

HATE ADS LOSE IN OH & CA

The same “Earth’s Final Warning” ads that the Catholic League has fought around the country appeared recently in the *Athens Messenger* in Athens, Ohio and *The Sun* in San Bernardino, California. Fortunately, the publishers of both newspapers pledged never to run them again.

The *Athens Messenger* ran the offensive ad on October 4. It was sponsored by a splinter group of the Seventh Day Adventist operating out of West Palm Beach, Florida. We did not learn of the ad until a few weeks later. On October 20, William Donohue wrote to the newspaper’s publisher, Fred W. Weber II, asking him not to run the ad again. On October 30, Weber wrote back saying, “We regret accepting and running the advertisement” and indicated that a statement of regret had already been issued to readers.

The Catholic League’s response to the ad in *The Sun* was timelier and thus had a greater effect. Donohue complained to publisher Bob Gray on October 20 about the October 15 ad and received a no-nonsense letter from Gray on October 30. The Sweetwater Seventh Day Adventist sponsored this one.

Gray said that “The persons who accepted this advertisement had already served notice of resignation. Their decision to accept was extremely poor.” He assured Donohue that “we will be careful not to accept such advertising in the future.”

Just as the bigots won’t give up, neither will we.

“HATE ADS” REPUDIATED

The publishers of two more newspapers that ran the “Earth’s Final Warning” hate ads have apologized in print. Roger Kintzel of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and Michael E. Waller of the *Baltimore Sun* apologized to readers for running the anti-Catholic ads; they appeared on August 26 and October 8-9, respectively. William Cardinal Keeler of Baltimore criticized his local newspaper for running the ad.

The Catholic League has protested the propriety of running these Catholic-bashing ads whenever they appear. At stake is not a legal issue—we never question the legality of placing these ads—but a moral one. Our point is simply that no newspaper is forced to accept any ad.

The full page, single spaced ads, are the work of a Seventh Day Adventist splinter group based in Palm Beach, Florida. The Eternal Gospel Church has run dozens of these hate ads in dailies all over the country. Most recently, they ran in the *Marietta Times* of Ohio and the *Montgomery Journal* in Alexandria, Virginia. The league is awaiting a response from the publishers of these two newspapers.

In one sense, the ads are so dumb that it is tempting to discount them. On the other hand, the ads are definitely feeding anti-Catholicism and must be protested every time they run.

We’re still not sure who’s funding this group, but whoever they are, they’re loaded. Ads of this size cost upwards of \$100,000 each. In any event, we love checkmating them whenever we can.

QUOTABLE

“Hannity and Colmes,” Fox News, 8/24/00

Pro-abortion advocate Virginia Saporta says ads that are opposed to partial birth abortion are “inflammatory.” William Donohue responds, “Let me tell you what! Inflammatory? You cannot discuss killing a baby who’s 80 percent born without it being inflammatory! It is the procedure that is inflammatory, not the rhetoric, lady!”

ABCNEWS.com REWRITES NEWS STORY AFTER PROTEST

Most of the reporting of Rome’s World Youth Day was fair and balanced. But there was one story that we objected to that rendered an unusual result: most of the offensive parts of the story were dropped from future web postings.

The story in question appeared August 17 on the ABC News website, ABCNEWS.com. Reporter Sue Masterman ridiculed Catholicism in her report, “Holy Disorder: Kids Are Dressed to Thrill at the Vatican Bash.” Her article was based on the throngs of youths who converged on Rome for Catholic event. Here are some of her observations, as original posted:

- “The Vatican’s strict dress code for visitors to St. Peter’s Church in Rome has collapsed...” Instead, there are “scantily clad pilgrims” wearing “hot pants, miniskirts, tube tops and other scanty clothing. Dogs, however, are another

question. However well covered in fur, they have to stay outside. They have no souls to redeem, the church decrees, thus access is denied. No holy water for them.”

- Priests are hearing confessions “from all youngsters who want absolution from sins they have hardly had time to commit.”
- “If God, Jesus, the Virgin Mary, the Holy Ghost are getting to see more than usual of the flesh which He created in places where the Roman Catholic clergy want it covered up, then it does not seem to be causing much divine offense.”

William Donohue called the office of ABCNEWS.com and then released a statement saying, “I do not believe for one second that Masterman would snicker at any other religion. For some reason, she has it out for Catholicism. We will press this issue with ABC officials to find out what her problem is.” What was particularly troubling about this story was that it was presented as “hard news,” and not as an editorial.

Within 24 hours of our protest, the first statement that we objected to was toned down and the other two were eliminated altogether. The league’s director of communications, Pat Scully, then called ABCNEWS.com to discuss this matter further. It was admitted, rather begrudgingly, that the story could be seen as offensive to Catholics and that is why it was changed.

A follow-up call was also placed to Donohue to see if he was pleased. He reported that he was and thanked him for his cooperation.

KUDOS TO ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Catholic League members know that we always protest those insipid anti-Catholic ads that are placed in major newspapers by a breakaway splinter group of the Seventh Day Adventists. Fortunately, most publishers act responsibly and pledge not to run them again. But few are as professional as the people associated with the *Arizona Republic*.

When the familiar "Earth's Final Warning" ad appeared in the August 19 edition of the newspaper, we complained via phone and letter. We are happy to report that so did Phoenix Bishop Thomas J. O'Brien. Indeed, he was so angry that he demanded an apology; the league supported him in this effort.

The result was that David Alley, the advertising vice president, wrote an apology to readers in the August 26 edition of the *Arizona Republic*. "While the strength of newspaper is its ability to give voice to a wide range of divergent views," he said, "we must ensure those views are expressed in a civil manner." Perhaps most heartening was the way he closed his editorial: "Unfortunately, this ad offended a lot of good people. For that we are sorry."

