

UVa: Cavalier about Anti-Catholicism

Managers of a student newspaper at the University of Virginia, the *Cavalier Daily*, recently forced a staff cartoonist, Grant Woolard, to resign. This action stemmed from a controversy surrounding a drawing of Mr. Woolard's that, according to the [Washington Post](#), depicted "nine darkened figures with bald, enlarged heads, dressed only in loincloths, fighting each other over a tree branch, pillow, chair, boot and stool. The caption for the melee: 'Ethiopian Food Fight.'"

Minority groups on campus, under the leadership of the local NAACP, showed up at the *Cavalier's* offices and demanded that Woolard be ousted. They were quickly obliged. The paper's editor-in-chief explained, "The instant the public raised a question about it, we realized it was a mistake." In addition, the *Washington Post* reports that a debate still rages on campus over whether the paper's managing board of editors should submit their resignations as well.

The *Cavalier's* editors wasted no time in acting on this issue. However, when the Catholic League objected to anti-Christian cartoons the paper published in September 2006 (one of which was also drawn by Woolard), they did not show the same haste. The editors initially refused to apologize (though they had previously apologized for a cartoon that upset gays) and stood by the cartoons, dubbing them acceptable satire. Eventually, the cartoons were removed from the paper's website and a statement of regret was posted. But Woolard was kept on.

It is telling that the management of the *Cavalier Daily* is sensitive about the concerns of blacks and gays, but not of Christians. It seems that while racism and gay bashing are treated seriously on the campus, religious bigotry is not seen as such a problem.

Kathy Griffin's Phony Defenders

On its website today, [New York magazine](#) gave Kathy Griffin “kudos” for unleashing a “joyfully blasphemous rant” upon receiving her Emmy award. Griffin’s words, “Suck it, Jesus, this is my God now” were so offensive and vulgar that most other news outlets won’t reprint them. Yet the Gotham publication goes so far as to gush, “Thank God we can always count on Kathy Griffin to inject a little energy into a boring awards show.”

The publication’s appetite for bigoted celebrity outbursts, however, seems to come and go. Foul-mouthed comediennes who insult Jesus and all Christians may meet with approval, but other celebrity offenders haven’t been so lucky.

Don Imus earned a spot in *New York’s* list of “Great Moments in Bigoted Slurs” for his remarks about the Rutgers women’s basketball team. Isaiah Washington called a cast mate a “faggot” and was branded “despicable” and a “leading homophobe” by the weekly. Mel Gibson also earned the “despicable” label (twice) for his drunken anti-Semitic outburst, and was even described as being on par with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Both Gibson and Michael Richards (the comic of “Seinfeld” fame who went on a tirade against blacks) were listed among the “Great Moments in Racism.” And the use of the word “faggot” by Ann Coulter and Eminem was enough to drive the magazine’s pollsters into Union Square to ask passersby for their thoughts on the matter.

Yet Kathy Griffin faces no such scolding. Instead, she is hoisted up as a hero. While anti-Semitism, gay slurs and

racism are (rightfully) condemned by *New York's* avant-garde, Christian-bashing is cause for celebration. And the editors aren't afraid to admit it.

Lying About the Scandal

The evidence is unmistakable: 81 percent of the victims of priestly sexual abuse were male, the majority of whom were postpubescent. Since 100 percent of the victimizers were male, we're talking about homosexuality, not pedophilia. Yet the cultural elite refuse to deal with reality, and have indeed waged an unprecedented cover-up.

Two items in today's *New York Times* are relevant. There is a review of a mime performance, "America LoveSexDeath," that makes mention of one of the acts, "The Priest and the Altar Boy." From another source, it is reported that this act "depicts a priest undressing a child clearly meant to be five or six and leaves little of the ensuing activity to the imagination." It is a sure bet that not a single artist in the nation would ever do a performance based on the typical case, namely one which depicted a gay priest hitting on a postpubescent male.

The *Times* also has a news piece by Ian Fisher covering the pope's trip to Austria. He writes that among many Austrian Catholics, there is "lingering anger over pedophilia scandals." But the scandal has been a homosexual one all along, and anyone who reads the data knows this to be true.

