smith dinner, sponsored by the Archdiocese of New York. Most observers considered this a political snub, the governor's way of avoiding an appearance with Cardinal O'Connor. Several days later, on December 10, 1990, both O'Connor and Cuomo appeared together at a union rally for strikers at the *Daily News*. When reporters asked Cuomo how he and the cardinal could appear on the same platform, the governor replied, "Well, the Cardinal and I agree on most things." Indeed, they may agree on many things but not public policy regarding Medicaid funding for abortions. This has a long and exhaustive history.

65. Geraldine Baum, "U.S. Bishops Chide 'Pro-Choice' Catholics," *Newsday*, Wednesday, November 8, 1989.

66. Kevin Flynn et al., "Cardinal Gives Giuliani Cool Parade Reception," *Newsday*, Monday, October 2, 1989.

67. Ji-Yeon Yuh, "O'Connor Focus of Protest," *Newsday*, Monday, October 9, 1989.

68. *Ibid.*

69. Dan Fagin, "Cuomo Vows to Fight Abortion Aid," *Newsday*, Tuesday, January 23, 1990.

70. *Ibid.*

71. *Ibid.*

72. Fred Dicker, "Judgement by a Higher Authority," *New York Post*, Tuesday, January 23, 1990.

73. Michael Powell, "Cuomo Answers Cleric on Abortion," *Newsday*, Wednesday, January 24, 1990.

74. Sam Howe Verhovek, "Cardinal Defends a Jailed Bishop who Warned Cuomo on Abortion," *New York Times*, Thursday, February 1,1990.

75. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "O'Connor, Vaughan, Cuomo, Al Smith, J.F.K.," *New York Times*, Friday, February 2, 1990.

76. Mark Shields' comment on the MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour, February, 1990.

77. Ji-Yeon Yuh, "O'Connor Defends Right to Speak Mind Slaps Abortion Critics," *Newsday*, Monday, February 5, 1990.

78. Peter Steinfels, "New Bishop Modifies Curb Put on Cuomo," *New York Times*, Friday, February 23, 1990.

79. Sam Howe Verhovek, *New York Times*, February 23, 1990, op. cit.

80. Peter Steinfels, *New York Times*, February 23, 1990, op. cit.

81. Mario Cuomo, "Letter-to-the-Editor," *Commonweal*, March 23, 1990. See Mario Cuomo. "Governor Responds," (Abortion policy) Letter to the Editor, *America*, May 12, 1990; Mario Cuomo, "A Governor Responds," (Pro-Choice Catholic Public Officials vs. the Church) Letter to the Editor, *America*, October 28, 1989.

82. Prior to the Supreme Court's *Webster* decision, Cuomo could claim that he was simply carrying out the "law of the land." With *Webster*, however, state public officials were given the task of revising and restricting abortion-rights. Consequently, the governors of states have become decision-makers in this matter. Here we witness both a "public" and a "private" Cuomo; one who is a "private" pro-life Catholic who publicly embraces pro-choice politics. Tenaciously, on radio talk-shows and in print, Cuomo claims that he does not classify himself as "pro-choice."

In his book *Under God* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1990) Garry Wills has written a thoughtful critique of Cuomo's political theology. An earlier version, "Cuomo's Abortion Trouble," appeared in the *New York Review of Books*, June 28, 1990. In expressing the essential problem with Cuomo's abortion politics since the Webster decision, Wills writes:

> Cuomo's position was bound to be unsatisfactory. By accepting a 'church teaching' valid for him as a Catholic, he makes some wonder why he does not show enthusiasm for that teaching in public debate....Cuomo claims to believe the church's teaching on abortion, but *acts* as if he does not. Pro-choice critics are infuriated by his belief; pro-life believers are just as indignant at his actions (or lack of them). Since most of the public is not simply classifiable as pro-life or pro-choice, this may be a shrewd political position; but it damages Cuomo in his claim to be a Catholic intellectual who reaches his conclusions from a well-trained conscience and not as a matter of political expediency. (*Under God*, p. 312)

