

CHURCH BLAMED FOR SLAVERY

Armstrong Williams, a conservative columnist for the Washington Times, has blamed the Catholic Church for slavery. In an article on Dr. Martin Luther King, Williams wrote that "King knew of the continuing legacy of xenophobia and ignorance that led to the enslavement of Africans simply because they were labeled 'infidels' by the Catholic Church." Williams' piece was reprinted in the Conservative Chronicle.

It is a sad commentary on some black writers that they blame Catholics or Jews for slavery. The fact is, as black Harvard sociologist Orlando Patterson has shown, that slavery has been a common practice in history in virtually every part of the globe. Indeed, slavery was well-known to Africa (and still exists there today) long before Europeans arrived. Hence, it is historically wrong and downright unfair to blame the Catholic Church for the institution of slavery.

HEMLOCK SOCIETY DIRECTOR BASHES CATHOLICISM

Faye Girsh, the executive director of the Hemlock Society, attacked Catholicism in a letter to *American Medical News*, the official newspaper of the American Medical Association.

Girsh wrote that while it was okay for Cardinal Bernardin to oppose doctor assisted suicide, it was not okay for the late cardinal "to foist the church's views on others." She also trotted out the old canards about Galileo and Darwin.

The league responded with a letter that charged Girsh with

wanting to censor the Catholic Church. “She knows all too well,” wrote William Donohue, “that Cardinal Bernardin had every constitutional and moral right to speak to this issue, and she also knows the difference between a church that proposes its ideas to society and one that imposes them. That the Catholic Church has neither the interest nor the ability to ‘foist’ its views on the public should be axiomatic, save for those bent on silencing the church.”

Girsh also chastised the AMA for associating with the “authoritarian” views of the Catholic Church (she was referring to the Church’s opposition to abortion). Donohue wrote that “Terms like ‘authoritarian’ are bandied about by those who suffer from intellectual collapse.” He added that “Those who can speak logically to public policy issues never engage in such discourse because they know how unproductive it is.”

It is amazing that those who show an enthusiasm for wanting doctors to kill their patients often cannot resist the opportunity to use invective. Nor can they resist the temptation to bash the Catholic Church.

CATHOLIC ROOTS SCORNE

Rolling Stone, the rock magazine, has listed her on its Hot List. She was the first openly gay comic to appear on national TV. But, unfortunately, this talented young woman bears a grudge about her religious roots.

In an interview, Lea DeLaria was asked what was it about her childhood that made her so disturbed that she grew up to be a flashy comedian. Here’s what she said: “Twelve years of Catholic school. I was a naughty little girl and I thought if

I could make that nun laugh, she wouldn't hit me with that ruler. I owe it all to nuns that I'm a comic and a lesbian."

Now who she owes her scorn to she does not say, but she does say that she feels at home in San Francisco. We have no reason to doubt her.

NY MAYORAL CANDIDATES SIDE WITH ILGO

On February 12, three New York City mayoral hopefuls, Fernando Ferrer, Ruth Messinger and Rev. Al Sharpton, met with representatives of the Irish Lesbian and Gay Organization (ILGO) to declare their unwillingness to march in the St. Patrick's Day Parade unless ILGO is allowed to march; ILGO has been denied the right to march in the parade by the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the parade's sponsor, and has lost in court in attempts to force their way into the march.

The Catholic League issued the following statement to the press regarding this incident:

"The Catholic League is delighted that Mr. Ferrer, Ms. Messinger and Rev. Sharpton will not be marching in the St. Patrick's Day Parade. Anyone who sides with those who would defame the parade's heritage should not participate. We are equally delighted that Mayor Giuliani has decided to ignore ILGO's bait and will march in the parade.

"Catholic voters comprise 43 percent of the New York City electorate. The Catholic League will do its best to inform them of the decision by Ferrer, Messinger and Sharpton to identify with those who have long sought to disrupt this

important day for Irish Catholics. Those who associate themselves with ILGO necessarily express their contempt for Catholics by honoring the politics of exclusion: it is simply not possible to honor St. Patrick if those who would besmirch his honor were allowed to prevail.

“The only good news about ILGO is their increasing political irrelevancy, and the only good news about Ferrer, Messinger and Sharpton is that they have now contributed to their own political irrelevancy by siding with ILGO.

PAT ROBERTSON’S SNICKERS AT POPE

The 700 Club show of February 26 showed a side to Pat Robertson that the league found less than amusing. In the news segment of the show, a report was given addressing the Catholic Church’s teachings on divorce and remarriage. The next segment was a commentary given on this “news” by Robertson and co-host Terry Meeuwsen.

Robertson and Meeuwsen found it unbelievable that the Holy Father would expect divorced and remarried Catholics to refrain from sex. Saying that “the Holy Father may believe in miracles,” Robertson stated that the pope was “involved in Angelic visitations that are not necessarily valid.” He also said, in a condescending tone, “Maybe somebody will buy into that theory.” Perhaps most inexcusable, Robertson laughed almost uncontrollably when speaking.

Dr. Donohue, who has been interviewed by Pat Robertson and has appeared on the 700 Club on many occasions, sent a letter to the televangelist registering his outrage. He said “Not only

were your remarks ignorant of the facts, they were presented in a manner that was offensive to Catholics: your snickering betrayed an attitude that is most disturbing.”

