

ELECTION TRIGGERS HYSTERIA: “THEOCRACY” FEARED

“Can you believe those Catholics telling people how to vote?” That’s exactly what a woman said to her friends as she exited the elevator at the end of the workday. It was Election Day.

This anecdote wouldn’t amount to much if it were just that—an anecdote. But as pages 4-7 of this issue demonstrate, it reflected the sentiments of a large sector of our nation’s elite. Never before have we seen such an outburst of anti-Christian remarks aired in such a short period of time.

For example, Maureen Dowd of the *New York Times* said, “America has always had strains of isolationism, nativism, chauvinism, puritanism and religious fanaticism.” But today, she maintained, “We’re entering a dark age, more creationist than cutting edge, more premodern than postmodern.” We’re headed, she insisted, to “a scary, paranoid, regressive reality.” All because Christians won on many moral issues.

Dowd’s colleague, Paul Krugman, blamed Christians for wanting to “break down the barriers between church and state.” Similarly, civil rights attorney Mickey Wheatley wrote in the *Los Angeles Times* that we have become “a fundamentalist-leaning nation, increasingly hateful and hated.” What made these people crazy was the American electorate’s insistence that moral values are of utmost importance to them. And by that they meant the importance of being pro-life and pro-marriage.

For our part, we criticized Catholic politicians who broke from Catholic teachings on these subjects. This explains why we went after California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger when he backed public funding for embryonic stem-cell research, as well as Senator Kerry for being pro-abortion.

While our criticisms were measured, the remarks of the bigots were not. To demonstrate the depth of the hatred against Christians, consider that the *Los Angeles Times* printed the following letter on November 10: "So many Christians, so few lions."

Not to be outdone, here's how William Donohue replied: "The letter by Gerald S. Rellick that says, 'So many Christians, so few lions,' has a certain ring to it. But so does, 'So many Jews, so few ovens,' yet it is a sure bet that this newspaper would never publish such hate-filled bigotry. Get the point?"

In other words, reasoned discourse went out the window before and after the election. And most of the profoundly bigoted comments were made by secularists against people of faith.

CENSORS TARGET CHRISTMAS

The attempt by radical secularists to censor Christmas started early this year. They not only want to bar nativity scenes on public property, they want to shut down Christmas celebrations in the workplace.

On November 10, in a legal newspaper out of San Francisco, *The Recorder*, two lawyers advised those who work in human resources to protect their company by censoring Christmas. Putting up Christmas decorations, they warned, might create "a hostile environment based upon religion." Their conclusion: "When in doubt, go secular with decorations."

Here's what led them to that conclusion: "One police department in another state had to face that issue [what to do about Christmas decorations] when it received a religious discrimination complaint filed by a Jewish employee. The

employee complained that the display of Christian-related holiday decorations [in this case, a nativity scene] violated his religious beliefs. As a result, the department banned all decorations with a Christmas theme, resulting in no Christmas tree, no Santas, no lights—nothing associated with the holiday season.”

Then there are the proverbial battles over nativity scenes on public property. Town officials in La Grange, Kentucky decided in November to stop a 14-year old tradition of putting a nativity scene on the courthouse lawn; they feared an ACLU lawsuit.

Please let us know of any anti-Christmas activities in your area.

BAD YEAR FOR THE CULTURAL ELITES

The year 2004 was a bad one for our cultural elites. They began the year by calling Christians who liked Mel Gibson’s “The Passion of the Christ” anti-Semites, and they finished the year by calling Christians who favor the traditional understanding of marriage gay bashers. But they lost both battles: Mel’s movie was a monumental success, and all eleven states that voted on gay marriage overwhelmingly rejected it.

The elites, those gentlepersons who work in the top echelons of the media, the colleges and universities, the publishing world, the entertainment industry, the artistic community, major grant-giving foundations, and so on, are now licking their wounds. And they are angry. Indeed, some are pledging to leave the country. Promises, promises.

What motivates the cultural elite are two things: hatred and power. They hate traditional values and they love power. When they could not succeed in censoring "The Passion of the Christ," they launched a hate-filled campaign against Mel Gibson and his supporters; for good measure, they branded the film "pornographic" and "sado-masochistic." And when they couldn't persuade voters that it was okay for two men to get married, they went ballistic. The demonization of Christians is now at an all time high. The elites are absolutely convinced that traditional Catholics and evangelical Protestants are out to get them. They sincerely believe that the United States is, or is on the verge of becoming, a theocracy run by Taliban-like Christian thugs.