83. Stephanie Saul, "Abortion Foes Rally and Regroup," *Newsday*, Sunday, April 29, 1990.

84. Jeffrey C. Alexander, "The Mass Media in Systematic, Historical and Comparative Perspective," op. cit., p. 109.

85. Richard Harwood, "Ombudsman: A Weekend in April," *Washington Post*, Sunday, May 6, 1990.

86. *Ibid.*

87. Under the sponsorship of the Religious News Service and the Lilly Foundation, Professor Stewart M. Hoover of Temple University, Philadelphia coordinated a major study on religion reporting, "RNS-Lilly Study of Religion Reporting and Readership in the Daily Press," October, 1989. The final report contains a carefully written preamble on the state of religious journalism as well as a national survey of readers. Some of the findings are interesting. For example, frequent attenders of church are roughly ten percentage points more likely to also read newspapers daily than infrequent attenders. Readers do not feel that the newspapers they read do a very good job of covering religion. Far from being oriented only toward local and parochial interests or issues of faith experience, respondents overall seemed to have a trans-local and universal scope in their interest in religion news. According to this survey, the ranking of "special interest" stories of importance to readers placed religion slightly higher than sports among those questioned.

88. Shaw, *Los Angeles Times*, July 4, 1990, op. cit.

89. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Feminism without Illusions: A Critique of Individualism* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and its Critics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991); Kristin Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1984); Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991).

90. Richard Harwood, Interview, October 30, 1990.

91. "Roe v. Webster: Media Coverage of Abortion Debate," Center for Media and Public Affairs, October 1989; also, most recent study of "anti-Catholic" bias sponsored by the Knights of Columbus and the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights. See "Catholic Study Finds Press Tilting Against Church," *New York Times*, Wednesday, March 27, 1991.

92. My approach to the subject of bias and religion differs sharply with that of a recent, much publicized study, "Media Coverage of the Catholic Church," by S. Robert Lichter and the Center for Media and Public Affairs. This effort was funded by a grant from the Knights of Columbus, and the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights. The subject of bias and religious values is worth considering. Naturally, there are contrasting value systems for journalists and religious leaders. However there is no substantial evidence to support the notion that the Roman Catholic Church has become a victim of coverage in the secular media. After all, this is the largest single denomination in the United States and continues to gain members annually. More to the point, the media attention provided to the church, its leaders and its members far exceeds that of other religious organizations.

In response to the Lichter study, Kenneth Briggs, a former religion writer for *Newsday* and the *New York Times*, argues, "The essential beliefs of Catholics are not being commonly ridiculed in the press." Instead, Briggs maintains, the press is covering a debate on how the church operates, with Catholics themselves challenging the hierarchy on how it makes critical policy decisions such as those on birth control. He concludes, "All the media is doing is reflecting that disarray and debate." (New York *Newsday*, Monday, May 20, 1991.)

In *Commonweal*, an unsigned editorial concludes: "Though Catholicism as religion and the Catholic church as institution are indeed often misperceived in this country, how much mileage is to be gained by efforts to show Catholics as a powerless picked-up minority? In a climate where acting the victim has become one more form of political manipulation, the church has nothing to gain from whining. And, to the extent that there really is Catholic-bashing in the media, media-bashing by Catholics will do more harm than good. In our view, "Media Coverage" demonstrates, first, that its authors and funders don't understand journalism very well, and, second, that they don't know bias when they see it." (May 17, 1991).

93. Peter Steinfels, "Knights Aiding Anti-Abortion Effort," *New York Times*, Sunday, May 13, 1990.

94. Tamar Lewin, "Abortion Divides Firm Hired to Help Fight It," *New York Times*, Wednesday, April 18, 1990; and Mark Landler, "When a PR Firm Could Use a PR Firm," *Business Week*, May 14, 1990. It is important to mention that tensions within Hill and Knowlton existed long before the so-called "Catholic account." British financier Martin Sorell's takeover of Hill and Knowlton generated a series of internal problems. As a result in 1991 several top-level executives left the firm.

95. Eugene Kennedy, "Catholic Bishops' Big PR Blunder," *New York Times*, Thursday, April 19, 1990.

96. Joseph M. McShane, "Virtue Must Advertise: The Bishops and Public Relations," *Church*, Spring, 1991.

97. "The American Bishops and the P.R. Campaign," *America*, May 19, 1990.

