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**PRESS & TELEVISION**

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to be disappointed. By 1928, industry giant NBC was taking in \$10 million annually from advertisers. Meanwhile, intellectuals regularly flailed the networks for pandering to low tastes—"the tastes of the mentally deficient," as literary critic Henry Volkening put it.

The BBC faced no such accusations. In fact, it was frequently taken to task for ignoring the preferences of its mostly working-class audience. Directed until 1940 by the dour and opinionated John C. W. Reith, the BBC was a rather dull bastion of propriety and good taste, Marquis reports. Classical music, lectures, and religious programs were its common fare.

The gulf between the BBC and its American counterparts was widest in reporting the news. Partly because of CBS president William Paley's hunger for prestige, American radio correspondents such as Edward R. Murrow and William L. Shirer scoured Europe for stories. By contrast, the BBC's charter and Reith's temperament made for timid journalism. For example, when British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden resigned in February 1938 to protest his government's appeasement of Hitler, CBS broadcast his farewell speech. The BBC did not.

American radio "showered an unconscionable load of trash on the American public," Marquis says. But the failure of the BBC in its early days was more fundamental. It betrayed its chief responsibility: to inform.

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**RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY**

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*Rethinking  
The Faith*

"Revolution in the Church" by Thomas Sheehan, in *The New York Review of Books* (June 14, 1984), P.O. Box 940, Farmingdale, N.Y. 11737.

"The dismantling of traditional Roman Catholic theology, by Catholics themselves, is by now a *fait accompli*." In their most vigorous intellectual renaissance since the High Middle Ages, declares Sheehan, a Loyola University of Chicago philosopher, Catholic theologians are radically rethinking their faith.

Early in this century, the Pontifical Biblical Commission, worried by "modern" readings of the Bible, proclaimed that the Bible was both literally true and inspired word-for-word by God. In 1965, however, amid the liberalizing influence of the Second Vatican Council, the same commission declared the Gospels to be neither an exact historical record nor an eyewitness account of events. Moreover, Catholic thinkers were for the first time allowed to read the works of their Protestant counterparts without special permission, which spurred a rigorous reexamination of the Bible.

The conclusions of such leading Catholic theologians as Hans Küng of the University of Tübingen and Holland's Edward Schillebeeckx would probably shock most ordinary Catholic churchgoers. In Roman Catholic seminaries, for example, "it is now common teaching that Je-

## RELIGION &amp; PHILOSOPHY

sus of Nazareth did not assert any of the divine or messianic claims the Gospels attribute to him and that he died without believing he was Christ or the Son of God, not to mention the founder of a new religion."

Based on close scrutiny of ancient texts, Küng and his colleagues have even cast doubt on Jesus' resurrection. And if Jesus did not rise from the dead, Sheehan notes, the chief evidence for life after death is gone. That would deprive the Catholic Church of much of its authority as spiritual arbiter. (Ironically, Küng does not reject the possibility of an afterlife; he just denies that there is any concrete proof that it exists.)

Not surprisingly, the Vatican has taken a dim view of these ideas. In 1979, Pope John Paul II demoted Küng by stripping him of his professorship in Catholic theology. Yet, Sheehan believes that the new theologians, by undermining the Vatican's claim to infallibility in theological matters, are having an effect. The Catholic Church's growing involvement in secular issues, such as nuclear war and abortion, he lays to a retreat from the theological arena.

Sheehan believes that any effort by the Vatican to quash the theologians' revolt is doomed to fail. Yet, it also seems unlikely that a church that has survived for nearly two millenia will change quickly.

### *A Revival of Jewish Orthodoxy*

"American Jews Rediscover Orthodoxy" by Natalie Gittelson, in *The New York Times Magazine* (Sept. 30, 1984), 229 West 43rd St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

Jews in the United States have long agonized over whether it is best to assimilate to American culture or to cling to the ways of their forefathers. Now, writes Gittelson, executive editor of *McCall's* magazine, more and more Jews seem to be deciding that it is possible to do both.

Of the nation's six million Jews, some 4.8 million belong to the mainstream and relatively assimilationist sects—the Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist movements. But Gittelson reports that membership in the more fundamentalist Orthodox movement, at about 1.2 million souls, is at a postwar high and growing steadily. "Often superaffluent, no longer insecure in the New World or uncertain about their American identity, these Jews have been freed by secular success to assert triumphantly their Jewish selfhood."

Scientists, film stars, and journalists are among the "new Orthodox." The movement itself is variegated—from the "far right" Hassidim, with their centuries-old costume (for men) of beards and long, black coats, to the more liberal Orthodoxy to which most of the newcomers adhere. Yet all of the Orthodox share a commitment to obey 613 biblical commandments and rabbinical laws. Among their practices: Praying three times daily, strictly observing the Saturday *Shabbos* (sabbath). Orthodox men wear *zizit* (fringed vests) beneath their shirts to remind them of God's presence and refrain from even touching their wives for nearly two weeks of every month.

The growth of ethnic consciousness and religious faith in America, along with sympathy for Israel's plight, have contributed to the Ortho-