

“CONDOM CHRISTMAS TREE”: DEAD ON ARRIVAL

A decision has been made not to erect a “Condom Christmas tree” in New York’s Central Park. Levi Strauss had petitioned the Makkos Organization, a private company that operates the park’s Wollman Center, for the right to put a huge Christmas tree, adorned with condoms, in an area near the park’s ice skating rink. That request has now been denied.

William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, greeted the news this way:

“The decision not to allow the ‘condom Christmas tree’ was the only ethical way out of this mess. It is difficult to congratulate the decision-maker as everyone associated with this incident has gone mute.

“As for Levi Strauss, it remains to be seen how bold it wants to be. Common decency is not an attribute in large supply at the company, so this story may not be over yet. But for right now, the Catholic League is delighted with the decision to spike their lousy tree.”

PROTEST TO MOUNT OVER “CONDOM CHRISTMAS TREE”

Levi Strauss, the San Francisco-based apparel company, is seeking to put up a giant Christmas tree in New York’s Central Park, adorned with condoms. The denim manufacturer is hoping to rent space from the Makkos Organization, a private company

that operates the park's Wollman Rink. City officials are reportedly not happy with this gambit, and it is uncertain whether Levi Strauss will get its way. If it does, the tree will go up on December 1, World AIDS Day.

Catholic League president William Donohue explained the league's position:

"Levi Strauss does a lot more than sell jeans—it is the nation's most fevered agent of political correctness in the workplace. From its war on the Boy Scouts to its exploitation of children in Third World countries, Levi Strauss has shown its true colors. Its aggressive sponsorship of the radical gay agenda has ironically led it to promote the causes of AIDS. By giving generously to organizations like the Hetrick Martin Institute in New York, Levi Strauss funds programs that advocate promiscuity among homosexuals. And now it wants the world to know how devoted it is to condoms, thus adding to the superstition that condoms will save gay men from the consequences of lethal sex acts.

"If a company were to put up a Christmas tree adorned with miniature coffins wrapped inside an AIDS ribbon, the tolerance kings and queens at Levi Strauss would be screaming bloody murder. But somehow they think it's okay to launch an attack on Christians. This proves that they are more than just bigots, they are plain stupid: to do this at a time of the year when sales are critical is irrational. Let them now deal with the boycott that we will call if the tree goes up.

"We will ask the city to demand that Levi Strauss put a large sign by the tree that informs the public who the sponsor is of this hate speech."

TWO GAY PLAYS ATTACK CATHOLICISM

Two gay plays that attack Catholicism have been announced: in New York, from now through March 13, 1999, "Burning Habits" will be performed as an eight-part play at Here in SoHo, and from April 1-May 2, "Clean" will be done at the Chamber Theatre in Washington, D.C., a Studio Theatre Secondstage production.

"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.

William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, responded this way:

"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."

PROTESTANT GROUP ATTACKS MORE THAN VOUCHERS

This week in Chicago, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. (NCC), is considering a proposal that would put it on record as opposed to voucher programs or tuition-tax credits for private schools. The proposal explicitly says that "public moneys should be used only for public schools." It further states that "public education should have the full and conscientious support of Christians and Christian churches."

William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, read the proposal and commented as follows:

"It is not certain who the National Council of Churches actually speaks for, but it is certain that millions of Catholics would regard the NCC's latest political statement as not representing their interests. Catholics, as well as Evangelicals, Muslims and Orthodox Jews, have shown that schools operated by members of their own faith far surpass the academic record of local public schools, and this is particularly true of faith-based schools in the inner city. Knowing this to be true, the NCC amazingly claims that by unequivocally supporting public education they are somehow supporting the best interests of the poor.

"Everyone knows how Catholic schoolchildren were subjected to

discrimination by the Protestant-run public schools in the nineteenth century, and that the origins of Catholic schools was in direct response to this bigotry. That is why it is disturbing to read, in 1998, language from the NCC that smacks of this sorry legacy. For example, the NCC proposal says that 'public education has been under attack for two decades by persons representing *religious*, cultural, and economic views which offer little or no support for public schooling' (my emphasis). Of course, it could have been said that Catholics would like to use their taxes to pay for schools of their choice, namely parochial ones, but that would convey a positive message. Better to drum up notions of Catholic opposition to assimilation, which is exactly what this proposal does. The NCC should reexamine its language."