98. Charles W. Bell, "The Ship-Shape Shepherd," *Daily News*, Tuesday, May 22, 1990.

99. Cardinal John J. O'Connor, "Abortion: Questions and Answers," *Catholic New York*, June 14, 1990.

100. "X-ing Communication," *Commonweal*, July 13, 1990.

101. Leslie Bennetts, "God's Man in New York," *Vanity Fair*, August, 1990 (Vol. 53, No. 8), pp. 134-54.

102. Ari Goldman, "O'Connor Won't Meet Reporters After Masses," *New York Times*, Friday, September 7, 1990.

103. This is a good example of how the press can miss the point. When Cardinal O'Connor issued his pamphlet *Abortion: Questions and Answers*, the press immediately reacted to Question 9 concerning the Church's laws on "excommunication." To me the genuine news was found in Question 13, "What about abortion in the cases of rape or incest?" Cardinal O'Connor replied:

> The conflict over imperfect law has definitely been divisive to the pro-life movement. It seems to me that our goal must always be to advance protection for the unborn child to the maximum degree possible. It certainly seems to me, however, that in cases in which perfect legislation is

clearly impossible, it is morally acceptable to support a pro-life bill, however reluctantly, that contains exceptions....I recognize that some in the pro-life movement may consider it politically or strategically unwise to take the course outlined above, but that is a matter of prudential judgement. It is not a matter of supporting intrinsic evil as such. (*Abortion: Questions and Answers*, pp. 22-3.)

104. "The Troubled Priesthood," WNBC-TV, New York series, April 25–27,1990.

105. John Leo, Interview, November 19, 1990.

106. Sister Susan Maloney, S.N.J.M., "Catholic Bishops and the Art of Public Moral Discourse," *Christian Century*, May 9, 1990.

107. Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland, Interview, November 2, 1990. All subsequent quotations and references to my conversation with Weakland are from this interview of November 2.

108. Marie Rohde, "Weakland to Hear Women on Abortion," *Milwaukee Journal*, Friday, November 10, 1989.

109. *Ibid.*

110. *Ibid.*

111. Marie Rohde, Interview, November 1, 1990.

112. *Ibid.*

113. For a full treatment of the 1984 incident over the signing of the *New York Times* advertisement, see Barbara Ferraro and Jane Hussey with Jane O'Reilly, *No Turning Back: Two Nuns' Battle with the Vatican Over Women's Right to Choose* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1990).

114. Quentin Quade, "Prescription for Failure," *National Catholic Register*, July 1, 1990.

115. In the United States and Ireland bishops have come from the ranks of the diocesan clergy. In countries with few native clergy, so-called "mission countries" of South America and Africa, a large part of the episcopacy has come from religious orders. To satisfy the need for black and Hispanic leadership in the United States, a recent pattern of appointments has drawn from the religious orders.

116. Archbishop Weakland, Interview, op. cit.

117. Anthony C. Meisel and M.L. del Mastro, (eds.) *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975), p. 51.

118. In 1968 Weakland presided at the meeting of monastic superiors in Bangkok, at which Thomas Merton was one of the speakers. It was here at the occasion of Merton's untimely death that Weakland administered the last rites of the church and had the body shipped back to the United States.

119. Rembert Weakland, "Vatican II: From Dream to Reality to Vision," Future of the American Church Conference—Time Consultants, September 28, 1990 published in *Origins* (Vol. 20., No.18) October 11, 1990.

120. Paula Kamen, "Catholic Women Air Abortion Views," *Kenosha News*, Saturday, March 24, 1990.

121. Press Release, Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Office of Communications, January, 17, 1990.

122. For further treatment see: Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice, Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982); Carol Gilligan et al., *Mapping the Moral Domain* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988); Mary Field Belenky et al., *Woman's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

123. Mary Beth Murphy, "Abortion Issue Complex Hearings Show," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Friday, April 6, 1990.

