

COMEDY CENTRAL ATTACKS CHRIST

Yesterday and today, Comedy Central aired a “Daily Show” segment with host Craig Kilborn that outdid all its previous attacks on Christianity. This one celebrated the Terrence McNally anti-Christian play, “Corpus Christi,” by calling it a “delightfully blasphemous homosexual romp.” It aired a news clip of those priests who protested the play on September 22, mocking them throughout. What followed made this look tame. Here is a direct quote from Kilborn:

“While historians argue that Jesus was not gay, there is evidence he did enjoy the occasional three-way [a photo of the three crosses of the Crucifixion is flashed on the screen]. The opening night reviews were mixed with critics complaining about the erotic raising of Lazarus scene and the one act with a second, third and fourth coming of Christ.”

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

“Just as Terrence McNally, or anyone associated with the Manhattan Theatre Club, refuses to debate me, no one at Comedy Central is available to discuss this matter with me. It must be a terrible thing to go to work each day convinced that it is impossible to publicly defend one’s efforts. But perhaps the worst element in this was the audience reaction: the crowd roared with laughter as Jesus Christ was attacked in a vicious and obscene way.

“In David Clay Large’s account of Hitler’s rise to power, *Where Ghosts Walk*, he mentions how Hitler arrived in Munich in 1913, settling on the edge of Schwabing, the city’s artistic and intellectual quarter. ‘He did so,’ Large explains, ‘because he considered himself to be an artist and wanted to be close to the center of action.’ He was—Schwabing was Germany’s bohemia. Isn’t it striking that it was in this

milieu of moral nihilism that Hitler was nurtured? Something for the Comedy Central folks to think about.”

ANOTHER ANTI-CATHOLIC PLAY HITS NEW YORK

“The Cardinal Detoxes,” an anti-Catholic play by Thomas M. Disch, opened yesterday at the Tribeca Playhouse in New York City. The play, which runs until October 18, is a 35-minute monologue by a character who plays a cardinal. The cardinal is an alcoholic who runs down and kills a pregnant woman while driving drunk. He attacks the Church for its teachings on women and sexuality and is ultimately poisoned by a monk when he confesses his plan to expose the problems of the Church.

The play was the source of some controversy in 1990 when it opened in a building that was owned by the Archdiocese of New York.

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

“Jeff Cohen, the director and producer of ‘The Cardinal Detoxes,’ said that one of the reasons he brought back the play now was due to the initial decision of the Manhattan Theatre Club to cancel Terrence McNally’s play, ‘Corpus Christi.’ This is quite an admission: to think that Cohen is competing with McNally for the honor of being known as New York’s biggest anti-Catholic bigot is something. This means that there is now a three way race going on, the third entry being Khalid Muhammad.

“One reviewer of Disch’s autobiography described the

playwright's life as 'full of dead-ends, back-roads, breakdowns, detours.' This sheds needed light on why Disch is determined to renew his hate speech. Some things never change."

TAKING LIBERTIES WITH CATHOLIC ICONS

In Seattle, Washington, there is a coffee shop called the Coffee Messiah. Its logo is a large red cross with the legend "Coffee Saves" and "Salivation." The shop is crammed with rosaries, crucifixes and Catholic icons. The house drink is called "Blood of Christ" coffee. Coffee Messiah has a web page that mocks Catholicism and offers a link to an anti-Catholic gay group, Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence.

In Quincy, Massachusetts, there is a company called Fridgedoor that makes magnets for refrigerators. One of the most hawked items goes by the name *MIXnMATCH VIRGIN MARY*. It is a magnet that features the Virgin Mary in a slip: she comes with a set of magnetic clothes that can be used to dress her. The item is described as including "everything from Jesus in a baby carriage to a Catholic school girl outfit to a waitress uniform."

Catholic League president William Donohue summed up the league's reaction:

"There is a profound difference between poking gentle fun at Catholic traditions and deliberately bashing Catholic sensibilities; it is the difference between 'Sister Act' and Howard Stern comedy. There is also a difference between bad taste and bigotry. In the case of Fridgedoor, the Virgin Mary

magnet is clearly disrespectful and needlessly offensive. At a minimum, it would qualify as bad taste.

“The fact that Coffee Messiah, unlike Fridgedoor, is exclusively engaged in misappropriating Catholic imagery, suggests that more is at work than crass commercialism. The link to Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, complete with offensive photos, offers even greater proof that what is at work is anti-Catholicism.

“Common decency suggests that it is wrong to abuse anyone’s religion. To do it with a profit motive in mind is even more outrageous.”

