

MOCK JESUS SHOW?

Comedy Central is weighing the possibility of offering a new animated show, “JC.”

All we know about “JC” is that it will be a half-hour show about Christ seeking to live a normal life in New York outside the reach of his “powerful but apathetic father.” But we know much more about who is doing this.

These are the same executives who delight in bashing Christians while continuing to censor any depiction of Muhammad on “South Park.” They also deceive. Kent Alterman, a network official, says this about the show: “In general, comedy in its purest form always makes some people uncomfortable.” Not true. Besides the fact that there is no end to the number of comedians who have made a huge name for themselves without ever offending anyone, what is even more relevant is the fact that Comedy Central has absolutely no interest in making Muslims feel uncomfortable.

We jumped on this issue as soon as we learned of it, and we are happy to say that we joined a coalition of like-minded folks headed by our friend Brent Bozell, president of the Media Research Center (and member of the Catholic League’s board of advisors), to protest the show.

We urge members to write to Comedy Central’s CEO, Doug Herzog, at 2049 Century Park East, Ste. 4000, Los Angeles, California, 90067. Not only is it offensive to ridicule Jesus, it is outrageous that these Hollywood types refuse to treat Catholics the way they treat Muslims—with respect.

MEDIA TAKE AIM AT THE POPE; BIGOTRY EXPLODES

Beginning in March, and extending well into April, the *New York Times* ran a series of articles seeking to tie Pope Benedict XVI to the priestly sexual abuse scandal. It was quickly joined by other media outlets, the most prominent of which was the Associated Press. The net result was an absolute explosion of anti-Catholic bigotry, the most vicious of which took direct aim at the pope.

The Catholic League was proud to respond with a full-page ad on the op-ed page of the *New York Times* that quickly rebutted the most serious accusations. The response it garnered, from the Vatican to American cardinals, was profoundly gratifying. Even those who are not normally on our side weighed in with praise, as did many non-Catholics.

On the other hand, the Catholic League came under fire from many quarters, and from many parts of the world. Much of the criticism was simply boilerplate: bloggers, in particular, painted us as defenders of sexual molestation, using the most vulgar language imaginable. In fact, we could fill this entire issue of *Catalyst* with all the invective used to smear us. Fortunately, we could also fill this edition with all the media hits we had—we were simply all over the news.

We are convinced that some of the attempts to finger the pope—none of which had any real sticking power—were designed to unseat him. Quite frankly, the pope is hated because he heads the most powerful countercultural institution in the western world. His enemies want to weaken his moral authority, and some have even called for his arrest the next time he steps foot on foreign soil. Yet as Bill Donohue told the *Washington Post*, “there is not a shred of evidence he did anything wrong.”

Our most common complaint against the media was its exclusive concentration on sexual abuse cases in the Catholic Church that extended back to the mid-20th century. No other religious or secular institution was targeted by the media—they were all given a pass. What made this resemble a modern-day witch-hunt—about events which occurred a long time ago—was precisely its cherry-picking nature.

The good news is that the more we made plain our case, the more receptive an audience we found. To wit: our good friend in the Jewish community, former New York City Mayor Ed Koch, branded the attacks as “manifestations of anti-Catholicism.” We are pleased to note, as well, the support that the pope received from Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz.

JOHNSEN QUILTS

From the time we learned that Dawn Johnsen was chosen to head the Office of Legal Counsel, we have been on a relentless PR campaign alerting the public, and U.S. senators, to her anti-Catholic record. On April 9, our wish came true: she withdrew her name from nomination.

“The Catholic League is delighted that Catholics will not have to contend with Dawn Johnsen running an influential office in the Obama administration,” Bill Donohue told the press. “As we said many times,” he continued, “in the late 1980s, Johnsen worked on a case that sought to strip the Church of its tax-exempt status, simply because the Church is opposed to abortion.”

There is no end to the number of religions that support abortion rights, though no one in the pro-life community has ever sought to deny these religions their tax-exempt status.

That ignoble prize goes to the pro-abortion crowd.

