

# CATHOLIC BASHING ON CAMPUS

It's not unusual for colleges to become a breeding ground for anti-Catholicism. Recently, New York's Cooper Union and the University of South Carolina-Sumter proved themselves no exceptions. These two schools, the beneficiaries of federal tax monies, awarded their students, under the guise of free speech, a platform to spout off their anti-Catholic vitriol.

From May 27 to June 10, The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art hosted an exhibition of student art on their campus in Manhattan. Although student art was on display, not every student's work made the cut. The school's website said of the event: "The School of Art faculty have selected major pieces by students representing 'the best of' each discipline ranging from sculpture, graphic design and painting to video installations. Young artists' work will include both individual and collaborative efforts, illustrating the school's continuing role as an incubator of significant artists...." An example of the institution's "best" art took a patently obscene cheap shot at Catholicism.

A series of paintings by Felipe Baeza was selected to be displayed at the exhibition. In one of his paintings, Baeza showed a man with his pants pulled down with a crucifix extended from his rectum. Under the painting was the phrase, "el dia que me converti catolico," or "The day I became a Catholic." Baeza had other similar paintings. One substituted a Rosary for the crucifix that extended from his rectum; another showed a man with his pants down and an angel holding two Rosaries with a penis attached to each of them; and there was a painting of a naked man with an erection and a halo hovering his head.

The fact that these works were deemed "major," and represented the "best of" the student contributions, does not speak well for Cooper Union. Throughout history, art has traditionally

been understood as conveying beauty. Now art has been mixed with junk and these paintings are a perfect example of that. Admittedly, there is so much junk that passes for art these days that the public can be forgiven if it is no longer capable of making that distinction.

Further down the Atlantic Seaboard at the University of South Carolina's Sumter campus, anti-Catholicism took a different shape.

In May the school published its annual student literary magazine *The Sandhill*. According to the school's handbook, the magazine contains manuscripts, artwork and photographs from the student body that have been judged anonymously by student editors. This year's winner of the Sandhill Award for Poetry went to George C. Floyd who had three poems published: "A Bloody Period," "Fish Out of Water" and "Counterfeit Christians," the last one containing his Christian bashing. "Counterfeit Christians" rails on Christians as being intolerant of Muslims, disrespecting Buddha and having less insight than a sleeping atheist. But Floyd held his punches for the Catholic Church until his last stanza:

*A good atheist sleeping good at night  
has more insight than a believer stealing spotlight.  
Keys to resting in peace have many versions,  
and it's not necessarily urging virgins to be alone.  
Especially when a catholic priest manipulates  
a small boy to get his freak on.*

The most disturbing part about both of these stories is that these schools receive direct funding from the federal government. The University of South Carolina is a public university funded by the state and Cooper Union has received over \$4.6 million in federal aid over the past eight years. According to the Cybercast News Service, some of the funding to Cooper Union came in the form of federal grants from the National Endowment for the Arts.

The fact that these students were rewarded for their anti-Catholicism does not speak well for their respective institutions. On the other hand, we have a sneaking suspicion that these items made the cut precisely because they attacked Catholic sensibilities. It can be assured that if these pieces had targeted Muhammad they would have been rejected.