WASHINGTON TIMES GIVES SPACE TO BIGOTS

On September 11, an anti-Catholic ad was printed in the Washington Times by the Eternal Gospel church of Layman Seventh Day Adventists (SDA). The ad takes Catholics (and, to a lesser extent, Protestants) to task for observing Sunday as the Sabbath. The Catholic Church is identified as the “WHORE” and the “beast,” and the Holy Father is charged with breaking down the walls between church and state.

James Cardinal Hickey, archbishop of Washington, wrote about this matter in last weekend’s edition of the archdiocesan newspaper, Catholic Standard. He quite rightfully branded the ad as “an attack on the Pope” and as a “throwback to the bad old days when it was perfectly fine to haul bigoted invective against the Roman Catholic Church and especially the Holy Father.”

What makes this so disturbing is that a similar ad was run in the Washington Times on June 27, 1997. At that time, the Catholic League was told that it was not likely that an ad like this would run again.

In a September 14 letter to Michael Mahr, director of advertising at the newspaper, Catholic League president William Donohue said he wanted a firm commitment that such an ad would never run again. In response, Mahr admitted on September 16 that he personally reviews all controversial ads. He then dismissed Donohue's concerns by saying, "I appreciate your sensitivity to the ad and regret it has offended you."

Donohue commented as follows on Mahr's letter:

"It is striking that when I complained to the *Miami Herald* and the *Sun Sentinel* about a similar SDA ad, I received a pledge that such ads would never run again. The *Washington Times*, however, refuses to do likewise. Fine. Now here's my pledge: we will conduct a publicity campaign against the newspaper that it will surely regret. We'll see who gets the last laugh."

We are pleased to announce that subsequent to our news release the Washington Times pledged never to run these ads again.

PROTEST OF "CORPUS CHRISTI" SWELLS

The Catholic League is proud to announce that 49 organizations—representing the Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim communities—have signed a formal declaration of protest against the Terrence McNally play, "Corpus Christi."

The play previews on September 22 and will have its gala opening on October 13; there will be a demonstration in front of the City Center, the venue of the play, on October 13. By that time William Donohue and Rick Hinshaw will have seen the play.

Here is the list of organizations that are protesting the play:

Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty; Alliance Defense Fund; American Catholic Lawyers Association; American Family Association; Americans United for the Pope; Ancient Order of Hibernians in America, Inc.; (Diocese of the) Armenian Church of America; Brotherhood of Catholic Laymen; CALL Network (Collegians Activated to Liberate Life); Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation; Cardinal Newman Society; Catholic Alliance; Catholic Answers; Catholic Campaign for America; Catholic Coalition of Westchester; Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights; Catholics United for the Faith; Center for Equal Opportunity; Center for Jewish and Christian Values; Chinese Catholic Information Center; Christian Coalition; Congregation of Mount Sinai; Council of American Islamic Relations; Crisis; Family Defense Council; Family Research Council; Free Congress Foundation; Guild of Catholic Lawyers; Interfaith Alliance; Interfaith Committee of Orthodox Jews; Islamic Center of Long Island; Jews for Morality; Knights of Columbus; Knights of the Holy Sepulchre; Legatus; Media Research Center; National Cops for Life; National Council on Islamic Affairs; Police Officers For Christ; Polish American Congress; Project Reality; Society of Catholic Social Scientists; Sons of Italy; Southern Baptist Convention (Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission); Toward Tradition; Traditional Values Coalition; Wethersfield Institute; Women for Faith and Family; Young America's Foundation.

William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, commented

on the support:

“The fact that there are 48 organizations, representing the four major world religions in the United States, willing to denounce ‘Corpus Christi’ tells us that the hate mongers in the artistic community have fooled no one. There was a day when being associated with the performing arts was a mark of distinction, but now—thanks to those like McNally—the only ones not tainted are the drop-outs.”

BROADWAY’S CATHOLICISM

PROBLEM:

In the “Weekend” section of today’s *New York Times*, several plays are advertised on one page (see p. E7). Four of them deal with Catholicism, one way or another: “Corpus Christi”; “Tony n’ Tina”; “Nunsense A-Men!”; and “Late Nite Catechism.” Their treatment of Catholicism, as even reviewers have noted, ranges from ridicule to blasphemy.