Lying about the sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church is commonplace. And the central reason why the lying continues is because the elites do not want to bash gays (which is fine). They just want to bash priests.

Mother Teresa as Seen Through the Eyes of a Rabbi

SACRED DOUBT

by Rabbi Irwin Kula

Rabbi Irwin Kula, a good friend of the Catholic League, is the President of CLAL—The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership. He is the author of Yearnings: Embracing the Sacred Messiness of Life (Hyperion, 2006).

Mother Teresa's passionate expression of doubt in her recently released "dark letters" is a reflection of the profundity of her faith and firmly places her in the tradition of the great spiritual figures shaped by the exquisite anguish of finite human beings genuinely yearning for the infinite. This window into Mother Teresa's agonizing spiritual darkness and wrenching doubt about God, Jesus' love, and prayer invites not only deep respect for her spiritual honesty but reflection about the character of authentic faith, especially in these days when faith is confused with certainty and doubt with weakness.

Mother Teresa's letters are undermining to all fundamentalist faiths—be they religious or secular. She was not some God-intoxicated mystic confidently empowered to sacrificially offer her life in service to the poorest people on this planet. Yes, we might have liked her to have been in ecstatic union with God as it would allow us to get off the hook by either idealizing her as someone with extraordinary faith, the sort of faith we normal human beings could never possess, or by seeing her as massively psychologically deluded, the sort of delusion normal human beings ought never suffer. But it

appears there is no escaping Mother Teresa's challenge.

Neither an extraordinary faith in some simplistic sweet and light filled new age God, nor a belief in some fundamentalist God who ultimately saves if just heeded, nor some liberal secular humanism about doing good, enabled her to endure decades of wiping leprous sores, of feeding the hungriest of the hungry or of suffering with the dying of so many. It turns out that what motivated Mother Teresa was the depth of her doubt. She served, she bandaged, she fed, she healed, she worked, she smiled and she loved without any of the ongoing awareness of God's presence that we assume she surely possessed.

Mother Teresa's honesty about her spiritual emptiness is uncomfortable because we tend to see genuine faith and love as free of doubt. But nothing could be further from the truth. A mature faith, a rich love, a genuine relationship with God or with another person (it is no accident that every mystical tradition analogizes the two relationships) is born of the grit and insecurity of life. We yearn for that place with God or with another person that can banish anxiety, anguish, and insecurity. But any faith that is certain is no faith at all just as any love never doubted is very shallow love.

The paradox of love and faith is that the more deeply we love the more we risk and the greater the intimacy we desire the more vulnerable we need to make ourselves. We may try to convince ourselves otherwise with declarations to our lovers like "till death do us part" or proclamations about God's unconditional love for us but the awesome truth about faith and love is that we can never be one hundred per cent sure we are loved by another human being or by God or whether we genuinely love another person or God with all our heart and might. Maybe this is why we need to hear "I love you" so often from those whom we most love and why so much traditional prayer proclaims our love for God and why so much new age meditation invites us to feel bathed in cosmic love. We can

never be certain.

What makes Mother Teresa so much more fascinating now that we know about her painful doubt is that we realize her choice to live in service of others and mitigate suffering was a choice made every day to love in the grip of doubt, to do good without the certainty that doing good would make any ultimate difference, and to be bound to a vision and a call, once had but never to be confirmed again, that love was ultimately Real. No false dogma or illusions of certainty, rather the pain of living with the possibility of ultimate meaninglessness and abandonment. And how could it have been otherwise for Mother Teresa? Day in day out, caring for the most destitute on our planet, knowing (not just feeling) the depths of people's suffering, and seeing the insignificance of her own actions relative to the enormity of that suffering, any posture but doubting God would have been a lie.

For Mother Teresa doubt was not simply part of faith and love; anyone who has ever loved deeply knows that doubt and faith are always in a dance. Doubt is a necessary path to greater intimacy whether with God or another human being. No doubt means no growth in love or in holiness. The profound teaching reflected in Mother Teresa's "dark letters" is that: **Doubt is a result of receiving guidance; doubt is a consequence of love, NOT a way of preventing or undermining it!** Certainty is the enemy of compassion, doubt an invitation to prove, with our actions, that Reality/God/Self/ Cosmos, whatever we name that which we have all yearned for, if not tasted, is fundamentally Loving.

