

ABC Makes Amends

Last night, ABC's "World News with Charles Gibson" ran a story about the health benefits of being an optimist. At the end of the segment, viewers on the East Coast were presented with a scene from "Monty Python's Life of Brian" in which crucified men (one is the character Brian, mistaken in the plot for the Messiah) sing and whistle the song "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life."

It didn't take ABC long to realize that airing a scene mocking the crucifixion was completely unnecessary and inappropriate. Not wishing to further offend Christians, the network changed the scene for subsequent broadcasts in other time zones and apologized to those viewers who voiced their objections.

We are pleased that officials at ABC acted quickly to correct their actions, and appreciate their willingness to convey their apologies. Their handling of the problem speaks well of the network. We can't help but wish, however, that instead of a trivial and offensive closer to the segment, something with real substance had been chosen.

The audience would have been well served to be reminded that faith in God also is beneficial to your health. A study from the University of Pennsylvania found that people who regularly practice their faith have lower rates of drug and alcohol abuse, depression and other health ailments. Other studies from Duke University Medical Center have found that religious people spend less time in hospitals and recover from illness more quickly than their secular counterparts. Additionally, using data collected over thirty years, scientists at the California Department of Health Services, the Public Health Institute and the University of California, Berkeley, found that those who attend church services weekly tend to live longer than others.

This is the sort of information that would have made a fitting end to ABC's story.

Lewis Black's Latest Salvo

Tonight, Comedy Central will premier a new show, "Lewis Black's Root of All Evil." The show will feature the cantankerous Lewis as a "judge" who must grapple with two other comics, each trying to argue a side of a supposedly humorous question. The first episode, "Oprah vs. the Catholic Church" will ask whether the talk show host or the Bride of Christ is more "evil."

According to preview videos and printed reviews, Black charges that the Church hinders "social progress" and that the pope gives lectures bashing other religions. The program features abundant jokes about molester priests. One would hope that a network devoted entirely to comedy would be able to come up with a few new gags rather than rely on the old bigoted chestnut about the priest and the altar boy. But Comedy Central has a long history of attacking the Church, and this is just more of the same.

We've read several reviews of the premier show. Some indicate that there will be minor jabs at the Catholic Church, and others that the attack is quite vicious. We'll report back tomorrow to weigh in.

What Did Spitzer In

Everyone is pointing out the obvious: Eliot Spitzer is an arrogant man who thought that the same rules that apply to everyone else don't apply to him. Yes, his hubris is insufferable, but there is something else going on as well.

One would be hard pressed to find a public official anywhere in the nation who entertains a more libertine understanding of sexuality than Eliot Spitzer. For example, his unbelievable passion for abortion rights led him to declare Crisis Pregnancy Centers the enemy when he was New York Attorney General. He intimidated them, harassed them and used bogus arguments to try to shut them down. But he met resistance, from the Catholic League and others, and had to pull back.

The majority of the residents of New York State—including the majority of those who live in New York City—are opposed to same-sex marriage. Spitzer favors it. He's not satisfied with civil unions—he wants gay marriage.

Spitzer has been working hard to declare abortion a “fundamental right,” one so inviolate that it could never be overturned by the courts. He has also warned that no institution could “discriminate” in forbidding abortion services. Though officials in his administration have told us this would not mandate Catholic hospitals to perform abortions, the fact that the issue has been raised is worrisome.

Now he has been involved in a prostitution ring for years (allegedly practicing unsafe sexual acts) and declares his behavior to be “private” in nature (evidently, he believes the laws against prostitution—laws which he previously prosecuted and is now sworn to enforce—do not address public matters). His comment that politics is not about individuals, but ideas, is similarly bizarre. It's not my persona that matters, he

seems to be saying, it's my ideas. Ideas, he adds, that are "progressive."

It is also revealing to note that the group he was scheduled to meet with—before being told that he had an emergency meeting with the Feds—was Family Planning Advocates. This is the lobbying arm of Planned Parenthood.

In other words, in addition to his arrogance, the man is a walking embodiment of the Playboy Philosophy: He is a true libertine. And like all libertines, he not only destroys himself, he ineluctably destroys those around him.

Biased Colorado Bill Shot Down

We [previously wrote](#) about attempts by Colorado lawmaker Rep. Gwyn Green to pass House Bill 1011. The bill would lift the statute of limitations on all future cases involving the sexual abuse of children and grant a two-year period that offers those who are currently barred from doing so the chance to file a lawsuit.

