

I Object!

James Hitchcock

[**Editor's Note:** The following is *Review* contributor James Hitchcock's reply to Christopher Manion's "A Response to James Hitchcock," Fall 2008. Mr. Manion was responding to two previous *HLR* articles by Professor Hitchcock: "Abortion and the 'Catholic Right'", Spring 2007, and "Part Two," Winter, 2008. To read all three previous articles, please visit our website at www.humanlifereview.com.]

My two articles were "replete with errors," but Manion says he does not have space to document them.

One alleged distortion was my response to his criticism of President Bush for saying that history might vindicate him. But Manion did make the absurd claim that thinking he might be vindicated by history showed Bush to be a "Darwinian Marxist."

I did not say that Manion admits that for Ron Paul "unborn life gets lost in the desert." I quoted Manion's line ironically, because it applies to Paul's states-rights philosophy, even though Manion cannot see it.

Dr. Paul is personally opposed to abortion and would never perform one. He is also opposed to virtually any Federal legislation that would protect the unborn.

Pro-lifers did not rally against Senator Lieberman in 2006 because his opponent was also pro-abortion.

I have never defended Linda Chavez, whose name I barely recognize.

Perhaps Bush has "destroyed the Republican Party." But how did he "set the pro-life movement back a generation"—by appointing Justices Roberts and Alito to the Supreme Court, by the Mexico City Policy, by speaking up for Terri Schiavo, by enacting the conscience clause for medical personnel?

Bush has "pushed the Republican Party to the Left." Perhaps he did in some ways. But did he do so on the pro-life issues? The White House under Bush took stronger pro-life stands than under any other president, but Manion makes it clear that Bush should be anathema for other reasons.

I never said that pro-lifers should not criticize Bush. On the contrary, there is a special moral obligation to monitor the actions of those whom one supports. Rather I object to *The Wanderer's* implication that Bush (and therefore Senator McCain) are beyond the moral Pale, possibly even worse than pro-abortion Democrats. (During the recent election *The Wanderer* at one

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point called McCain a dangerous psychopath.)

The “obscure thread” that Manion says does not exist is *The Wanderer*’s position that all American wars, at least since the Civil War, have been unjust. In a recent issue the Belgians were declared to have committed atrocities against the Germans in 1916.

Manion’s rehearsing of the divisions within the pro-life movement over the Helms Bill and related issues is an irrelevancy. I have never written about that debate but rather about the division in which some conservatives do not regard abortion as the primary public issue.

Manion is correct about the nature of a coalition. My point is that some on the Catholic Right are no longer willing to be part of an anti-abortion coalition that includes George Bush, John McCain, *The Weekly Standard*, and anyone else who is not a “true conservative.”

Manion often cites Senator Santorum’s criticism of McCain, without recalling that *The Wanderer* in 2006 declared Santorum unreliable and urged his defeat.

I do not of course think that *The Wanderer* has sufficient influence to determine the outcome of a national election. However, in its home state of Minnesota it appears that pro-life Senator Norm Coleman has lost by fewer than a hundred votes, and it is not at all implausible that the margin of his defeat was provided by *Wanderer* readers who were persuaded that it was wrong to vote Republican in 2008.

The crux of Manion’s problem with me lies in his statement that, had Bush acted differently, “Hitchcock could have had his war.” (He also speaks of my “abiding devotion” to the war.) The simple fact is that Manion does not know what I think about the war, because I carefully refrained from revealing my opinion in my two articles. I did so precisely because people who disagree about the war should be able to agree about abortion. Manion and others who have responded to my articles automatically assume that I support the war, that indeed that it is the reason why I wrote the articles. But they offer no proof, because there is none. They, not I, try to force people to choose between the war and abortion.

Most assuredly, as Manion says, the war contributed heavily to the Republican defeat in 2008 and thereby to the weakening of the pro-life movement. *The Wanderer* cheered that defeat.

Manion alludes to an interview he did with me in *The Wanderer*. He does not mention my comments about Barry Goldwater, and there lies the rub. Goldwater epitomizes “true conservatism” for Manion and others. But Goldwater was fanatically pro-abortion, something that Manion and other “true conservatives” have never been able to deal with.