

OBAMA = THEOCRAT?

On April 30, the *New York Times* ran a front-page story on Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama and his spiritual journey to Christianity. The Catholic League questioned whether Senator Obama wants the U.S. to become a theocracy:

If the same standard that was applied to President George W. Bush were to be applied to Senator Obama, then Obama must be considered a theocrat who shows no respect for the separation of church and state. What else could one conclude after seeing a color photo of him on the front page of the Times on April 30, preaching from the pulpit of a Christian church? The *Times* article itself was even more indicting.

Obama's spiritual mentor is the Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright Jr., a radical minister who blames the United States for the war in Iraq. So controversial is Rev. Wright that Obama shunned him when he announced his bid for the presidency. It makes one wonder how the media will follow up on this: after all, when Mel Gibson was being criticized for making "The Passion of the Christ," his foes constantly demanded that he denounce his father's views on the Holocaust.

Surely Rev. Wright—who has played a pivotal role in shaping Obama's thinking—should be subjected to at least the same scrutiny. And surely Obama should be asked to denounce Wright's radical views, including his position that white racism can be found in Zionism.

Obama began his presidential campaign by saying, "Giving all praise and honor to God," and it didn't raise an eyebrow among the guardians of the separation of church and state. But when Bush said that Jesus was his favorite philosopher, the guardians went ballistic. Indeed, Obama was able to compare himself to Joshua, and no one blinked.

The day before the *Times* piece ran, Obama blasted the Bush

administration's handling of the war in Iraq while preaching at a Christian church. Now imagine a pro-life Republican candidate speaking at a Catholic church denouncing the Democrats for supporting partial-birth abortions. And imagine the reaction he would receive if there were a color photo of him on the front page of the *New York Times* speaking at Saint Patrick's Cathedral.

The double standard is nauseous, and it smacks of religious *and* racial prejudice.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN LOSES

In May, the University of Wisconsin-Madison agreed to pay \$250,000 in student fees next year to the University of Wisconsin Roman Catholic Foundation to settle its religious discrimination lawsuit.

The Catholic group, which has existed on the campus since 1883, was deemed ineligible by the university because some of its board members were not students and because the group allegedly violated a university policy governing nondiscrimination; membership in the group is limited to Catholics.

The former complaint was easily rectified, leaving on the table the serious matter of religious autonomy. The Catholic organization scored a victory in April when U.S. District Court Judge John Shabaz ruled that the university had violated the group's right to freedom of association. The settlement came in early May.

Also in April, the University of Wisconsin-Superior agreed to pay \$20,000 in legal fees when it lost in its bid not to

recognize the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship; the university complained that leadership positions were limited to Christians.

The Alliance Defense Fund, an ally of the Catholic League, won both University of Wisconsin lawsuits. David French, whose work was featured in last month's Catalyst, won both cases.

Interestingly, Jewish and Muslim groups have never encountered the kind of harassment shown to Catholic and evangelical groups. There is something seriously wrong at the University of Wisconsin (it is hardly alone) that it takes lawsuits for Catholics and evangelicals to have clubs staffed by—of all people—Catholics and evangelicals.

NUN AD GETS DUMPED

Washington Mutual is a bank that recently ran an advertisement on the radio that offended many listeners. The radio ad, which played in Sacramento, California and other places on the west coast, featured a ruler-wielding nun as a mortgage lender. Every time a man asked her a question about his mortgage, the nun would say “no” to the crack of her ruler.

This was far from the worst incident that we've encountered, but when some of our members said they were offended and asked for our help, we contacted the company. We are happy to say that the ad has been pulled. A woman from the bank's PR office called to apologize.

PLANNED PARENTHOOD RIPS OFF ANGELS

Planned Parenthood Golden Gate (PPGG) released a “Safe is Sexy” television advertisement in April that features a young couple being interrupted from having unprotected sex by their Guardian Angels.

The ad, slated to appear on MTV, VH1 and FX, shows a sloppy-looking male angel eating popcorn at the head of the bed watching in delight. Then a female angel appears, imploring the male angel to do something. He accesses a TV remote and rewinds the scene of the couple in bed. This time the woman asks her male partner if he has any protection, to which he exclaims, “Yeah, of course.” She responds, “Amen!”

Given the moral hollowness of Planned Parenthood, it was not surprising to learn that it was now in the business of hijacking religious imagery to pander its sex-without-consequences message. But as with PETA before it, the anti-natal salesmen will find that the faithful will tune them out.

Ironically, while PPGG was ripping off Guardian Angels, the California chapter of Planned Parenthood was lobbying to defeat the “Missing Angels Act.” This bill, which has been pushed by women who have experienced stillbirth, would require a certificate of birth when this occurs. Currently, all states are required to issue a death certificate for a stillbirth; they also require the family to bury or cremate the baby.

But as Joanne Cacciatore, who is in charge of the Missing Angels Foundation, has said, “How in the world do states ethically justify telling someone they have to bury someone who they are not willing to say existed?”

