

ANTI-ISLAM CARTOONS AND FREE SPEECH



Bill Donohue comments on the anti-Islam cartoon event in Garland, Texas that left two gunmen dead and one security guard wounded:

According to some media outlets, minutes before Elton Simpson started shooting, he tweeted, "If there is no check on the freedom of your speech, then let your hearts be open to the freedom of our actions." He was shot dead quickly thereafter, never realizing that his plainly irresponsible position—no limits on speech means no limits on conduct—was the proximate cause of his death. Absolutism also explains his attraction to Islamism.

There is no role for absolutism in a free society. Yet there are those who, like many members of the PEN American Center, embrace it, at least when it comes to speech. Tonight they will honor *Charlie Hebdo* in New York City, the French magazine that was tied to the Paris murders. Officials from the publication will receive an award for "freedom of expression courage." But other PEN members are objecting, saying that freedom of expression has limits: by depicting Muslims as savages, *Charlie Hebdo* is promoting bigotry.

Both factions of PEN are phonies. In October 1998, I led 2,000 demonstrators in the street outside the theater that featured "Corpus Christi," a play that depicted Christ having sex with the apostles. "From the beginning," I wrote in the November 1998 issue of *Catalyst* (our monthly journal), "the league has argued that the play should not be censored by the government

but that the producers of the play should have cancelled it in the name of common decency.” On that same rainy night there were 300 counter-demonstrators: they came to protest our constitutional right to freedom of speech. Among them was a contingent from the PEN American Center.

The other phonies are the ones who don't want to honor *Charlie Hebdo*. They have no problem offending Christians, but when it comes to bashing Muslims, they are horrified. The entire organization is corrupt.

Here's my take: It is wrong to honor *Charlie Hebdo*, and it is equally wrong to intentionally bash people of faith.

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