What is amazing about this lunacy is that their cruel caricature of Christians is so wide of the mark. What most Christians want is a decent society that respects life and family. The right of a child to be born is not a religious issue—it is a human-rights issue. The preservation of marriage as an institution between a man and a woman is also not a religious issue—it is a societal issue. The attempt to label these issues as religious is actually an attempt to marginalize them.

That the Catholic Church is both pro-life and pro-marriage does not make abortion and marriage religious issues: atheists and agnostics have been known to favor both, and some religions—Unitarianism comes quickly to mind—reject both positions. It should also be pointed out that simply because the Catholic Church supports traffic lights and arithmetic, they do not, on that account, become religious matters.

Much to the chagrin of the elites, moral issues played a big role in the election. So what have they learned? Not much. Having lost on abortion and gay marriage, the elites are now saying that poverty, war, corporate greed, health care, the environment and the minimum wage are also moral issues. They're right about that, but what they fail to understand is

that everyone can relate to issues of life and family—they are as palpable as they are visceral. The same cannot be said about something as nebulous as the deficit.

Similarly, the elites would like to live in a world where most parents get as upset about air pollution as they do moral pollution. But any parent who isn't more concerned about the smut that Hollywood delivers than he is the smut that automobiles deliver is irresponsible. Technology can, and has, helped to check the latter, but only a values reversal can change the former.

The Catholics and Protestants whom I know are not seeking to impose their values on anyone. What they want is for the secular elites to stop imposing their values on us. It is not our side that seeks to censor "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance. It is not our side that seeks to stigmatize the Boy Scouts. It is not our side that seeks to remove the Ten Commandments from courtrooms. It is not our side that wants to ban kids from singing "Silent Night" in the schools. Indeed, when it comes to muzzling free speech and punishing diversity, it's more often their side that's guilty.

Many on all sides are questioning whether we can have a truce in the culture war. Listen to what the *New York Times* said in an editorial two days after the election: "This page will never give up our commitment to women's right to reproductive choice, as well as full civil rights for people of all sexual orientations." Sounds pretty unequivocal.

Unashamedly, the next sentence says that "political sacrifices" will have to be made in order to stake out a "middle ground" that will lay "the foundation for a new national consensus that might finally bring the nation's social wars to an end." Translated this means that those who support traditional values will have to compromise their principles in order to accommodate the side of the *New York Times*.

Uh, huh. Didn't anyone tell them they lost?

THE BEST-SELLING BIGOTRY OF LEFT BEHIND

By Carl E. Olson

Two years ago I was engaged in an e-mail exchange with a Fundamentalist pastor, who wrote:

But as an effort to still save your soul, if indeed my concerns for you are true, may I urge you to reexamine the Mariolatry of the Church you have bought into. I will not badger you with the unscriptural practice of making Mary “the mother of God” or “the Queen of Heaven” which comes from Babylonish paganism not Christianity or Scripture.

It was typical Fundamentalist fare, but the man who penned it was no ordinary Fundamentalist. He was Dr. Tim LaHaye, one of the most influential Christians—Catholic or Protestant—in America over the past thirty years. A founding member of the Moral Majority, LaHaye is best known today as creator/co-author of the mega-selling *Left Behind* books, the most popular works of Christian fiction in history. Since 1995, when the first *Left Behind* novel appeared, the “end times” series (now twelve volumes strong and with two more coming) has sold some sixty million copies.

Since entering the Catholic Church in 1997, I've written over two dozen articles and a major book about the *Left Behind* theology propagated by LaHaye and many others through books, television, and radio. As a former believer in the “Rapture” and premillennial dispensationalism (the most common

form of the *Left Behind* theology), I know how confusing this topic can be for Catholics. But I was—and still am—surprised by how many Catholics fail to see how biased against Catholicism are the *Left Behind* novels and companion volumes produced by LaHaye.