What really galls Planned Parenthood is the fear that the bill would clearly help the pro-life movement by acknowledging the

humanity of the unborn child; the bill says the fetus must have advanced past 20 weeks of gestation.

It looks like the only kinds of angels that Planned Parenthood wants to affirm are those that promote its deadly agenda. Planned Parenthood is to religion what matricide is to Mother's Day.

NOT THE BIG LEAGUES

Whenever we protest a movie or work of art, we are invariably asked why we are drawing attention to what offends us. But isn't that what all anti-defamation organizations do for a living—protest bigotry? Actually, in our case, it is more complex than that.

If the offender is well known, or has his work prominently displayed, we have to protest. But when a nobody wants to get our goat so as to become a somebody, we let them hang. This happened recently with the movie "Sinner."

"Sinner" portrays a traditional Catholic priest as cruel and deranged while depicting a dissident priest as compassionate. Laced with sexual overtones, the script is as silly as it is anti-Catholic.

"Sinner" is one of those independent movies making the rounds at various film festivals in quest of a distributor, and this explains why one of the film's publicists sent a DVD copy to Bill Donohue: she wanted help in promoting it.

Donohue sent a letter back to her. "So sweet of you to think of me—thanks for sending 'Sinner.' Basically what it comes down to is this: the Catholic League only goes after anti-

Catholic movies that merit the big leagues. Sorry, but 'Sinner' didn't make the cut."

ILLINOIS TEACHER DESERVES AN "A"

Catholic League members know that one of our perennial issues is protecting and defending the good name of Pope Pius XII, who occupied the Chair of Peter during the dark days of World War II, from his detractors.

Those detractors, of course, continue to claim that Pius XII was silent during the Holocaust and did nothing to help Jews, and even tag him with the labels "Hitler's Pope" and "Nazi collaborator." All of this flies in the face of history, but Pius' detractors persist nonetheless. With investigations into Pius' possible canonization in high gear, we would not be surprised if the attacks against him were to grow louder and more frequent.

So when we found out that a middle school teacher in Lake Bluff, Illinois gave an assignment to her students pinpointing the people who were responsible for the Holocaust—listing Pius XII alongside of such monsters as Himmler and Goebbels—we swung into action.

We sent a letter of protest to the principal and copies of the Catholic League volume on Pope Pius XII, as well as Rabbi David Dalin's work *The Myth of Hitler's Pope*, to the teacher. Both of these publications show clearly that during World War II, Pope Pius XII was one of the best friends European Jews had.

What we got back was a very grateful and professional response from the teacher. She had no idea that the pope had played such an important role in seeking to undermine Hitler and rescue hundreds of thousands of Jews. She merits an “A” in our book.

JOHN HAGEE: VETERAN BIGOT

John Hagee is the senior pastor of Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas. Best known for his End-Time writing, Hagee is committed to bringing evangelical Protestants and Jews together. He is also committed to slandering the Catholic Church.

Hagee is no stranger to the Catholic League—we’ve been tracking his bigotry for some time. But in his latest book, which is a revised and updated account, *Jerusalem Countdown*, he goes on the attack once again. Though most of his rantings in this book are directed at Muslims, he just can’t help but take another shot at Catholicism. In one chapter, “Centuries of Mistreatment,” he misrepresents the history of the Catholic Church so badly that it would be hard for any anti-Catholic bigot to beat.

Here’s a sample of Hagee’s idea of history:

- “Anti-Semitism in Christianity began with the statements of the early church fathers, including Eusebius, Cyril, Chrysostom, Augustine, Origen, Justin, and Jerome ... This poisonous stream of venom came from the mouths of spiritual leaders to virtually illiterate congregants, sitting benignly in their pews, listening to their pastors. They labeled the Jews as ‘the Christ killers, plague carriers, demons, children of the devil,

bloodthirsty pagans who look for an innocent child during the Easter week to drink his blood, money hungry Shylocks, who are deceitful as Judas was relentless.'"

- "The Roman Catholic Church, which was supposed to carry the light of the gospel, plunged the world into the Dark Ages.... The Crusaders were a motley mob of thieves, rapists, robbers, and murderers whose sins had been forgiven by the pope in advance of the CrusadeThe brutal truth is that the Crusades were military campaigns of the Roman Catholic Church to gain control of Jerusalem from the Muslims and to punish the Jews as the alleged Christ killers on the road to and from Jerusalem."
- "The Spanish Inquisition was perhaps the most cynical plot in the black history of Catholicism, aimed at expropriating the property of wealthy Jews and converts in Spain for the benefit of the royal court and the Roman Catholic Church."
- "Adolf Hitler attended a Catholic school as a child and heard all the fiery anti-Semitic rantings from Chrysostom to Martin Luther. When Hitler became a global demonic monster, the Catholic Church and Pope Pius XII never, ever slightly criticized him. Pope Pius XII, called by historians 'Hitler's Pope,' joined Hitler in the infamous Concordat of Collaboration, which turned the youth of Germany over to Nazism, and the churches became the stage background for the bloodthirsty cry, 'Pereat Judea'.... In all of his [Hitler's] years of absolute brutality, he was never denounced or even scolded by Pope Pius XII or any Catholic leader in the world. To those Christians who believe that Jewish hearts will be warmed by the sight of the cross, please be informed—to them it's an electric chair."