What makes this victory so sweet is that President Obama renominated her this year after her nomination failed to reach the senate last year. It does not speak well for the president that he was so determined to put an anti-Catholic in his administration. We simply can't imagine him appointing a racist, so why the exception for us?

On March 4, Donohue wrote to every member of the senate, asking just one question: "Are you aware that Dawn Johnsen, who will soon be voted upon by the full Senate, sought to strip the Roman Catholic Church of its tax-exempt status in 1988?" Looks like the letter was not in vain.

COURTROOM BIGOTRY EXPLODES: MICHIGAN GRIEVANCE FILED

On March 3, the Catholic League filed a formal complaint with the Michigan Attorney Grievance Commission regarding anti-Catholic comments made by defense attorney Henry Scharg.

In a Wayne County Circuit Court hearing concerning a woman charged with smothering her newborn daughter to death, her attorney, Henry Scharg, sought repeatedly to malign trial judge Dan Ryan, accusing him of allowing his Catholic religion to color his judgment in the case. Not only did Scharg call into question Ryan's affiliation with Ave Maria Law School, he sought to remove the judge from the case.

What happened on March 1 was unbelievable. Scharg was angered over the fact that Ryan was taking vacation time to teach at Ave Maria on Mondays (the fact that Ryan rearranged his Monday

schedule to accommodate Scharg undercut his complaint). In any event, on p. 10 of the transcript from the hearing, Scharg is quoted as saying, "This is the equivalent to an African-American man being on trial and the judge taking Mondays off to attend Klan meetings."

Bill Donohue issued the following statement to the media: "Scharg has no business representing anyone. To compare an accredited Catholic law school to a racist terrorist organization is more than despicable—it constitutes rank anti-Catholic bigotry. Indeed, this remark is so egregious as to warrant severe punitive sanctions, if not disbarment. We will do what we can to see that justice is done."

Justice, we decided, could only be served by lodging a complaint with the Attorney Grievance Commission of the State of Michigan. It is not the Catholic League's role to determine, or even recommend, a suitable punishment. All we can do is formally ask for an investigation of this matter, which we did.

What angered us as much as anything was the attempt by Scharg to force the removal of the judge. Judge Ryan, of course, did nothing wrong. Scharg was the one who discredited himself before the court with his flagrant anti-Catholic bigotry. When we went to press, there were no reported bigoted outbursts by Scharg in the courtroom. At the very least, we hope our complaint had a chastening effect on him.

Someone on our side gave us a tip about this incident. We are happy he did. But we are not happy with the silence of the Michigan media. Had an anti-Semitic or racist remark been made in court, it's a sure bet it would have been covered. Nonetheless, if justice is to be served—and it could take six months—it will come from the government, not the media.

MUSLIM MASSACRE

Muslim violence against Christians in Nigeria exploded in March. According to one newspaper, “dozens of bodies lined the streets” of three Christian villages in northern Nigeria. “Other victims of the weekend’s Muslim fury jammed a local morgue, the limbs of slaughtered children tangled in a grotesque mess.”

Children were scalped and “officials estimate that 500 people were massacred in night-time raids by rampaging Muslim gangs.” According to one eyewitness account, homes were set on fire and many were decapitated.

We weren’t happy with the way many in the media covered this story. For example, CNN accurately reported on the violence, but hastened to add that “analysts say it would be wrong to assume the conflict was rooted in religion.” Of course: When Muslims massacre Christians, religion never has anything to do with it.

“Some analysts,” the story continued, “believe the weekend slaughter was a revenge attack for the killing of around 150 members” of a Muslim community by Christian mobs. But as we pointed out, after a truce was made, it was Muslim youths, armed with machetes, who broke it.

CNN also cited an ugly incident in 2001 in the same area. What started the Muslim massacre back then? “A Christian woman had tried to cross the road through a group of Muslims during Friday prayers.” That an innocent Christian woman should be murdered by Muslims in prayer should be enough to convince even the biggest skeptic that there is something really sick

going on.

