

CULTURE AT WAR

L. Brent Bozell III

In my line of work you can be on the receiving end of some pretty interesting mail. When it's a manila envelope without a return address, if it isn't anthrax, it's some nut's compilation of faded newspaper articles dating back to the 60s allegedly proving some bizarre point; or even worse, it's a manuscript; or worse still, it's a printed (as opposed to published) manuscript: that nut spent his life savings writing some tract no one will ever read. Invariably it's about some sort of conspiracy, and if it's deep enough, you'll find the papists in Rome behind it all. The other day one of those books hit my desk. "The United States must soon face the most deadly enemy it will ever face," it begins. Thinking about this article I perused it to satisfy an itch: How long would it be before the author fingered the Catholic Church as the villain out to destroy America? Would you believe page 2? "Russia, Prussia, Austria and Pope Pius VII, king of the Papal States, entered into a secret treaty to do so." There you have it.

The attack on Christianity, particularly Catholicism is broad, dangerous and, indeed, in some ways already successful. It is the believers against the unbelievers, except the unbelievers are nihilists out to destroy the West. And it's all captured by The Catholic League's president, Bill Donohue, in his new book, *Secular Sabotage: How Liberals are Destroying Religion and Culture in America*.

But first, full disclosure. I am a Roman Catholic. I like saying that. A few years ago I was invited to speak at a fundamentalist Christian convention. Good people though they were, they couldn't understand why I was offended when they insisted that as a condition of my appearance (on a weekend, no honorarium, paying my own travel), I had to first submit a

written statement of personal faith. No, I said, if you can't accept at face value my faith, then best to cancel me. No, they implored, don't cancel. Please speak. But this is a requirement for all our speakers. Back and forth we went, all the way to the eve of the convention, with all sorts of high officials intervening. Finally we reached an accord. I would, indeed, provide a written statement of personal faith, but they would accept whatever it was I wrote. I am a Roman Catholic. That's all they got, because that's all they needed.

Second disclaimer: I'm on the Board of Advisors of the Catholic League. I've been involved with this terrific organization for many years, dating back to my participation in a colloquium in 1993, later published, and exploring the extent to which the news media have an anti-Catholic bias. I serve on this board because Bill Donohue invited me, and I've never been able to refuse Bill Donohue anything.

Which naturally leads to the third disclaimer: Bill Donohue is a friend, and I like him. There are an awful lot of people I know in the world of public policy, many of whom I respect and admire. But beyond respecting his wisdom and admiring his courage, I just plain like Bill Donohue. I like his Irish feistiness. I like his sense of loyalty. I like his sense of humor. Most of all, I like how he drives his opponents mad. And with *Secular Sabotage* he could be expected to be stricken from all manner of Christmas card lists except the people he skewers don't believe in Christmas.

Secular Sabotage is serious business. Donohue insists the United States should be considered unequivocally a Christian country. Eight out of ten Americans consider themselves as such. Indeed— and I didn't realize this—the United States is the most Christian country, in quantitative terms, in the world. "In fact," states the author, "the U.S. is more Christian than Israel is Jewish." And yet if this is so, why can't we celebrate Christmas? Why can't our children pray in school? How did we just elect a president who insisted the

United States ought not to be considered a Christian nation?

The popular culture's hesitation to acknowledge the truth of this country's Christian identity is a direct measure of the success a tiny minority of Americans has enjoyed in thoroughly intimidating the majority. While Donohue discusses secular sabotage he is clear that these ought not to be considered simple secularists existing alongside the faithful. They are nihilists out to expel Christianity not just from the public square but from the public conversation entirely. And they are powerful enough to be succeeding.

The Christian nation has at its core the nuclear family. Erase the notion of the nuclear family and you've destroyed the Judeo-Christian identity of America. The secular saboteurs know this, which is why the author writes they "not only seek to destroy the public role of Christianity, they seek to sabotage the Judeo-Christian understanding of sexuality." The sexual revolution of the 60s, no matter how morally improper, at least believed itself to be governed by the goal of love. The sexual revolution today has no such illusions. As Donohue documents, it is about instant self-gratification; and rather than build a separate societal structure, the nihilists simply want to tear down existing norms. How else to explain the radical feminists' zealous obsession with abortion?