So there you have it—the history of the Catholic Church as seen through the eyes of one of the most popular and influential evangelical leaders today. If you would like to

write him a letter, send it to John Hagee Ministries, P.O. Box 1400, San Antonio, TX 78295-1400.

Just so our members understand how the Catholic League sees things, we do not object to those Protestants who express strong disagreement with the teachings of the Catholic Church. As long as the debate is civil, that is all that matters.

But when someone clearly distorts Catholic teachings, or misrepresents its history, that is a different matter altogether. Tone matters as well, and Hagee's tone is nothing but derisive.

GEORGIA ASH WEDNESDAY INCIDENT UPDATE

In last month's *Catalyst*, we ran a story on a public high school in Georgia where a Catholic student had her ashes involuntarily removed from her forehead on Ash Wednesday by a substitute teacher, who then berated the student. The teacher also hurled anti-Catholic invectives at her.

We followed the chain of command and, after a runaround, were able to confirm that the offending teacher will not be back at the school next year.

However, we have no reason to believe that this teacher won't turn up at some other school. Such is the practice of what is known in the public schools as "passing the trash." It is truly unfortunate that in most public schools, this kind of wrongdoing exists with impunity. Who's to blame? The unions: they constantly defend indefensible teachers, thus contributing to the erosion of their prestige. These

miscreant teachers should be shown the door.

In any event, it's reassuring to know that the student in Georgia won't have to deal with this bigoted teacher again.

“CHOCOLATE JESUS” NIXED; PUBLIC RALLIES TO OUR SIDE

From April 1 to April 7, the Roger Smith Lab Gallery at the Roger Smith Hotel in New York City was set to display a 6-foot tall anatomically correct sculpture of Jesus in milk chocolate; the figure was depicted as crucified. But thanks to a protest led by the Catholic League, it never saw the light of day.

Artist Cosimo Cavallaro titled his work “My Sweet Lord”; a picture was available on the Internet. The Roger Smith Hotel is located in the heart of New York City, and the gallery is located on street level, easily accessible to the public. Adding insult to injury, the public was invited to eat the Jesus-figure. All of this was to happen during Holy Week.

“All those involved are lucky that angry Christians don't react the way extremist Muslims do when they're offended—otherwise they may have more than their heads cut off,” said Bill Donohue. He also challenged James Knowles, the president and CEO of the Roger Smith Hotel (and artist-in-residence), to substitute Muhammad for Jesus and display him during Ramadan.

The Catholic League contacted approximately 500 organizations about this assault. Our allied list contains scores of Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim Buddhist and Hindu

organizations, as well as secular groups, that share our concerns about religious hate speech and the degradation of our culture. We called upon them to boycott the hotel. As Donohue said, “The Roger Smith Hotel is morally bankrupt. It is the goal of the Catholic League to make it financially bankrupt as well.”

The reaction of the public was heartening. The hotel was bombarded with angry phone calls and e-mails, and not just from Catholics. This, in turn, led to a surge in Catholic League membership. Unfortunately, it also led to a surge in hate mail against us.

Kiera McCaffrey appeared on several TV shows and granted many interviews to the press. Donohue debated the artist three times, once on TV and twice on radio. The media were very fair to both of them.

As we’ve said before, not a Lenten season goes by without an attack on Christianity. This year was worse than most. From a teacher who wiped ashes off the forehead of a high school student, to the Jesus-tomb “Titanic Fraud” to “Chocolate Jesus,” it was open season on our religion. But the Catholic League fought back, and came out on top.

“SOUTH PARK” LAMPOON

On April 4, the Comedy Central show “South Park” lampooned Bill Donohue.

Donohue appeared as one of the cartoon characters, along with a figure of Pope Benedict XVI. The Easter script depicted Donohue chastising the pope for being “too soft.” Donohue then takes over as pope. When a Jesus figure appears, Donohue has

both the pope and Jesus arrested. After Jesus is killed by Kyle (one of the regular cartoon characters), he resurrects and kills Donohue.

“I have no idea why ‘South Park’ creators Matt Stone and Trey Parker caricature me as a heartless thug,” Donohue said in a news release. He continued, “In any event, I stand convicted and have no defense. Now I have to get back to business—I hear someone just took some liberties with the Easter Bunny.”

On April 5, Donohue discussed this episode on the MSNBC show, “Scarborough Country,” and he went on the Fox News Network show “Your World with Neil Cavuto” on April 9 to explain his reaction. What surprised some people was Donohue’s humorous take on the show.

On April 7, “Page Six,” the celebrity page of the *New York Post*, ran a piece on this issue. It said Donohue “has been immortalized in a ‘South Park’ episode,” adding that the Catholic League president “showed his softer side recently when he went after schools Superintendent William Rearick in Tiverton, R.I. for banning the Easter Bunny...” Click [here](#) for the story.