MOTHER TERESA STAMP OKAYED; ATHEISTS LAUNCH BOYCOTT

As soon as the U.S. Postal Service announced that it would celebrate the centenary of Mother Teresa's birthday with a commemorative stamp, it drew fire from atheists. No organization was angrier than the Freedom from Religion Foundation: it called for a boycott of the stamp. The Catholic League joined the fight, assailing the group.

Annie Laurie Gaylor is co-president, with her husband Dan Barker, of the atheist group; she is leading the atheist crusade against the Mother Teresa stamp. She reasons that the Post Office should not honor a religious figure. The Post Office replies that Mother Teresa was selected because of her humanitarian work.

When asked about a previous stamp honoring Malcolm X, a leader of the Nation of Islam, Gaylor said, "Malcolm X was not primarily known for being a religious figure." She is correct in this observation. But she sounded like a white racist when she dressed down Rev. Martin Luther King: she said he "just happened to be a minister."

As we said to the media, "We'd like to hear her explain that to African Americans at a Sunday service. Perhaps she can get the NAACP to recast King as a secular orator, and not as a black clergyman, during Black History Month."

What is really driving Gaylor's hatred of Mother Teresa, besides her virulent anti-Catholicism, is the saintly nun's opposition to abortion. Gaylor accused the Albanian nun of making an "anti-abortion rant" during her Nobel Prize acceptance speech. In fact, the "rant" amounted to her saying that "abortion was the greatest destroyer of peace in the world."

Gaylor was not above trotting out some of Christopher Hitchens' criticisms of Mother Teresa. But neither he, nor Gaylor, we told the press, has ever laid a glove on her.

We pointed out to the media why abortion hits a nerve with Gaylor. Her mother, Annie Nicol Gaylor, founded the Freedom from Religion Foundation in 1978. And just two years after the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion-*on-demand*, *she released a book titled, Abortion Is a Blessing*. This kind of book, we said, "could only be written by someone who sees abortion as a positive good." Her daughter is obviously cut from the same cloth.

Gaylor is not alone in protesting the Mother Teresa stamp. Elizabeth Tenety, who writes for the *Washington Post's* "On Faith" blog, weighed in against the nun on similar grounds. The Catholic League will not only lead the defense of Mother Teresa, we will bestow our own honors when the stamp is released on August 26.

DONOHUE ON "SIMPSONS"

"The Simpsons' 20th Anniversary Special" aired on January 10th and drew some 20 million viewers. Here's how it was flagged by the *New Haven Register*: "And what a mix of celebs and places

it is: John Waters, Sting, the theme-song musicians, Dan Rather, Seth Myers, Mike Judge, Trey Parker and cohort Matt Stone, James L. Brooks (producer and godfather of the show) and even Bill Donohue of the Catholic League.”

Donohue was interviewed for the Anniversary Special in October. Though the animated series has managed to offend one segment or the other in the course of 450 episodes, the Catholic League has had only a few complaints, and two of the three dealt with ridiculing the Eucharist.

We protested two episodes of “The Simpsons” in the late 1990s and didn’t issue another news release until last fall, right around the time the film crew came to our New York City office. On October 19th, we went public with our complaint regarding the show that aired the night before. “Mocking the heart of any religion always crosses the line,” Donohue said, “and mocking the Eucharist does it for Catholics.”

The clip they aired of the interview, conducted over a two-day period, fairly showed Donohue registering his misgivings. It did not take his words out of context or attempt to caricature his remarks.

Donohue quipped, “What are Catholics supposed to be—piñatas? Are we supposed to be like the guy that you can just beat up on?” Not on your life.

CHRISTMAS COPS ON THE BEAT; BIZARRE TACTICS USED

Just as the sun sets in the morning, we know that every

December the anti-Christmas folks swing into high gear. And as evidenced by the articles in this issue of *Catalyst*, 2009 was no exception. Save, perhaps, for one thing: the tactics this time around were noted for their novelty.

Nothing gained the Catholic League more publicity this past Christmas season than our criticism of PETA's (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) campaign to exploit the religious holiday for profit. It featured an almost totally nude *Playboy* pinup "dressed" with Catholic symbols. Bill Donohue debated a PETA spokeswoman on CNN, making swift dispatch of her arguments.