Donohue sent Robertson copies of the Catholic News Service and Vatican Information Service’s news release on the subject. He stressed that the so-called news was simply a pastoral letter from the Pontifical Council for the Family restating the Church’s teachings on divorce and remarriage. He also explained the flaw in Robertson’s characterization of this teaching of the Church.

Donohue commented that the Church forbids both pre-marital sex and adultery and that “the only legitimate form of sexual activity is between a man and a woman in the Sacrament of Matrimony.” If a divorced Catholic does not receive an annulment, then any sex—within another marriage or outside of marriage—is proscribed; that would amount to fornication.

There is an internal logic to the Church’s teaching, Donohue said, but even if someone doesn’t accept this position, it is unacceptable to misinterpret the Church’s teaching and then mock the Church for holding the stance ascribed to it.

Donohue has asked Robertson to respond to his letter. We will let our readers know the outcome.

DID YOU KNOW ST. PATRICK WASN’T CATHOLIC?

If you didn’t know that St. Patrick wasn’t Catholic, don’t feel bad—neither did we. But that’s precisely what we learned when we read this nonsense in the March/April edition of the

Christian Coalition's flagship publication, Christian America.

The so-called "real story" of St. Patrick wherein this fable was invented cited as its source "Friends of Wesley & Patrick," an outfit from Pasadena, California. Fortunately, an address and phone number was listed. We called and guess what we learned?

Well, it so happens that the source person says he was misquoted in the magazine and that he never said that St. Patrick wasn't Catholic. Knowing that we weren't too thrilled with the story, he called the writer of piece in Christian America to let him know that he wasn't too pleased either. The result is that the publication will retract the claim and make an apology to its readers in the next edition.

This may not seem like a big issue but it should be remembered that what gets into print gets circulated via the electronic media and other sources. This is how rumors get fed and how total untruths become accepted as conventional wisdom. That is why we jumped on this issue.

HEALTH FOOD CHAIN SHOWS SIGNS OF SICKNESS

Nutraceutical Corporation, a health food establishment headquartered in Park City, Utah is running ads that uses a full color photograph of the sanctuary of the old Cathedral in Montreal, Quebec. Above the photo is the headline, "This is about as close as we get to going to mass." The ad closes with the statement, "And...you can always have faith in us."

The league sent a letter to the president of the corporation,

Jeff Hendrichs, explaining the significance of the Mass for Roman Catholics and asking him to reconsider his ad. It was the league's position that while there are aspects of any religion that may be legitimately parodied, "clearly a line has been crossed when the most sacred ritual of a world religion is made the butt of cheap humor in a commercial advertisement."

TEXACO PULLS SPONSORSHIP OF HOLIDAY FESTIVAL

After a protest by the Catholic League, Texaco Inc. has withdrawn sponsorship of a controversial holiday festival. During the holiday season, the league complained to Texaco that the Festival of Trees and Lights displayed Jewish religious symbols but no Christian religious symbols; secular symbols associated with Christmas were all that were shown.

"Upon investigation of the religious circumstances of the Festival of Trees and Lights," wrote the director of public relations for Texaco, "I agree with the observation that a lack of balance regarding religious symbols of the season exists." He went to explain that as a result of this finding, Texaco has decided to withdraw sponsorship of the festival in 1997.

While the league is pleased with Texaco's response, we would have been more pleased if the company had simply insisted that a nativity scene adorn the festival next year.

It speaks well for Texaco that this is the second time that the league has complained about some program that it was sponsoring, and in both instances it immediately dissociated

itself from the event.

GAY LEADER LIKES ATTACKS ON CHURCH

Andy Humm, a well-known gay activist in New York, has voiced his pleasure at the Tom of the Finland Foundation award-winning entry for 1996. The “art” that Humm likes showed a picture of a priest performing fellatio on Jesus Christ.

Humm made the following comment in reply to Dr. Donohue’s mention of this offense in the Tablet, the newspaper of the Diocese of Brooklyn: “I can just hear the little altar boys and girls who read the Tablet asking their catechism teachers, ‘What’s fellatio’? or looking it up in their Funk & Wagnall’s. Considering how little sex education they do in Catholic schools, Donohue may have performed a valuable service. I’d never have known about this drawing otherwise.”

This just goes to show that Humm is not unequivocally opposed to bashing groups in society; he only objects when gays are bashed. It also shows that his hatred for Catholicism is so deep that there is no attack on the Church that he would regard as being beyond the pale. For Humm, the word sacrilegious has not meaning whatsoever, not, at least, when applied to Catholicism.

LEAGUE ASKS BLOCKBUSTER TO WITHDRAW FILM

Last month's *Catalyst* included a review of the movie, ***The Life of Brian***. Subsequently, we were troubled to learn that this anti-Catholic film has been stocked by Blockbuster. The league has asked Blockbuster chairman H. Wayne Huizenga to withdraw the movie from its shelves. Previously, Blockbuster refused to stock *The Last Temptation of Christ*; it did not cooperate by removing *Priest*.

League members can write to Chairman Huizenga at Blockbuster Entertainment Group, One Blockbuster Plaza, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33301. Many thanks to our former general counsel, Andrew McCauley, for bringing this to our attention.