We wrote to Mr. Alley saying, "This piece should be recognized as an example of journalistic integrity." We also told him we would mention this in *Catalyst*. What we liked best about his comment was that he spared us the usual, "If you were offended..." He simply told it straight.

FEDS EYE PRO-LIFERS

Over the summer, it was learned that the Clinton administration has been compiling files on various pro-family and pro-life groups. Included on the list is the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB).

An activist group, Judicial Watch, obtained documents under the Freedom of Information Act that reveal how federal investigators, including the FBI, are keeping tabs on innocent persons in the pro-life community. The secret program, known as "Violence Against Abortion Providers," documents all sorts of data as far back as the mid-1990s.

What is alarming about this is that the Clinton administration has gone way beyond keeping a eye on those who might be connected with the commission of a crime. It is, in fact, keeping files on persons simply because of their beliefs and expressed opinions. "The investigation of abortion clinic violence was a cover for them to go after pro-life leaders and religious leaders who obviously had no connection to this," said Tom Fitton, president of Judicial Watch.

When asked to comment on this, William Donohue told the press, "The surprise would be if they *didn't* regard such people as the enemy." He maintained that "There's no question that the pro-life community is the enemy as far as the Clinton administration is concerned." Donohue then questioned, "Why would it be such a leap to conclude he [Clinton] wouldn't have people investigating these groups?"

Is anyone surprised?

OKLAHOMA OFFICIALS ADDRESS FLAP AT ROGERS STATE

In June, Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating, along with state lawmakers and education officials, jumped into the fray at Rogers State University. The school came under fire by the Catholic League for offering an art appreciation telecourse that features anti-Catholic imagery. The resulting media fanfare, which hit big in the Sooner state, led public officials to get involved.

The league went directly to the Oklahoma media after learning of a depiction of “a Madonna with an exposed potbelly dragging a cross into a religious ceremony being led by a priest with two Devil’s horns”; cannibalism was also shown. The video is from the “Temple of Confessions” segment in an art series titled, “A World of Art: Works in Progress.”

We responded by writing to the two governing boards of Rogers State University asking them to consider the appropriateness of this telecourse. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and the Oklahoma Board of Regents exercise considerable authority over this public institution and therefore have an obligation not to violate the public trust. “Surely there can be no public interest in using public monies to assault the sensibilities of minority groups,” we said, “and that would certainly include Oklahoma Catholics.”

We also contended that it was a perverse use of public funds to pay for a course that was designed to counter the prejudicial attitudes that some whites harbor against Latinos, and then bash Catholics in the process. “If there were a course designed to check anti-Semitism that featured art that offended Native Americans,” we countered, “everyone would see the hypocrisy in a New York minute.”

The Catholic League was pleased with the forthright response of Governor Keating. He wrote to us explaining that he is in the process of obtaining a copy of the video, adding that "I do not believe state institutions should be in the business of broadcasting patently offensive material of any kind." We also heard from state representative Kevin Calvey who promised to take a serious look at the matter.

As for Rogers State, the school fell back on the tired excuse of academic freedom. That there is such a thing as academic responsibility seems to be forgotten. The league has explicitly asked the State Regents "to get beyond legalisms" and do what is right.

VICTORY IN THE COURTS

On June 28, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that taxpayer money could be used to buy computers and other instructional aids for private and parochial schools. This was a victory that the Catholic League shared with others: Gerard Bradley and Robert George, both of whom serve on our board of advisors, filed an amicus brief on behalf of the league in this important case, *Mitchell v. Helms*.

Justice Clarence Thomas, who wrote the majority decision, emphasized that the exclusion of parochial schools from aid programs is rooted in 19th century anti-Catholicism. Such exclusion, he said, "born of bigotry, should be buried now."

The brief by Bradley and George took issue with previous court rulings in this area and sought to dispel many myths regarding Catholic schools. In doing so, they offered a trenchant Catholic analysis of recent jurisprudence on the establishment

clause of the First Amendment.

In a news release on this subject, the Catholic League also took note of other issues that touched this case:

“It is the hope of the Catholic League that those who favor school vouchers will use this decision to promote school choice. Then we can finally end this class warfare of making the poor pay for schools they expressly reject while the Bill Clintons and Jesse Jacksons of this world can afford to bypass such schools altogether.”

We are grateful for the pro-bono contributions of Bradley and George.

QUOTABLE

Catholic Press Association, Baltimore, MD, 5/25/00

WILLIAM DONOHUE: “You don’t run a civil rights organization the way you run a soup kitchen. I will be apologetic to no one about this. We confront people in the public square...Those who think dialogue is the god, go ahead and dialogue and see how far it gets you. Try to sit down with those people without the Catholic League (existing) and see how far it gets you.”

QUOTABLE

“NBC Nightly News with Tom Brokaw” 5/4/00

WILLIAM DONOHUE: (on John Cardinal O’Connor) Here is a man who gave us a moral compass, who gave us some understanding, who grounded our religion, not only in the teachings of the Church, but in common sense.

MSNBC’s “Hardball with Chris Matthews” 5/4/00

WILLIAM DONOHUE: (on John Cardinal O’Connor) Well, he was a man of tremendous courage, for one thing; a man of great intellect, a man who was also a humanitarian and a person who certainly defied many of our cultural and political winds. And to be specific, this is a man who was not interested in kind of having a Dick Morris or a Gallup poll to find out what was politically correct on the radar screen. He offended people on the left, he offended people on the right. He never offended God, because he was a man of peace, he was a man of love, and anybody who got a chance to know him knew he had a tremendous sense of humor; a man of eternal optimism and, beyond anything else, as far as I’m concerned, a man who didn’t just engage in empty rhetoric.