Mother Teresa connected her feeling of spiritual abandonment into an act of ego abandonment and it gave her unique access to the meaninglessness, loneliness and suffering in life that most of us will do anything—drugs, shopping, watch television, celebrity worship, meditate, worship God—to avoid feeling. That access compelled her to impose compassion upon the suffering, solidarity upon the loneliness, and love upon the

meaninglessness. In her extreme devotion and doubt Mother Teresa is an absorbing contemporary model. For many of us devotion requires certainty and doubt undermines devotion. The paradox of faith, as illuminated by Mother Teresa, is that to all appearance God is indeed absent, contrary to our religious fundamentalist's dogmatic assertions, and yet there is a possible faith, contrary to our secular fundamentalists, that can supply what is lacking even in faith—a faith that combines active and **engaged devotion** to healing people's pain and fiercely **honest doubt** about whether such action makes any ultimate difference.

From this sacred contradiction may well flow the sort of joy that must have been the reason for Mother Teresa's ever present smile. The joy my tradition calls "simcha shel mitzvah" the joy of doing that which one knows one must do. Perhaps, in these days when certainty not only undermines our search for the truth and our capacity to love but threatens us with destruction, what we need is Mother Teresa type doubt—sacred doubt—that births humility and compassion that paradoxically proves faith more than any creed or dogma.

Hitchens Still Doesn't Get It

In September, Doubleday will release a book by Father Brian Kolodiejchuk called *Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light*. Father Kolodiejchuk, the postulator for Mother Teresa's sainthood cause, has collected the amazing woman's writings into a volume that shows the intensity of her holiness. Particularly revealing are the sections that highlight the severe "dark night of the soul" that haunted Mother Teresa for years.

An interesting [article in Time](#) that ran yesterday quotes Christopher Hitchens discussing what is revealed about Mother Teresa in the book:

"She was no more exempt from the realization that religion is a human fabrication than any other person, and that her attempted cure was more and more professions of faith could only have deepened the pit that she had dug for herself."

[Hitchens] likens her to die-hard Western communists late in the cold war: *"They thought, 'Jesus, the Soviet Union is a failure, [but] I'm not supposed to think that. It means my life is meaningless.' They carried on somehow, but the mainspring was gone. And I think once the mainspring is gone, it cannot be repaired."*

Hitchens still doesn't get it. While others are awed by Mother Teresa's life of good works and love for the Lord, even during the years she felt distant from Him, the famed atheist sees even more to loathe. But this is no surprise coming from Hitchens, whose book ranting against the saintly nun, *The Missionary Position*, contained not one footnote to support his charges.

Hitchens can rage all he likes. Most people will not be swayed. As *Time* reports Father Kolodiejchuk has said, "The tendency in our spiritual life but also in our more general attitude toward love is that our feelings are all that is going on...And so to us the totality of love is what we feel. But to really love someone requires commitment, fidelity and vulnerability. Mother Teresa wasn't 'feeling' Christ's love, and she could have shut down. But she was up at 4:30 every morning for Jesus, and still writing to him, 'Your happiness is all I want.' That's a powerful example even if you are not talking in exclusively religious terms."

After all, as Mother Teresa herself wrote, "I accept not in my feelings—but with my will, the Will of God—I accept His will."

Bogus Claims About Catholic Pol Don't Wash with LA Protestants

As [reported by Jan Moller](#) in today's *Times-Picayune*, Louisiana Protestants don't support a television commercial made by the Louisiana Democratic Party. The commercial accuses Republican gubernatorial hopeful Bobby Jindal of bigotry against non-Catholic Christians.

The advertisement claims that in an article he wrote in 1996, Jindal "insulted thousands of Louisiana Protestants. He has referred to Protestant religions as scandalous, depraved, selfish and heretical." However, as we noted in a recent [news release](#), Jindal's words were taken out of context. Indeed, much of what the Democrats attribute to him are actually the words of John Calvin.

