

VATICAN DIDN'T LURE ANYONE TO CATHOLICISM

In late October, the Vatican announced a new process for disaffected conservative Anglicans to join the Roman Catholic Church. Some of the newspaper coverage was okay, but there were others that completely misrepresented the outreach of the Church.

The opening sentence in the Vatican's October 20 statement said, "With the preparation of an Apostolic Constitution, the Catholic Church is responding to the many requests that have been submitted to the Holy See from groups of Anglican clergy and faithful in different parts of the world who wish to enter into full visible communion." Indeed, at least two dozen Anglican bishops, as well as many of the rank-and-file, *petitioned* the Vatican for assistance.

Despite this fact, several news stories maintained that the Vatican *lured* and *bid* for Episcopalians to join the Roman Catholic Church. This is complete nonsense.

An October 20 story on the *New York Times* website started the mantra with a headline, "Vatican Bidding to Get Anglicans to Join Its Fold." The first sentence of this story, repeated in the following day's newspaper version, said, "In an extraordinary bid to lure traditionalist Anglicans en masse...." Not surprisingly, the *Boston Globe*, which is owned by the *Times*, followed suit and carried the same story. The *Washington Post* started its story by saying, "In a remarkable bid to attract disillusioned members of the Anglican Communion...."

On October 20, the Associated Press ran its first story on the subject and did not use such language. But after reading the *Times'* gospel, on the following day it ran the headline,

“Vatican Seeks to Lure Disaffected Anglicans.”

The October 21 *Christian Science Monitor* asked if the Vatican would now try to “lure” Africa’s Anglican bishops, saying that the day before Rome “launched its bold bid” for Anglicans to join.

The online newsletter Dissident Voice said that the “Roman Church is catering to the homophobes in the Anglican formation” and that it was a “masterstroke of corporate raiding.” Another online publication, Religion Dispatches, said that the Vatican was moving to “shore up its market share” and called it a “theological scandal.”

A week after the Vatican’s announcement, the British newspaper *The Guardian* ran a commentary entitled, “The Vatican thirst for power divides Christianity and damages Catholicism: The astonishing efforts to lure away Anglican priests show that Pope Benedict is set on restoring the Roman imperium.”

Happily, there were a few exceptions to the media Groupthink, e.g., the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* and the *Washington Times*. Both of these newspapers did not partake in the Catholic baiting and reported the story accurately.

Why the Catholic baiting charge? Because reporting like this feeds the stereotype that the conniving Vatican has embarked on another one of its legendary power grabs. This is pure bunk, as any independent-minded source would acknowledge.

But stories like these beg the question: Who was the Vatican in a bidding war with?

NEW YORK TIMES AGAINST “ZERO TOLERANCE”?

The November 11 *New York Times* ran an editorial on “zero tolerance” policies and the trouble they can cause.

Looking back at the “zero tolerance” policy for school misconduct that the Congress adopted in 1994, the *New York Times* opined that it was a “reasonable step” at the time. But it now says that this policy “has been disastrous for young people,” and cited many problems attendant to its implementation. The editorial made sense.

Regrettably, the *New York Times* did not pronounce against the problems inherent in all “zero tolerance” policies. For example, on April 25, 2002, an editorial in the *New York Times* criticized the bishops for not making good on their “zero tolerance” proposal for dealing with cases of priestly sexual abuse. Referring to newly announced strictures, the *Times* said, “Unfortunately, these recommendations stopped short of a zero-tolerance policy for all abusive priests, an issue on which there appears to have been strenuous disagreement.”

In the same piece the *Times* said, “We hope that Cardinal Theodore McCarrick was correct in saying that the pope’s own remarks, especially his comment that there is ‘no place’ in the priesthood for child abusers, suggests that a zero-tolerance policy may eventually take shape. It should.”