For example, one Catholic fan of the *Left Behind* books scoffed at my concerns about the novels. “You know,” he said, “they actually have the Pope raptured. So they cannot be anti-Catholic.” I encouraged him to read the books more closely since the passage he referred to, from the second book of the series, *Tribulation Force*, is actually an example of how the Catholic Faith is attacked in the *Left Behind* books:

“A lot of Catholics were confused, because while many remained, some had disappeared—including the new pope, who had been installed just a few months before the vanishings. He had stirred up controversy in the church with a new doctrine that seemed to coincide more with the ‘heresy’ of Martin Luther than with the historic orthodoxy they were used to.” (Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, *Tribulation Force: The Continuing Drama of Those Left Behind* [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1995], p. 53.)

In other words, the new pope is secretly Raptured despite being Catholic because he embraces the views of Martin Luther and has therefore renounced Catholic teaching. So those Catholics who *reject* the Catholic Faith can be “saved” and Raptured, with the logical conclusion being that Catholics who are loyal to the Church are not “saved,” are not true Christians, and will not be Raptured.

The leading Catholic character, the American Cardinal Mathews, is a greedy, power-hungry, Biblically-illiterate egomaniac whose devious actions apparently result from his adherence to “normal” Catholic beliefs and practices (*Tribulation Force*, pp. 271-278). He becomes the new pope and the head of Enigma One World Faith, an evil, one-world religion. Taking the

title *Pontifex Maximus Peter*, he declares war on anyone believing in the Bible. His anger is especially directed towards true Christians from “house churches, small groups that met all over the suburbs and throughout the state,” an obvious reference to Fundamentalist and Evangelical Protestants.

Cameron “Buck” Williams, “a senior staff writer for the prestigious newsmagazine *Global Weekly*” presses Cardinal Mathews for his explanation of the disappearance of millions from earth and his interpretation of Ephesians 2:8-9:

“‘Now you see,’ the archbishop said, ‘this is precisely my point. People have been taking verses like that out of context for centuries and trying to build doctrine on them.’ ‘But there are other passages just like those,’ Buck said.”
(*Tribulation Force*, p. 54-55.)

Afterwards Buck writes an article in which “he was able to work in the Scripture and the archbishop’s attempt to explain away the doctrine of grace.” In other words, Catholicism is a false religion based on works, not grace, and the Catholics who were Raptured were those who went against official Church teaching.

This reflects LaHaye’s beliefs in *sola fide* (salvation by “faith alone”) and *sola scriptura* (no authority except the Bible), two cornerstones of the Protestant Reformation. In *Revelation Unveiled*, his commentary on the final book of the Bible, LaHaye writes, “Rome’s false religion too often gives a false security that keeps people from seeking salvation by faith. Rome is also dangerous because some of her doctrines are pseudo-Christian. For example, she believes properly about the personal deity of Christ but errs in adding Babylonian mysticism in many forms and salvation by works” (*Revelation Unveiled*, p. 269). Anyone familiar with the early ecumenical councils will find this amusing, but Fundamentalists unfamiliar with Church history take LaHaye’s

depiction of the Catholic Church as Gospel truth.

When a reader complained online that *Tribulation Force* was anti-Catholic, *Left Behind* co-author Jerry B. Jenkins vehemently insisted that the books are “not anti-Catholic” and that “almost every person in the book who was left behind was Protestant. Astute readers will understand where we’re coming from. True believers in Christ, regardless of their church ‘brand’ will be raptured” (Amazon.com, August 26, 1999). In June 2003 the Illinois Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement condemning the *Left Behind* books and related materials as anti-Catholic. LaHaye responded by insisting that “our books are not anti-Catholic. In fact, we have many faithful Catholic readers and friends” (Religion News Service, June 26, 2003).

He added that the series is “not an attack on the Catholic church” and, according to a *Chicago Tribune* column (June 13, 2003), “said the bishops are ‘reading into these books something that’s not there.’ The books don’t suggest any particular theology, he said, but try to introduce people to a more personal relationship with Jesus.” In an interview with the *Chicago Sun-Times* (June 6, 2003), LaHaye explains that the character of Cardinal Mathews is simply that: a character. “What [the bishops] don’t seem to realize,” he said, “is that every church has some renegade people in it, and we just picked one out of theirs.”