124. Peter Steinfels, "Weakland Hears Plenty on Abortion," *New York Times*, Wednesday, April 4, 1990.

125. Paul Kamen, *Kenosha News*, op. cit.

126. Marie Rohde, "Abortion: Weakland Rejects Tactics of Pro-Lifers," *Milwaukee Journal*, Sunday, May 20, 1990.

127. Mary Beth Murphy, "Weakland: Pro-Choice Could Be OK: Stance at Odds with US Conference of Bishops," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Monday, May 21, 1990.

128. *Ibid.*

129. *Ibid.*

130. Fran Bauer and Mary Carole McCauley, "Abortion Opponents Angered by Weakland's Criticism," *Milwaukee Journal*, Monday, May 21, 1990.

131."Weakland's Call to Reason," *Milwaukee Journal*, Tuesday, May 22, 1990.

132. "Sensible, Tough Talk on Abortion," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Tuesday, May 22, 1990.

133. Mary Beth Murphy, "Weakland Gets Priests' Blessing," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Wednesday, June 23, 1990.

134. John Lukaszewicz, Interview, November 1, 1990.

135. Marie Rohde, Interview, op. cit.

136. Mary Beth Murphy, "Weakland Comments Blasted," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Tuesday, May 22, 1990.

137. The phenomenon of Catholic fundamentalism today draws on impulses found in the complex history of American religious life. Consider the works of Richard Hofstader *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Knopf, 1963) and William Warren Sweet, *The Story of Religion in America* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1973). Also see John A. Coleman, "Who are the Catholic 'Fundamentalists'?" *Commonweal*, January 27, 1989.

138. Greg Bell, Interview, November 2, 1990.

139. Rembert G. Weakland, "Respect for Life Still Is Our Priority," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Saturday, May 26, 1990.

140. Mary Beth Murphy, "Bishops Praise, Criticize Weakland," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Saturday, June 2, 1990.

141. James Burtchaell, "Weakland Letter 'Biased and Ignorant'," *National Catholic Reporter*, June 15, 1990.

142. Marie Rohde, "Cardinal's Comments Take Indirect Aim at Weakland," *Milwaukee Journal*, Tuesday, June 19, 1990.

143. Damian Byrne, O.P., "Letter to Archbishop Weakland," October 21, 1990.

144. *Ibid.*

145. Richard Bradee, "Promoting Social Justice Still Politically Unpopular," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Wednesday, November 14, 1990; and Peter Hebblethwaite, "Weakland and the Theology of Fribourg Doctorates," *National Catholic Reporter*, November 23, 1990.

146. Peter Steinfels, "Vatican Bars Swiss University from Honoring Archbishop Weakland of Milwaukee," *New York Times*, Sunday, November 11, 1990.

147. Peter Steinfels, "Papal Official Regrets 'Wound' to U.S. Prelate," *New York Times*, Thursday, November 29, 1990.

148. Marie Rohde, "Key Player Has Yet to Speak to Weakland," *Milwaukee Journal*, Sunday, December 2, 1990.

149. *Ibid.*

150. Mary Beth Murphy, "Weakland Gets Vatican Apology," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Thursday, November 29, 1990.

151. Richard P. McBrien, "Authority and Responsibility in an Adult Church: Conflict and Challenge," Address to Call to Action Conference, Silver Spring, Maryland, November 13, 1990.

152. Paul Wilkes is among the best religious journalists today. His recent two-part profile of Archbishop Weakland, "The Education of an Archbishop," appeared in the *New Yorker* on July 15 and July 22, 1991. In writing this illuminating and insightful portrait, Wilkes followed the archbishop to Central America. I recommend it highly.

153. Marie Rohde, "Weakland Plays Down Snub to Rome; Says He Won't Change," *Milwaukee Journal*, Saturday, November 24, 1990.

154. I think it is important to contrast this notion of mutual involvement of church and press with those expressed in Thomas J. Reese's portrait, *Archbishop: Inside the Power Structure of the American Catholic Church* (San Francisco, CA.: Harper & Row, 1989). The author provides a detailed analysis of the nation's largest archdiocese from the perspective of the bishops who govern them. Few, if any, of the participants consider print or electronic media and the role of the bishop. Nor is there much discussion about a planning process for the use of press, radio and television. Seen relative to other efforts like education and social services, Catholic leadership often regards the media as of only "marginal" interest. To some this might be understandable were it not for the fact that nearly all the goals of the church require a formal outreach to Sunday congregations, Catholic generally, and to the society as a whole.