LOUISIANA JUDGE DICTATES TO CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Last Friday, two football players from Archbishop Shaw High School in Marrero, Louisiana were arrested and charged with one count of attempted simple rape of a 15-year-old girl. The two students, Doug King and Jared King, were immediately suspended by Shaw principal Father Richard Rosin. But the suspension was overturned just as quickly by Judge Robert A. Pitre, Jr. of the 24th Judicial District Court Division G of Jefferson Parish.

On November 7, Judge Pitre issued a temporary restraining order (TRO) against the Archdiocese of New Orleans, Archbishop Shaw High School and Father Rosin. The order, filed by an attorney for the players (they are cousins), restrains the New Orleans suburban school not only from suspending the students,

but from barring them from playing football. As a result, Doug King played in a football game that day; Jared King has left the team.

William Donohue, Catholic League president, announced the league's position today:

"On November 12, Judge Jo Ellen Grant of the 24th Judicial District Court Division I of Jefferson Parish will sit in judgment over the status of the temporary restraining order. Unless she is as incompetent as Judge Pitre, she will drop the order without delay.

"If separation of church and state means anything, it means that the government has no business dictating the internal procedures of religious institutions. This is not a difficult issue, and indeed the case law provides no constitutional basis for issuing a TR0 against a parochial school for implementing its disciplinary policies.

"The Catholic League advises the attorneys for Archbishop Shaw to brook no compromise: we will offer our resources, if it is necessary."

WARNER BROS. INTRODUCES KIDS TO CATHOLICISM

The WB Television Network features an animated show for children, "Histeria!", that "gives viewers a fast-paced look at well-known and not-so-well-known events and people of the past via quick comedy sketches, hilarious informational bits and clever original songs." It also teaches kids to reject Catholicism.

Over this past weekend, "Histeria!" offered a portrayal of the Inquisition, "Convert or Die," that depicted a game show where the contestants are tied to a wheel and tortured for every wrong answer. The host of the show, a bishop, is called "Torquemada" by the prisoner-contestants. The bishop gives the contestant 20 seconds to confess "the single most terrible heresy you've committed." We get answers like, "I ate meat on the day of abstinence," etc. The bishop informs him that the correct answer is "I have read books forbidden by the Catholic Church and am a big stinky heretic." He adds, "the next time you commit a mortal sin against the Church, don't be surprised if someone comes up to you and says....[interruption]—'Convert or Die.'"

William Donohue of the Catholic League expressed the organization's concerns:

"Only someone terribly naïve would think that this is harmless fun. Warner Bros. explicitly set out to teach an amusing history lesson for children, and in doing so it found it amusing to lead them in Catholic-baiting. Upcoming shows supposedly deal with Confucius and Abraham Lincoln, and no one will be surprised to learn that both men are treated fairly. But when it comes to Catholics, WB wants to make sure that what it believes in its heart of hearts about Catholicism gets taught to kids.

"According to WB, 'Histeria!' is an 'original and hysterically amusing way' of 'fulfilling the FCC educational programming requirement.' Really? Now that I know that, I won't hesitate to contact the FCC myself."

“ALLY McBEAL” STRIKES OUT AT CATHOLICISM

On last night's episode of the Fox TV show, "Ally McBeal," a nun sued the Church because she was dismissed for breaking her vow of celibacy. Throughout the show, repeated attacks were made on Catholic sacraments, teachings and practices. Here is a sample of the lines that were voiced.

Ally: "Nuns are not supposed to have sex except with other nuns."

Nun: "A priest has sex with a boy, he gets transferred. Me they...At least my lover was of legal age for God's sake."

Female Colleague: "Maybe I can talk them into rehiring her. I'm very good at flirting with clergy. At Communion, I always got the extra wafer."

Nun: "If the sex is great, you can't be a nun."

Ally (in confessional): "I went to bed with a guy, partly because he had a uh, uh...It was uh big, big. God, I slept with it...him."

Priest: "I often hear that size doesn't matter. How was it?"