But in that same column I insist that LaHaye is “a rabid anti-Catholic.” Why? Because LaHaye “is convinced, and he teaches very clearly in his nonfiction books, that the Catholic Church is apostate, it is false, and it is not Christian.” He has established a lengthy and consistent pattern of harshly condemning the Catholic Church, attacking her beliefs, and using inflammatory language and factually baseless statements in the process.

LaHaye resorts to the sort of nativist attacks on Catholicism

common in the United States during the 1800s, notably in the writings of Alexander Hislop, a Scottish pastor whose book *The Two Babylons the Papal Worship Proved to be the Worship of Nimrod and His Wife* (originally written in 1853-1858) attempted to prove that every distinctive Catholic belief and practice is pagan in origin and Satanic in orientation. In *Revelation Unveiled* LaHaye writes that “the greatest book ever written on [Babylonian religion] is the masterpiece *The Two Babylons* . . . This book, containing quotations from 275 authors and to my knowledge never refuted, best describes the origin of religion in Babylon and its present-day function.” (p. 266). He summarizes Hislop’s main ideas: Catholicism is idolatrous, Satanic in origin, based on secrecy and fear, and filled with pagan doctrines and practices. He then proclaims that “[a]fter reading the above quotations, you may be inclined to think me anti-Catholic, but that isn’t exactly true; I am anti-false religion” (p. 269).

Yet it’s hard to deny LaHaye’s unreasonable (he never provides citations from actual Catholic documents) and even hysterical animosity towards Catholicism in light of his claims that:

- Roman Catholicism, “apostate Protestantism,” Hinduism, and Buddhism will form a system of “pagan ecumenism” and will facilitate the rise of the Antichrist during the Tribulation era (*The Beginning of the End*, [Tyndale, 1972, 1981], 148-51).
- Hindus can become Catholic without renouncing any of their Hindu beliefs (*The Beginning of the End*, 151; *Revelation Unveiled*, p. 275).
- “All that inhibits the ecumenical movement today are the fundamental, Bible-believing Christians.... They are the group called ‘the Church’ that Christ is coming for ... so-

called Christ-endom is divided basically into two main groups, the apostates and the fundamentalists" (*The Beginning of the End*, 151-2).

- The Catholic Church is an apostate Church that has mixed paganism with Christianity, resulting in the "dark ages" and the existence of "Babylonian mysticism" (*Revelation Unveiled*, 65-68, 260-277; *Are We Living in the End Times?* [Tyndale, 1999], 171-176).
- "The Church of Rome denies the finished work of Christ but believes in a continuing sacrifice that produces such things as sacraments and praying for the dead, burning candles, and so forth. All of these were borrowed from mystery Babylon, the mother of all pagan customs and idolatry, none of which is taught in the New Testament" (*Revelation Unveiled*, 66-67).
- Catholics worship Mary, saints, and angels (*Are We Living in the End Times?*, 173).
- The Catholic Church, in large part due to Augustine, removed the Bible as the sole source of authority among Christians and "spiritualized" away the truths of Scripture, and kept the Bible from the common people (*Are We Living in the End Times?*, 174).
- The Catholic Church killed over forty million people during the "dark ages" when "Babylonian mysticism controlled the church" (*Are We Living in the End Times?*, 175).

The *Left Behind* books and their non-fiction companions are filled with poor writing, bad theology, and anti-Catholic bigotry. It's best to leave them behind and rely on Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium of the Church when studying the end times—or anything else.

Carl E. Olson is the editor of IgnatiusInsight.com. His best-selling books Will Catholics Be "Left Behind"? and The Da Vinci Hoax are available from Ignatius Press (1-800-651-1531). Visit him at www.carl-olsen.com.

ELITES IGNITE ANTI-CHRISTIAN HYSTERIA

Catholic League president William Donohue says that an anti-Christian hysteria has gripped the nation's cultural elites. Consider the following recently published comments:

- * Robert Wright, visiting professor at Princeton, says Bush's "divine-feeling feelings" are part of today's "problem, not the solution."
- * A *New York Times* editorial says if Bush wins again, he will appoint judges that will allow states to become "mini-theocracies."
- * David Domke, a University of Washington professor, says "one is hard pressed" to distinguish between Osama bin Laden's religious views and Bush's.
- * NYU professor Mark Crispin Miller says Bush wants a "theocracy."
- * USC professor Neal Gabler says Bush's ideas are "the stuff

of a theocracy—the president as pope or mullah.”