Our concern with this piece of legislation was that it would only affect private institutions, such as Catholic schools, while public institutions would largely be immune. (A separate and [wholly unequal bill](#) was aimed at public schools.) We are pleased to note that the Colorado's House Judiciary Committee killed Green's objectionable bill yesterday.

Maryland Victory

On February 19, [we commented](#) on a proposed Maryland bill that would suspend the statute of limitations on child sexual abuse cases for almost two years. We took issue with this piece of legislation because while it would effect private institutions like Catholic churches and parochial schools, government institutions such as public schools would largely be exempt.

We are happy to report that after facing harsh opposition, the delegate who sponsored the bill, Eric Bromwell, has withdrawn it. According to [The Examiner](#), Del. Bromwell states he will give “serious consideration” to resubmitting the bill during the next legislative session. As we said previously, any legislation on such matters should apply equally to all institutions—public and private. If that were the case, the Catholic League would not object.

Why We Don't Object

We received several phone calls and e-mails about a situation in Albany, Oregon. A public school principal suspended two teenage boys for refusing to remove crucifixes and rosary beads from around their necks. Because the educator had reason to suspect the students' wearing of these religious symbols was related to gang activity, the Catholic League has no problems with his action.

Though a flat-out ban of religious symbols worn by students would certainly be objectionable, this is not the case here. The principal has stated that religious items are permitted. However, he reserves the right to order their removal on a case-by-case basis, should he have reason to believe they are

meant to indicate gang affiliation.

It is unfortunate that gangs are a problem in our country's schools, and unfortunate that many gangs pervert Catholic symbols and devotionals in order to identify themselves and intimidate others. The Oregon principal seems to be doing what he must to protect all of his students, and keep the kids focused on education.

Colorado Spin

In response to the Catholic League's [news release](#) of February 7, "Politics of Sex Abuse in Colorado," state Representative Morgan Carroll sent us this e-mail:

Attacking a fellow member or her religion is not a particularly professional way to argue a bill on the merits. If you have policy problems with removing the SOL protecting sex offenders, please share your reasons, but so long as you are simply attacking a colleague or her motives, I, for one, find it offensive. It hurts your credibility on the issues and instead makes it look like you guys are about politics over policy. In an effort to be more effective, you may wish to reconsider your approach and simply debate the pros / cons of the issues.

Thanks,

Morgan

Catholic League president Bill Donohue responded to Carroll as follows:

One of your colleagues makes a libelous remark about the Catholic Church, wears her Catholicism on her sleeve, boasts

of her support from the abortion industry and introduces a bill that discriminates in its application against private institutions vis-à-vis public institutions, and you have the gall to lecture me about politics?

No wonder the American people hold politicians in such a low regard. You, sir, are Exhibit A.

Humorless Maher

Last week Bill Donohue was asked on the Fox News Network to comment on his charge that Bill Maher is “Americans #1 bigot.” In his concluding remarks, Donohue opined that he would love to get in the ring with Maher in Madison Square Garden so he could “floor him.”

When Maher was asked last night by Larry King to respond to Donohue’s quip, he said—in a serious tone—that Donohue “threatened to beat [him] up” and that he would “defend” himself if necessary.

To which Donohue said today, “At 6 feet 2 inches tall and 235 pounds, Maher is lucky to know that I don’t pick on people who are not my size, and this is doubly true when they’re half my size.”

It is obvious that this humorless “comedian” needs to get a life. He also needs to see a shrink about his pathological obsession with all things religious, especially Roman Catholicism.

Neither Faith Nor Reason

This week, Pope Benedict XVI had to cancel a talk at Rome's Sapienza University because 67 professors said they would stop him from speaking. The high priests of tolerance explained their exercise in censorship by saying they disagreed with the pope's writings on science. The few instances they cited were all erroneous.

Ironically, the pope was to talk on one of his favorite subjects—the need to embrace both faith and reason—and was stopped by those who obviously believe in neither.

Oh, yes, the fascist professors owe their livelihood to Pope Boniface VIII: he founded the university in 1303 (it became independent in 1870). That's what the Catholic clergy do—they promote faith and reason.

Behar Needs a Shrink

On the January 9 edition of "The View," panelist Joy Behar made it plain that she needs a shrink. She said the reason why there are so few saints anymore is because of "psychotropic medication." She continued, "I think the old days, the saints were hearing voices and they didn't have any Thorazine to calm them down."

Besides being flatly wrong—a record number of saints have been named over the past few decades—it is Behar who needs to consult a shrink. Her musings about all things Catholic suggests a pathological condition so severe as to make those who hear voices positively sane by comparison.