

BAD YEAR FOR THE CULTURAL ELITES

The year 2004 was a bad one for our cultural elites. They began the year by calling Christians who liked Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ" anti-Semites, and they finished the year by calling Christians who favor the traditional understanding of marriage gay bashers. But they lost both battles: Mel's movie was a monumental success, and all eleven states that voted on gay marriage overwhelmingly rejected it.

The elites, those gentlepersons who work in the top echelons of the media, the colleges and universities, the publishing world, the entertainment industry, the artistic community, major grant-giving foundations, and so on, are now licking their wounds. And they are angry. Indeed, some are pledging to leave the country. Promises, promises.

What motivates the cultural elite are two things: hatred and power. They hate traditional values and they love power. When they could not succeed in censoring "The Passion of the Christ," they launched a hate-filled campaign against Mel Gibson and his supporters; for good measure, they branded the film "pornographic" and "sado-masochistic." And when they couldn't persuade voters that it was okay for two men to get married, they went ballistic. The demonization of Christians is now at an all time high. The elites are absolutely convinced that traditional Catholics and evangelical Protestants are out to get them. They sincerely believe that the United States is, or is on the verge of becoming, a theocracy run by Taliban-like Christian thugs.

What is amazing about this lunacy is that their cruel caricature of Christians is so wide of the mark. What most Christians want is a decent society that respects life and family. The right of a child to be born is not a religious

issue—it is a human-rights issue. The preservation of marriage as an institution between a man and a woman is also not a religious issue—it is a societal issue. The attempt to label these issues as religious is actually an attempt to marginalize them.

That the Catholic Church is both pro-life and pro-marriage does not make abortion and marriage religious issues: atheists and agnostics have been known to favor both, and some religions—Unitarianism comes quickly to mind—reject both positions. It should also be pointed out that simply because the Catholic Church supports traffic lights and arithmetic, they do not, on that account, become religious matters.

Much to the chagrin of the elites, moral issues played a big role in the election. So what have they learned? Not much. Having lost on abortion and gay marriage, the elites are now saying that poverty, war, corporate greed, health care, the environment and the minimum wage are also moral issues. They're right about that, but what they fail to understand is that everyone can relate to issues of life and family—they are as palpable as they are visceral. The same cannot be said about something as nebulous as the deficit.

Similarly, the elites would like to live in a world where most parents get as upset about air pollution as they do moral pollution. But any parent who isn't more concerned about the smut that Hollywood delivers than he is the smut that automobiles deliver is irresponsible. Technology can, and has, helped to check the latter, but only a values reversal can change the former.

The Catholics and Protestants whom I know are not seeking to impose their values on anyone. What they want is for the secular elites to stop imposing their values on us. It is not our side that seeks to censor "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance. It is not our side that seeks to stigmatize the Boy Scouts. It is not our side that seeks to remove the Ten

Commandments from courtrooms. It is not our side that wants to ban kids from singing "Silent Night" in the schools. Indeed, when it comes to muzzling free speech and punishing diversity, it's more often their side that's guilty.

Many on all sides are questioning whether we can have a truce in the culture war. Listen to what the *New York Times* said in an editorial two days after the election: "This page will never give up our commitment to women's right to reproductive choice, as well as full civil rights for people of all sexual orientations." Sounds pretty unequivocal.

Unashamedly, the next sentence says that "political sacrifices" will have to be made in order to stake out a "middle ground" that will lay "the foundation for a new national consensus that might finally bring the nation's social wars to an end." Translated this means that those who support traditional values will have to compromise their principles in order to accommodate the side of the *New York Times*.

Uh, huh. Didn't anyone tell them they lost?