Catholic League president William Donohue took note of this today:

“The play ‘Tony n’ Tina’ features an Italian Catholic wedding in which a pregnant bride on drugs interacts with a drunken priest. ‘Nunsense A-Men!’ is an adaptation of the play ‘Nunsense,’ only this time the characters are in drag; the nuns use drugs and hawk a Blessed Virgin Mary cookbook that contains sexual innuendo. ‘Late Nite Catechism’ ridicules the pre-Vatican II church in a way that its fans would label outrageous had the script targeted ‘progressive’ nuns. ‘Corpus Christi’ is Terrence McNally’s contribution to hate speech.

“Reporters often ask me which segment of society harbors the greatest animus against Catholicism. They frequently think I will finger the media. No, I believe it is the artistic community that hates Catholicism the most; the higher education community is a close second. Why this is so has much to do with sex: our elites sponsor a libertine notion of sexuality while the Catholic Church preaches the virtue of restraint. Want to know which version liberates? The statistics kept by courts and morgues provide the answer.”

GOV. PATAKI MAKES RIGHT CHURCH-STATE DECISION

In the wake of the fire that devastated New York's Central Synagogue last Friday, Governor George Pataki has ordered a state of emergency that allows the congregation to use the New York State Armory on Park Avenue; access has been granted for 10 days, from the eve of Rosh Hashanah on September 20 until Yom Kippur on September 29. The governor's order suspends state military law that prohibits the use of armories for religious purposes.

Catholic League president William Donohue endorsed Pataki's decision today:

“Governor Pataki is to be commended for extending to the congregation of Central Synagogue the right to use the Seventh Regiment Armory on Park Avenue. Only a separation of church and state fanatic would oppose this move. Which raises an interesting question: would the ACLU, People for the American Way and Americans for Separation of Church and State be as quiescent if the armory had been extended to the parishioners

of St. Patrick's Cathedral in the wake of a similar disaster? Maybe an inquiring journalist will let us know.

"What's at stake in this issue is the proper *accommodation*, as opposed to sponsorship, of the state to church needs. That all of us can live with the governor's decision, and that the U.S. Constitution will not come undone in the meantime, is proof positive that those who have willfully distorted the meaning of the establishment clause are wrong once again.

"Congratulations to Governor Pataki and best wishes to the congregation of Central Synagogue."

VILLAGE VOICE ADDS TO ITS LEGACY

On page 14 of the September 8 edition of the *Village Voice*, there is a huge photo of a man wearing a T-shirt with the inscription "JESUS IS A C_ _ _" (obscene term for female genitalia). There is no accompanying story: only two sentences commenting on "street people" appear on the page (there are four other smaller photos).

Catholic League president William Donohue offered his thoughts on this matter:

"I called Lynn Yeager, the person who wrote the two sentences, and photo editor Meg Handler. On their voice mail, I left just one question: if instead of Jesus, Martin Luther King's name had been printed on the T-shirt, would they have run it? They have yet to get back to me. Presuming they were honest, is there anyone who doubts what they would say?

“The gratuitous nature of this ‘article’ (is it a news story?) speaks volumes about the *Village Voice*. It also explains why they have to give their paper away free: who would buy it?

“Some might say that I would be judgmental if I used the word ‘evil’ to describe this. They are right, and that’s exactly how I feel. Perhaps someone at the *Voice* can explain to me why they don’t share my sentiment.”

HUSTLER STOOPS TO NEW LOW

The September edition of the pornographic-misogynist publication, *Hustler*, features a doctored picture of Pope John Paul II and Fidel Castro hawking the magazine. Castro is shown holding a copy of the magazine, with its pages open, while the pope gazes down at it. On the pope’s clothing is a yellow sticker that says, “I saved 44%”; the word “Hustler” appears below it. There is a statement above the photo which ends with, “For the Love of Christ, Subscribe Today!”

At the bottom of the full-page picture there is a disclaimer that reads: “Not to be taken seriously. While the subscription offer is real, the accompanying photograph of the Pope and Fidel Castro reading HUSTLER has been altered.”

Catholic League president William Donohue wrote a letter to the magazine’s editor, Allan MacDonell. Here is part of what he said:

“Not surprisingly, this [the ad] shows that your appetite for bigotry is on a par with your appetite for obscenity, and that’s really saying something.

“I have just one suggestion: instead of playing off contrasts,

why not go to the well (or should I say the sewer?) and use a picture of Marilyn Manson or Howard Stern in lieu of the pope. And don't forget about home base—a shot of Larry Flynt should work well. There's always Satan, right?"

The Catholic League knows that *Hustler* is incapable of being shamed. But it also knows that there are those in American life that still want to deny the existence of anti-Catholicism. It is for this audience that this news release is intended.