The problem with all “zero tolerance” policies is twofold: their absolutist language and their universal application. By definition, they never allow for nuance, for mitigating circumstances, or shades of gray. Just as there is a difference between a student who knifes a classmate and one who bullies an overweight kid, there is a difference between a

rapist and a fondler. But in the eyes of “zero tolerance,” all four offenders should at least be banished.

The *New York Times* should now write an editorial criticizing the adoption of all institutional “zero tolerance” policies. It should not matter whether the institution is educational, religious, financial, journalistic, etc. What should matter is the nature of the policy itself.

KERRY AND KENNEDY FUND RELIGION

On November 3, the *Los Angeles Times* wrote an article on a health care bill in the Senate. The following quote appeared in that story:

“Backed by some of the most powerful members of the Senate, a little-noticed provision in the healthcare overhaul bill would require insurers to consider covering Christian Science prayer treatments as medical expenses. The provision was inserted by Sen. Orrin G. Hatch (R-Utah) with the support of Democratic Sens. John F. Kerry and the late Edward M. Kennedy, both of Massachusetts, home to the headquarters of the Church of Christ, Scientist.”

The following are past quotes from Sen. Kerry:

“There is a separation of church and state in America and we have prided ourselves about that all of my lifetime, all of our history.”

“I believe that I can’t legislate or transfer to another American citizen my article of faith.”

The following are past quotes from the late Sen. Kennedy:

“The separation of church and state can sometimes be frustrating for women and men of deep religious faith. They may be tempted to misuse government in order to impose a value which they cannot persuade others to accept.”

“I do not assume...that my convictions about religion should command any greater respect than any other faith in this pluralistic society.”

Though it wasn't their Catholic faith, it seems that finally Kerry and Kennedy found a religion they could publicly endorse and whose beliefs they find worthy of a federal subsidy.

“OPPOSITE-SEX MARRIAGE”?

In a piece from the October 27 edition of the *New York Times*, Adam Liptak—the*Times*' Supreme Court correspondent—referred to marriage as “opposite-sex marriage” in a piece on the battle over gay marriage. Referring to attorney Charles J. Cooper, who is pressing the case against recognition of gay marriage, Liptak wrote, “The government should be allowed to favor opposite-sex marriages, Mr. Cooper said, in order ‘to channel naturally procreative sexual activity between men and women into stable, enduring unions.’”

When two men want to get married, they call it “same-sex marriage,” but how many of us have heard of marriage being labeled “opposite-sex marriage”? Well, that's exactly the way the *New York Times* is playing it.

We did a Lexis-Nexis search and found that this occasion was only the tenth time the *New York Times* has ever used the term

“opposite-sex marriage,” and only the fifth time it appeared in a news story (some columnists and letter writers have employed it). The first time anyone appeared to have used the term was in the 1990s: an editorial in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in 1994; a *Yale Law Journal* article that same year; an article by Andrew Sullivan in 1996 in the *New Republic*; and so on. Which raises the question: Is this the start of one more round of corrupting the English language?

Here’s how it will play out in the classroom: kindergartners will be told that some adults choose same-sex marriage and some choose opposite-sex marriage. There is no moral difference—it’s just a matter of different strokes for different folks. What will not be mentioned, of course, is that some male-on-male practices are dangerous. Nor will it be pointed out that only so-called opposite-sex marriages are capable of reproducing the human race. In other words, the kids will be lied to about what nature ordains.

The politicization of language is nothing new, but this latest entry is particularly disturbing. Marriage means one thing, and attempts to make it a smorgasbord are pernicious.

BOOK FOR YOUNG GUYS

Want a gift of easy reading for a young guy this Christmas season? *All Things Guy: A Guide to Becoming a Man that Matters* by Teresa Tomeo, et al. might be just right. This short inspirational volume, the work of four committed Catholic women, asks such questions as, “Do you want to grow up to be a happy successful man?”, and, “Do you want to make something of yourself on earth and then, when your life is over, go to Heaven?”