Ally: "It was great, unbelievable. You have no idea. I mean, I assume you don't. It was amazing. Am I forgiven?"

Catholic League president William Donohue issued this statement:

"The bigots are at work again. On the September 28 episode of 'Ally McBeal,' a cheap shot about priest pedophilia was made. That subject returns this week, only with much more in the way of offense. Now we have Father O'Reilly videotaping confessions about sex for his documentary, 'World's Naughtiest

Confessions.’ And, of course, we have nuns that are degraded and sexual comments that are designed to disparage.

“We will take our case to Fox, which has already been inundated with complaints. Make no mistake: all of this—every bit of it—is intentional.”

ANTI-CATHOLIC BIAS AT THE NEW YORK TIMES

In today’s *New York Times*, there are several articles about tomorrow’s elections. The articles are grouped according to “The Senate,” “The Polls,” “The Campaign” and “The Churches.” With regard to the last article, coverage is given to John Cardinal O’Connor’s homily yesterday wherein he questioned why some were blaming him for killing Dr. Barnett Slepian, the abortion doctor; the New York Archbishop wondered whether “this accusation was really aimed at me, or at those public officeholders and those campaigning for public office who are pro-life.”

The article says that “Abortion-rights leaders criticized the Cardinal for casting politicians who oppose abortion rights as victims so soon before Election Day.” It quotes Alexander Sanger, president of Planned Parenthood, as charging that the Cardinal was actually delivering “an electoral message.”

William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, points out the bias:

“On the front page of today’s *New York Times*, it discusses how President Clinton and Rep. Charles Schumer made political hay by speaking in Protestant churches yesterday. Yet on page B6

it has a column, 'The Churches,' that makes no mention of these obvious church and state violations. Indeed, the title 'The Churches' is inaccurate: the only church mentioned is a Catholic one, namely St. Patrick's Cathedral.

"The author of this misstated piece, David Halbfinger, says that abortion-rights advocates were upset with Cardinal O'Connor for simply *mentioning* a public policy issue, and he quotes Alexander Sanger as evidence. Question: Was Mr. Sanger at St. Pat's yesterday? Was he accompanied by his friends in the pro-abortion movement? Or did Mr. Halbfinger call Sanger for a comment? If so, whom did he call about Clinton and Schumer soliciting votes in Protestant churches? Why didn't he write about it? Why did he find it necessary to go back to 1984 to cite Cardinal O'Connor's objections to Geraldine Ferraro's position on abortion? Why the double standard?"

POLITICS AND RELIGION MIX (IF YOU'RE NOT CATHOLIC)

Yesterday, President Clinton spoke at the New Psalmist Baptist Church in Baltimore. According to the *New York Post*, he turned a two-hour service into "a foot-stomping, amen-filled revival." The president was accompanied by Democratic candidates for governor and senator.

Meanwhile, Rep. Charles Schumer, the Democratic candidate for U.S. Senator of New York, spoke to 1,000 congregants of the St. Paul Community Church in East New York, Brooklyn. According to the *Daily News*, Schumer was "virtually endorsed by the Rev. Johnny Ray Youngblood." Schumer then addressed 1,100 congregants at the Christian Life Centre.

By contrast, in New York, John Cardinal O'Connor explicitly told the faithful to vote their "informed conscience," independent of party. In response to charges that he was somehow to blame for the killing of Dr. Slepian, the abortion doctor, the Cardinal did question whether "this accusation was really aimed at me, or at those public officeholders and those campaigning for public office who are pro-life." At that, according to the *New York Times*, Albert Sanger of Planned Parenthood complained that the Cardinal was delivering "an electoral message."

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

"Just a month ago, the Catholic League criticized Senator D'Amato for stumping in churches. Now we have his challenger, Rep. Schumer, doing the same thing. In neither case, has the media said a word. Nor do they question President Clinton's church-state violations. But when Cardinal O'Connor simply addresses issues of public policy, newspapers like the *New York Times* call on phonies like Albert Sanger for a response. It is not just the media and pro-abortion groups that are playing politics, the IRS is guilty of selective indignation. This raises the question, 'Do we have one set of rules for Catholic churches and another set for others?'"