155. For Americans to better understand this point of view simply consider the anti-Enlightenment thinking of Pope Gregory XVI in his encyclical letter *Mirari Vos*, written in 1832 in order to combat revolutionary and anti-clerical movements. Gregory, angered by newly established press freedoms, declared:

> Here belongs that vile and never sufficiently execrated and detestable freedom of the press for the diffusion of all sorts of writings: a freedom which, with so much insistence, they dare to demand and promote. We are horrified, venerable brothers, contemplating what monstrosities of doctrine, or better, what monstrosities of error are everywhere disseminated in a great multitude of books, pamphlets, written documents—small certainly in their size but enormous in their malice—from which goes out the face of the earth that curse we lament.

See Robert White, S.J., "Mass Media and Culture in Contemporary Catholicism—The Significance of Vatican II," in *Vatican II: Assessment and Perspectives: Twenty-Five Years After*, Rene Latourelle, ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), Vol. III, p. 580-611.

156. Clyde Haberman, "Vatican Synod Reaffirms Celibacy for Priests," *New York Times*, Sunday, October 28, 1990.

157. "The Cologne Declaration: Authority Out of Bounds," *Commonweal*, February 24, 1989.

158. Pat Windsor,"Vatican's Weakland Veto Hot Topic in Corridors," *National Catholic Reporter*, November 23, 1990.

159. "Bishop Ken Untener Presents Reflections to NCCB Meeting," *Saginaw Catholic*, November 15, 1990.

160. Peter Steinfels, "Bishop Issues Warning on Birth Control," *New York Times*, Thursday, November 15, 1990.

161. Peter Steinfels, "How Do You Tell a Victorious War From a Just One?" *New York Times*, Sunday, March 17, 1991; and Peter Steinfels, "State of the Church: Has Catholicism Lost a Chance to Be Our Moral Clearinghouse?" *New York Times*, Sunday, April 8, 1990.

162. To fully appreciate the topic of abortion requires a consideration of American values, especially themes such as "the sanctity of life," "the common good," and "moral literacy." The following works have been proven very helpful to me.

Daniel Callahan, *Abortion: Law, Choice and Morality* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc.,

Robert Coles, *Harvard Diary: Reflections on the Sacred and the Secular* (New York: Crossroads, 1990); "Birth Mother: The Story of America's First Legal Surrogate Mother," (book review by Robert Coles) *New York Times Book Review*, June 26, 1988; "Gatsby at the B School...Literature as a Means of Teaching Morality in Business," *New York Times Book Review*, October 25, 1987; "What Lisa Knew: The Truth and Lies of the Steinberg Case," *New York Times Book Review*, April 8, 1990. *The Spiritual Lives of Children* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990); *The Moral Lives of Children* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986).

Ronald Dworkin, "The Sanctity of Life," Oliver Wendell Holmes Lecture, Harvard Law School, September 24, 1990; "The Future of Abortion," *New York Review of Books*, September 28, 1989; "The Great Abortion Case (Roe v. Wade)," *New York Review of Books*, June 29, 1989; "The Right to Die: The Nancy Cruzan Euthanasia Case," *New York Review of Books*, January 31, 1991; "Liberal Community," (Symposium: Law, Community and Moral Reasoning) *California Law Review*, May, 1989.

Mary Ann Glendon, *Abortion and Divorce in Western Law* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986); "Who Owes What to Whom," (A Conversation with Benjamin Barber, Christopher Lasch et al.) *Harper's Magazine*, February, 1991.

David Hollenbach, S.J., "The Common Good Revisited," *Theological Studies* (Vol. 50, No. 1), March, 1989; "Religion and Political Life," *Theological Studies* (Vol. 52, No. 1), March, 1991.

James R. Kelly, "A Political Challenge to the Prolife Movement," *Commonweal*, November 23, 1990.

Richard A. McCormick, S.J., "Abortion: the Unexplored Middle Ground," *Second Opinion*, (Vol. 10), March