

# GAY PLAYS CONTINUE TO RIP CATHOLICISM

Just before Thanksgiving, a gay play that attacks Catholicism began in New York, while another that is scheduled to begin in Washington, D.C. this spring was announced; a third opened in New York the week before Christmas.

The first to open was "Burning Habits," an eight-part play at Here in SoHo, a New York Off-Off Broadway theater; it runs until March 13. From April 1-May 2, "Clean" will be done at the Chamber Theatre in Washington, D.C., a Studio Theatre Secondstage production. And opening on December 14 at New York Theater Workshop was "The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told."

"Burning Habits," written by Blair Fell—no stranger to Catholic bashing—is a play that ran in London and New York in the mid-1990s. The play features an "evil Catholic witch" and three lesbian nuns. Future episodes will show, in Fell's words, that "the overriding evil is the Church, and the force of good are queers."

"Clean" was also performed a few years ago. What will delight the crowds this time is what worked last time: a script that calls for "the conversion of a drag queen and sins of a priest." The play ends with an unambiguous attack on the Church's teaching on homosexuality.

The Catholic League's take on these two plays was as follows:

"The Catholic Church does not find sodomy acceptable behavior. And for this it is pilloried as anti-homosexual. Such is the thinking among many of those who consider themselves highly educated, tolerant and respectful of diversity. Why they haven't labeled the Church anti-heterosexual for its opposition to adultery is anyone's guess.

"The hatred of the Catholic Church that is popular with much of the theater crowd is not seen as bigotry: it is seen as morally justified. To take one example, never, never, never have we seen an anti-Catholic play branded by theater reviewers for the *New York Times* as anti-Catholic; today's review of 'Burning Habits' is the latest evidence. There is a reason for this, and it is the very same reason why the Catholic League exists."

Finally, there is "The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told" by Paul Rudnick. We commented on this in the last issue of *Catalyst* explaining how we refused to be drawn into a controversy over a really stupid production. But readers should know how the play was received on opening night by theater critics.

The play is supposed to be a rebuttal to the story of Adam and Eve; this version is about Adam and Steve. Early on in the play, the homosexuals meet two lesbians. According to Donald Lyons of the *New York Post*, there is a "tough, unsentimental, bulldog Jane," and her "preachy airhead" lover, Mabel. "As history progresses," writes Lyons, "Adam invents hair conditioner and hors d'oeuvres and Mabel turns to religion—which in this play is a bad thing, like heterosexuality."

In the second half of this play, Jane gets artificially inseminated. Pregnant, she takes Mabel as her spouse; the wedding is officiated by a lesbian rabbi in a wheelchair, thus completing the politically-correct script. Poor Steve, the bodybuilder, is H.I.V. positive, but he can't figure out why. Not surprisingly, God is damned for causing AIDS. Thus, the play bears an eerie resemblance to life as it exists in the East Village, home of the theater.

When the play opened, we watched for the reviews. They proved to be were so enlightening we thought we'd issue a news release commenting on the commentators. Here is part of what

we said:

"It sounds like a routine homosexual play: full-frontal male nudity, filthy language, discussion of body parts, butch lesbians, effeminate gay men, ranting against nature, damning God for AIDS, etc. Interestingly, the reviewers seem torn by Rudnick's creation.

"The blasphemous elements either go unnoticed or are dismissed cavalierly. Ben Brantley of the *New York Times* finds 'reverence in Mr. Rudnick's irreverence,' a remark that reveals a great deal more about Mr. Brantley than Mr. Rudnick. After this review, his job at the *Times* will surely be secure.

"It has been reported that Rudnick's play is a 'rebuttal to the religious right's' vision of the Bible. Yet *USA Today* reviewer David Patrick Stearns said 'this play makes gay people look far worse than the religious right could dream of doing.' Too bad Mr. Stearns' sensitivity doesn't extend to Christians. But the question remains: does the play advance a negative gay stereotype or is it an accurate reflection of reality?"

As for Rudnick himself, he says that "I wanted the Garden of Eden and Central Park, and the possibility of Mary as a lesbian mother, which would certainly help me comprehend immaculate conception." We're not sure what it would take for us to fully comprehend him, but were we to try, it's a sure bet that the section in a bookstore called "Recovery and Addiction" would be a good place to start.