

SMITHSONIAN SMOKESCREEN

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on recommendations made yesterday by a Smithsonian panel:

“Culturally sensitive exhibitions should be previewed from a diverse set of perspectives,” said the Regents Advisory Panel. What exactly does this mean? If a swastika is painted on a synagogue, should those who find it endearing be consulted? If KKK is plastered across a portrait of Rev. Martin Luther King, must those who can’t decide if this is offensive be summoned for advice? Now imagine if there is a video of large ants running all over a depiction of Muhammad, is it incumbent on Smithsonian officials to find someone who likes such fare? Would it change things if we substituted the crucified Jesus for Muhammad?

Speaking of the artist who made the ants-on-the-crucifix video, the Smithsonian’s John W. McCarter Jr. said, “I believe, in his mind, that [the video] was not sacrilegious.” Did he stumble upon the diary of David Wojnarowicz? Has he been channeling him? McCarter also asks us to consider the possibility that the video “might have been very deeply religious?”

McCarter’s subjectivism is unwarranted. We know some things about the artist, and what we know is that he branded the Catholic Church a “house of walking swastikas.” So why is it so hard to connect the dots? Isn’t it obvious the artist was a raging anti-Catholic bigot? Let’s face it: if an artist offended Jews, African Americans or Muslims—as in the examples cited above—the artwork alone would be cause for censorship, never mind investigating any harbored prejudices he may have had.

What they did yesterday was a smokescreen. If a man like Wojnarowicz can insult Christians the way he did, knowing full well his sentiments on Catholicism, and he is still given the benefit of the doubt—even to the point of entertaining the fiction that his video is “very deeply religious”—then it is obvious what is going on.

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