* Yale emeritus professor Harold Bloom fears if Bush is reelected, we could be faced with a “theocracy, an eventual tyranny of the twice-born.”

* Robert Kuttner of the *American Prospect* says Bush “seems to want to move the United States towards a theocracy.”

* Journalist James Ridgeway says, “Bush’s goal is to blur the lines separating church and state and turn the U.S. toward theocracy.”

* Brian Rusche, director of the Minnesota Joint Religious Coalition, implores the faithful to remember, “We don’t want a theocracy.” Similarly, S. Michele Fry of the *Contra Costa Times* and Linda Valdez of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* both admonish readers to keep their guard up, remembering that “America is not a theocracy.”

NOTE: The letters-to-the-editor sections of most newspapers are rife with such examples. Thus have our cultural elites ignited a wave of anti-Christian hysteria.

ANTI-CHRISTIAN POSTER IN NYC POLLING PLACE

The *New York Post* reported today that an anti-Christian poster was featured at a polling place in Manhattan’s SoHo district. The poster showed a soldier pointing a gun alongside the words, “Say it, one nation under God. Say it, you love Jesus. Say it.”

The poster was on a wall in the Puffin Room art gallery on Broome Street; it was in clear view of citizens waiting on line to vote. There was another poster that depicted Attorney General John Ashcroft as a Nazi. Ed Skyler, the press secretary to New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, denounced the posters as “totally inappropriate.”

Catholic League president William Donohue is issuing a formal complaint to the Board of Elections today, and released the following comment to the media:

“I am writing to John Ravitz, executive director of the New York City Board of Elections, registering a complaint about the anti-Christian poster in the Puffin Room gallery polling site. I want him to investigate the veracity of the remark made by Carl Rosenstein, the owner of the gallery, who said that the Board of Elections found no problem with the posters.

“No Catholic or Protestant should be expected to endure this kind of harassment while waiting on line to vote. We will be looking to Mr. Ravitz to discipline those officials who gave the okay to this polling place. His response will determine whether we will commence litigation.

“That the New Yorkers who witnessed this hate speech were apparently not disturbed by it does not speak well for them, and it certainly does not speak well for Mr. Rosenstein that he allowed it. Apparently, some New Yorkers have an infinite tolerance for intolerance, just so long as it is aimed at Christians.”

RELIGIOUS BIGOTS EXPLODE AFTER ELECTION

Catholic League president William Donohue says the following examples, taken from today's newspapers and Internet sites, prove we need to build more asylums:

*In the *Wichita Eagle*, Mitch Albom of the *Detroit Free Press* wonders if President Bush understands that "he was not chosen god, bishop, rabbi or high priest?"

*The publisher of *Harper's* magazine, John R. MacArthur, blasts both President Bush and Senator Kerry for advertising "their subservience to Jesus Christ and the Christian god, without the least concern about whether it might offend me" and others like him.

*Ex-seminarian Garry Wills writes in the *New York Times*, "Can a people that believes more fervently in the Virgin Birth than in evolution still be called an Enlightened nation?" He ends by saying that "moral zealots" will scare moderate Republicans with their "jihads."

*Maureen Dowd, a *New York Times* columnist who hates Bush, says the President "ran a jihad in America so he can fight one in Iraq."

*Dowd's colleague, Thomas Friedman, accuses Bush's base of wanting "to extend the boundaries of religion" and of promoting "intolerance."

*Without providing one example, Margaret Carlson opines in the *Los Angeles Times* that Catholic bishops "demonized" Kerry's supporters by warning them "they could go to hell just for voting for him."

*Sheryl McCarthy of *Newsday* accuses Bush of "pandering to

people's fears, petty interests and prejudices" against gays and others.

*Sidney Blumenthal, writing in *Salon.com*, nervously observes that the new senate majority is "more theocratic than Republican."

*In the same spot, Sean Wilentz embarrasses his fellow Princeton faculty by saying, "religious fanaticism" has "seized control of the federal government."