Despite any intentions held for the commercial, Louisiana Protestants aren't susceptible to the smear job against Jindal. When asked by the *Times-Picayune* to name Protestant leaders who would agree that the 1996 article was offensive, a Democratic Party spokeswoman failed to produce a single one.

Indeed, the Rev. David E. Crosby, senior pastor of New Orleans' First Baptist Church, told the paper that "Anybody who reads [Jindal's] whole article and ends up angry just needs to grow up."

Further, the Interfaith Alliance, described by the *Times-Picayune* as "a Washington D.C., grass-roots group that was

formed as a liberal counterweight to more conservative Christian groups,” also condemned the ad. The organization’s president, Baptist pastor Rev. C. Welton Gaddy, wrote to the state party’s chairman and requested the ad be pulled.

Despite all this, party leaders are standing behind their smear-job. As of this writing, it is still featured prominently on the [homepage](#) of Louisiana’s Democratic Party.

Gay-Bashing Heroine

We pass no judgment on the late Leona Helmsley, but we are amused to find that the same woman who fired two men because they were gay (she settled out of court with the first man and lost in court to the second one), and made numerous anti-gay comments, is viewed as a heroine by two of New York’s liberal columnists.

To Gail Collins of the New York Times, Helmsley was a brave feminist who stood up to all those bad men. To Ellis Hennican of Newsday, she was misrepresented in the media and misunderstood by the public. To the Catholic League, we are impressed by the fact that neither one of them had a word to say about her history of gay bashing.

Mel Gibson. Michael Richards. Isaiah Washington. Imus. All of them got wound up and made callous statements. But Leona—she can intentionally fire gays because they are gay and still pass muster with the liberal elite. Once again, the messenger counts more than the message.

Showtime's Vulgarities in Church

Last night, the Showtime network debuted its new series, "Californication," starring David Duchovny. The main character, Hank is a writer who has published a book called *God Hates Us All*. Unhappy about the film adaptation of his work, struggled with his young daughter, and missing his ex-girlfriend, Hank is troubled by a bad case of writer's block.

The opening scene of the pilot shows Hank enter a Catholic Church,* smoking a cigarette. He drops the butt in the holy water font, walks up to the altar, and begins a conversation with Jesus on the crucifix. A nun approaches him, and Hank begins telling her about his writer's block in foul language. The nun responds that she would normally tell him to say the Lord's Prayer as penance for his cursing. In this case, however, she decides to offer him oral sex. Hank puts up his hand to block Jesus' view as the nun begins to perform the act. At this point, he wakes up with another woman, revealing the church scene to be merely a dream.

If this is what passes for "edgy" at Showtime, we'll take a pass on the upcoming season of "Californication."

*NB: We have since learned that the church used in this scene is actually St. Vibiana's, the former cathedral for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. This raises serious questions about the propriety of using a building which was once consecrated for the setting of a trashy program. The Catholic League will follow up on this matter.

Holy Smokes! Cardinal Lustiger Was Catholic

In today's *New York Times*, the obituary on Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, a Jewish convert, says that "Like John Paul, Cardinal Lustiger was a conservative. He opposed abortion and the ordination of women and married men to the priesthood, and he sought to preserve the priestly vow of celibacy."

Holy smokes! Sounds like Cardinal Lustiger was Catholic.

Tell Us Joy, Who Are They?

During today's airing of the ABC television show "The View," the panelists discussed gay marriage. Joy Behar was all for it, saying, "Gay people would like to say that they are married, instead of just a civil union." She then asked, "Why don't certain people, we know who they are, not want gay people to marry?"

We don't doubt that by "certain people," Behar probably meant Catholics and Evangelicals. But we have some news for her: There's never been a survey taken that indicates the American people support the idea of two men getting married. Indeed, even in New York City, a plurality of those asked have said that marriage should remain a union between one man and one woman. Perhaps Behar should ask why "American voters" aren't in favor of radically altering an ancient institution. But then she'd have to admit that she doesn't speak for most

people.