How else to explain the radical gays' overt hatred of the Catholic Church? Several years ago I attended an early morning Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. It was celebrated by the late John Cardinal O'Connor. I noted a large battery of uniformed police guarding the door and lining the aisles. When I raised this issue later at breakfast with Cardinal O'Connor, he just smiled rather sadly. An aide pointed out that the size of the daily police presence was in direct relation to the number of death threats aimed at him.

Secular Sabotage documents this hatred in a far more prescient manner. Donohue is an eyewitness and retells, with a riveting

first hand narrative, the horrific attacks on St. Patrick's by gay radicals in 1994 and again in 1995. If Catholics who read these passages are shocked and infuriated once more, then Donohue has succeeded. He insists we not forget.

Perhaps nowhere is the anti-Catholicism more prevalent than in the arts and Donohue exposes the bigotry with a surgeon's precision. He reminds us of the ugliness of Andres Serrano and Robert Mapplethorpe, men who took taxpayers' money (grants from the woefully incompetent National Endowment for the Arts) only to produce repugnant "art" aimed at offending Christians. He introduces us to others like Robert Goober, an ex-Catholic gay man, whose "art" exhibition in Los Angeles in 1997 included a sculpture of Our Blessed Mother, pierced with a phallic culvert pipe. There's Garilyn Brune who was awarded the grand prize in a L.A. art festival the year prior. His drawing depicted a priest performing fellatio on Jesus Christ. There's John Santerineross, whose photograph featured a woman with her genitals cut and bleeding unto a crucifix. There is...well, enough. As Donohue tells us, obscenity and blasphemy are joined at the cultural hip of the nihilists.

Donohue travels to Hollywood to document the attacks on Christianity by an artistic community that insists it only reflects reality yet constantly paints a picture that is the antithesis of reality ("The Last Temptation of Christ"); insists it only follows market impulses, yet produces anti-Catholic fare when there is zero market demand for it ("Dogma," "The DaVinci Code," "Priest," "Angels and Demons") and claims to respect its audience yet sneaks anti-Christian bigotry into even children's movies ("The Golden Compass").

The anti-Christian, anti-Catholic agenda of the nihilistic secularists is not confined to the cultural. It is now in the open, very political, and absolutely determined to crush the Judeo-Christian identity in America. For Donohue 1972 is a pivotal year, the year he believes that religious conservatives chose the Republican Party and secular liberals

the Democratic Party for their respective homes. But it's one thing to promote a secular political agenda, it's quite another to come out with a pronounced anti-Christian one. Donohue documents that emergence during the Clinton years with the likes of Dr. Jocelyn Elders, the Surgeon General-designate who believed it was government's job to teach teenaged girls how to have proper illicit sex. He tracks the increasingly shrill attacks against Christians in general and the Catholic League in particular by the radicals at the Democratic National Committee; he exposes how in 2004 Sen. John Kerry, a self-described "devout Catholic," hired a spokeswoman for ACT-UP, the gay group that attacked St. Patrick's Cathedral, as his Director of Religious Outreach; and how in 2007 presidential candidate John Edwards hired religious bigots to organize his Internet presence.

The evidence will show that in all these cases there was overreach and the subsequent backlash. So why do it? That is the strength of the militant Democratic Party base: strong and wealthy and uncompromising and impatient. It was also another demonstration of the superior political acumen of Team Obama. Though arguably even more radical than his predecessors, Obama showed tremendous discipline in muting his radical agenda during the campaign. So vague was he on the issues that 54 percent of the voters believed the disciple of the hateful Rev. Wright was "friendly" to religion.

Bill Donohue saves his best for last. He believes there are some positive signs. Young people seem not to be as radical as their parents. (How 'bout them apples?) There are new alliances being created among conservative Catholics, Protestants and Jews. And then there's this nugget: "But not all agnostics and atheists are secularists at heart." At first blush this doesn't seem to make sense.

The late great Steve Allen didn't make sense, either. A fallen-away Catholic, Steve as a self-proclaimed agnostic who openly championed all manner of liberal political causes. But

few were as upset and outspoken as he against the left's attacks on Christianity and Catholicism.

In the final analysis it may be liberals who are trying to destroy religion and culture in America, but it's not all liberals, as Steve Allen, Sen. Joe Lieberman and others have shown. And it's not just liberals. The libertarians' refusal to defend the Judeo-Christian tradition indicts them as well. But no matter who it is attacking the Christian faith, there's one thing for certain: that fellow will have to face Bill Donohue.

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