ELITES CONTINUE THEIR CRACKUP

Last week Catholic League president William Donohue listed the anti-religious commentary that many cultural elites offered in the aftermath of the election. Here are some new ones:

*In today's *New York Times*, Gary Hart proclaims, "There is a disturbing tendency to insert theocratic principles into the vision of America's role in the world."

*DeWayne Wickham of *USA Today* frets, "Putting God in the public square runs the risk of turning our democracy into a theocracy."

**Miami Herald* writer Leonard Pitts Jr. warns that social conservatives are "the soldiers of the new American theocracy."

*Ellen Goodman of the *Boston Globe*, always fearful of morality, says people like her "don't want their country racked by the fundamentalist religious wars we see across the world."

*Another worried soul, author Barbara Ehrenreich, argues we

are polarized because of “Christian fundamentalism.”

*Syndicated columnist Byron Williams sounds the alarms by noting we are moving “closer to a theocracy.”

*Tony Kushner, the anti-Catholic playwright, believes we now have “a kind of unholy alliance between theocracy and plutocracy.”

*Cynthia Tucker, an editorialist with the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, blames “black churchgoers” for using the Bible “as a bludgeon” against gays, saying “homophobia” now “oozes across lines of color.”

*Similarly, a *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* editorial says the rejection of gay marriage means “the old bigotry against homosexuals has not abated.”

NOTE: Thus do our cultural elites prove once again why they are known as “a herd of independent thinkers.”

REAL WICKEDNESS MARKED HALLOWEEN

At least a dozen Internet sites sold highly offensive priest and nun costumes this past Halloween. Perhaps the worst was a man dressed as a priest shown with an erection, and a nun shown in full habit holding her pregnant stomach; they were sold together. The inscription on the ad for the priest costume said, “Keep Up The Faith”; the nun ad said, “Thank You, Father!”

Both items were made by Easter Unlimited, Inc./Funworld, a

Long Island outlet. Harvey Cohen, the store official whom we spoke to, would not comment on whether the company, run by Stanley Geller, carried offensive rabbi or imam costumes. It was sold in stores across the nation, and an El Paso TV station (KVIA) did a story on it. But thanks to one of our courageous members from Long Island who called the store to complain, this item will not be sold next year.

Catholic League members from California and Texas contacted us about similar problems in their area. At a Safeway store in California, a male employee was dressed as a pregnant nun. We made a formal complaint to the CEO of Safeway Inc. and are awaiting a response. In Amarillo, Texas, at a workplace Halloween party, a woman came dressed as a pedophile priest and another dressed as a pregnant nun; the latter won the prize for “best costume.”

Meanwhile, school officials of the Puyallup School District near Tacoma, Washington, literally banned Halloween because some of the costumes were deemed offensive to witches. Tony Apostle, the assistant superintendent, said that school officials objected to “such inappropriate stereotyping” as “witches on flying brooms” and witches with “long noses and pointed hats.” Another school official said it was important not to offend “real witches.”

All of which goes to show that Halloween does bring out the wickedness in the Catholic bashers. But God forbid we offend the witches.

NUNS ANGER PLANNED PARENTHOOD

On November 8, federal workers in 27 Illinois counties were empowered to select a Catholic-based insurance plan that does

not cover abortion, contraceptives or fertility treatment. Run by the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis, OSF HealthPlans is being touted as an example of the faith-based initiatives favored by President Bush.

Gloria Feldt, president of Planned Parenthood Federation of America, said the plan was an “inappropriate” use of federal funds, one that “is blatantly designed to foster one religion’s point of view.”

Our press release on this issue was picked up by the *Washington Times*. Here is what it said:

“The taxpayers are forced to fork over a quarter-billion dollars of federal funds each year to support Planned Parenthood’s agenda. But all of a sudden the officials at the so-called pro-choice organization feel threatened by some Catholic nuns and want to deny federal workers freedom of choice. So much for truth in advertising.

“Planned Parenthood is afraid the OSF HealthPlans initiative might catch on, which is why they’d like to kill it now. Having just lost to President Bush—Planned Parenthood Action Fund supported Senator Kerry—the abortion-friendly group fears the country is turning against them. It is. This is one ‘Sister Act’ all Catholics can savor.”