

Busy on All Fronts

William Donohue

April 2009

Last December I wrote a president's desk piece titled, "Culture War Ready to Explode." I predicted that the election of Barack Obama would occasion a fierce battle between traditionalists and modernists, and that was because many of those in the latter category will "see in his victory a golden opportunity to wage war on traditionalists." That is exactly what has happened.

We have been so busy at the Catholic League, and on so many fronts, that we could fill this issue of *Catalyst* many times over. We could also fill the entire issue with all the media hits we've had. So the bad news is the bigots are on the march; the good news is we're taking them on, chalking up some big victories along the way.

The culture war has indeed exploded. I am of the 60s generation, the generation that witnessed a radical turn in our culture. Some good things happened in the 60s—such as the civil rights movement, giving black Americans rights long denied them. But overall, the 60s saw a coarsening of our culture. Radical individualism triumphed, something which by now is deeply ingrained in our society.

I was in the U.S. Air Force in the late 60s, stationed at Beale Air Force Base in northern California, not far from Marysville and Yuba City. On weekends, I would travel with friends to San Francisco. The Haight-Ashbury section was the epicenter of hippie America, a drug infested hell hole where anti-Americanism flourished. Many of those radicals wound up dead. Others turned the corner. Still others joined the establishment, but never really changed their thinking. It is this group that is now igniting the culture war.

The radicals who are fomenting the culture war see in Obama a chance to relive the 60s. As I said in December, "I am not blaming Barack Obama for all of what is about to happen." But he is the catalyst, however personally uninvolved he may be. The fact is that many see in him a chance to finish what they started in their youth. And a big part of it is driven by anti-Catholicism. Consider the following.

In Maryland and New York, as this issue shows, bills have been introduced that take direct aim at the Catholic Church. The proponents say they are interested in protecting children, and that is why they want to suspend the statute of limitations allowing for those abused many years ago to get their day in court. But this is a ruse. They are not interested in protecting kids—they are interested in sticking it to the Catholic Church.

How do I know this? Because if they were truly interested in protecting kids and securing justice for those who have been molested, they would start where the action is, and that would be in the public schools. But, in fact, in every state where these bills have been introduced, the public schools have been shielded by special laws tailored to insulate them from the same kinds of penalties afforded private institutions. It is outrageous, duplicitous and bigoted.

Look at what happened in Connecticut. Two gay Democrats tried to engineer a takeover of the Catholic Church by the Connecticut legislature. They lost, but the fact that they even tried is incredible. To single out the Roman Catholic Church in an unprecedented power grab shows beyond any doubt that anti-Catholicism is alive and well in the United States. No other religion is ever targeted the way Catholicism is.

As I said on "Glenn Beck," could anyone imagine what would have happened had Catholic bishops in Connecticut decided to lobby for a bill granting them the authority to run the administrative and fiscal affairs of the state legislature?

The charge would be fascism. So why, aside from the Catholic League, didn't others use this term to describe what happened?

And where was the ACLU, that great protector of separation of church and state? Americans United for Separation of Church and State was even worse: it took the occasion to lecture the Catholic Church on the meaning of separation of church and state! The best it could do was to say that the lawmakers who tried to stage this coup were "misguided." It proves, once and for all, that Americans United is an organization that exploits the First Amendment for political reasons, not principled ones.

Not only is Catholicism singled out, when our side strikes back, we are bashed beyond belief. Our victory in Georgia, as this issue shows (and we could fill many pages with the hate mail we received), triggered a hate-filled stream of bigoted comments. Not to worry—we are thick-skinned at the Catholic League.

Radical secularists, many of them from the 60s generation, believe this is their last shot. That's why they are in high gear. They can create so much damage because of where they are situated: They dominate higher education, the arts, the media, Hollywood, the publishing industry, the foundations and the non-profit advocacy organizations. And their lust for power is insatiable.

As I said in December, "So buckle your seat belts." Just reading this issue of *Catalyst* shows why.