Atheist organizations were up to their old tricks of seeking to criminalize Christmas by suing municipalities. Because of the bad economy, all it took were a few threats to scare budget-weary officials from challenging the intimidators in court. The anti-Christmas foes know this, and shamelessly exploited it to their advantage.

Dumb is the only way we can characterize some of what happened. By erecting a lighted Loch Ness Monster in lieu of a manger scene in Howard County, Indiana, officials got blasted from all sides. In some cases, school districts had policies in place that were sensible, but were never invoked. Hence, some of the silliest decisions were made, like changing the Christmas tree to the "Giving Tree."

More bizarre tactics included gay-themed Christmas plays and the banning of secular symbols like Frosty the Snowman and candy canes. Over and over again, we heard the refrain that censoring Christmas was being done to protect non-Christians (from what we still don't know). It is one thing to complain about the effects of second-hand smoke, quite another to sound the alarms over the effects of second-hand Christmas cheer.

The White House had fewer ornaments and wreaths than usual, a fact that was nicely explained by First Lady Michelle Obama:

this was done intentionally, she said, to show compassion for those who were hurting at Christmastime. We don't understand the logic, but neither do we understand why an ornament featuring the genocidal maniac Mao Zedong was hung from one of the White House Christmas trees.

Perhaps bizarre is too kind a word to describe such events. In any case, if there was one hero, it was Colorado's Larimer County Sheriff who advised all the Christmas cops to simply "Lighten Up. Just say 'Merry Christmas'" and "Wishing You a Loud and Politically Incorrect 'Merry Christmas.'" Touché.

TRILOGY SERIES NIXED

We previously reported in *Catalyst* that New Line Cinema has not shown much interest in making any more movie versions of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy; his first book in the series, *The Golden Compass*, hit the big screen in 2007, and was the subject of a vigorous Catholic League protest. At the end of 2009, our dream came true: there will be no movie made of either *The Subtle Knife* or *The Amber Spyglass*.

In December 2007, the Catholic League launched a boycott of the film version of *The Golden Compass*. We did so in the hope that Christian parents would keep their children away from the film and thus not be inclined to buy *His Dark Materials* as a Christmas gift; the trilogy of pro-atheist books is aimed at young people. We also wanted to discourage the possibility that producers would make a movie of the second book of the trilogy. Now Pullman, an English atheist, has confirmed our victory: there will be no sequel.

Pullman was widely quoted in Britain taking aim at Bill

Donohue for his alleged “triumphalism.” Donohue responded by saying, “The accusation is accurate. I am positively gloating.” In Wales, Donohue was quoted as saying, “I knew if we could hurt box office receipts here, it might put the brakes on the next movie.” Pullman shot back, labeling Donohue’s boasting as “disgusting.”

This is a big victory for Christians, especially Catholics. And it is especially sweet for the Catholic League.

BELLS ARE RINGING

Christmas bells started ringing early for the Catholic League this year. Indeed, just three days into November, we heard the call and swung into action. The next day, we scored our first victory.

Initially, there was to be no Christmas Tree on the Capitol lawn in Frankfort, Kentucky. That’s because the word “Christmas” was deemed offensive. So to placate the diversity dons, the authorities opted instead for a “Holiday Tree.” The official line was that the “Holiday Tree” is inclusive of Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah and New Year’s. We couldn’t help saying, however, that no one has ever heard of a “Thanksgiving Tree,” “Hanukkah Tree” or “New Year’s Tree.”

Naturally, we blanketed the media with our objections. The next day, Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear, after getting pounded, decided to pivot. He declared that in 2009 the Christmas Tree would actually be called the “Christmas Tree.” Chalk up a victory for Santa and sanity.

Though there has been a Christmas parade in Amelia, Ohio, for three decades, there won’t be one this year. That’s because

the village changed the name to the "Holiday Parade," though it did not say what holiday was being celebrated. Nor will there be a nativity scene on a public median in Warren, Michigan, even though there has been one there since World War II. In Olympia, Washington, religious displays have been banned inside municipal buildings. But outside the buildings, it is okay.

The cultural fascists never know when to quit. But neither do we.