The book is appropriate for Catholic boys aged 9 through 14. These are formative years, and in our society today, young guys need all the help they can get to keep on the straight and narrow. The temptations are many, and the right answers are harder to find.

All Things Guy contains chapters on such issues as dignity, virtue, vocations, family and friends, body, etc. Importantly, it does not talk down to readers, but neither does it equivocate on critical issues. It also has a chapter on "Strong Catholic Men," that features a short look at Tom Monaghan, Bill Donohue and Father Frank Pavone.

Donohue says of this work, "Never preachy, the book should have wide appeal to Catholic young men trying to sort out contemporary issues in a confused culture."

To order a copy go to www.BezalelBooks.com or e-mail the publishing house at BezalelBooks@gmail.com. To call, phone (248) 917-3865.

WHY DOES OBAMA LIKE KEVIN JENNINGS?

In the November issue of *Catalyst*, we noted President Barack Obama's selection of Kevin Jennings to be the Director of the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools. We noted that Jennings is a former drug user, irresponsible teen counselor and a Christian basher.

What we did not know at the time is that he is also a proud member of ACT UP, the homosexual urban terrorist group that broke into St. Patrick's Cathedral in 1989 and disrupted Mass;

the Eucharist was desecrated and obscene depictions of Cardinal O'Connor were posted.

Now an organization called MassResistance, and the website WorldNetDaily, have exposed Jennings as a member of ACT UP. And he is no mere member: Jennings is listed as a donor to a sick display, "ACT UP New York: Activism, Art, and the AIDS Crisis, 1987-1993," currently featured at the Harvard Art Museum. Harvard, of course, would never feature a display of Klan paraphernalia and say it was being done for the purpose of "dialogue."

The real story here is not the corruption of Harvard—that's old news—the real story is the president's choice of a morally challenged anti-Catholic homosexual to join his team. That Jennings belongs to, and sponsors, an urban terrorist organization, should alone disqualify him from public service at a municipal level. And remember, Obama did not choose him to monitor the environment—he was chosen to instruct youth on moral matters.

Catholics deserve to know why Obama likes Jennings.

BLOOMBERG GREASES BLACK MINISTERS

There was an article in the October 29 edition of the *New York Times* on New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and his relations with African American ministers.

Rev. Calvin O. Butts III has managed to grab "at least \$7 million in city contracts" under Bloomberg for his church and non-profits. Rev. Floyd H. Flake is awash in millions of

dollars—make that \$8 million—in city contracts for city services his church provides. But Rev. A.R. Bernard wins the trophy: the Bloomberg administration decided to sell parts of two streets to his Christian Cultural Center.

According to the article, Bloomberg “has deployed an unusual combination of city money, private philanthropy, political appointments and personal attention, creating a web of ties to black clergy members that is virtually unheard of for a white elected official in New York City.”

In return the mayor has received the endorsements and “the blessings of the city’s most powerful black ministers, who together preach to tens of thousands of congregants each week.”

Where are the church and state watchdogs when it comes to government aid to black churches? If Catholic priests had this kind of “relationship” with Bloomberg, all hell would break loose.

Once again, white liberal racism is at work: black ministers can endorse political candidates with impunity, but woe to a Catholic priest who preaches against abortion. Moreover, Catholics are still waiting for Bloomberg to say it’s okay to put a crèche in the classroom next to the menorah. We aren’t even asking the mayor to buy us a street.

VULGAR CATHOLIC HALLOWEEN COSTUMES

As usual, this Halloween season ran out the common costumes depicting Jesus, priests, nuns, ministers, rabbis, and imams, most of which were innocuous. But there were two costumes that

were vulgar, and, as usual, they were designed to offend Catholics: a priest with an erection and a pregnant nun, often sold as a pair.

Some immigrant groups were upset about an illegal alien costume, but weren't complaining it was vulgar. A mere depiction of Muhammad in a Danish cartoon that was anything but vulgar led to riots. Now imagine what would happen if we paired Muhammad sporting an erection with a Latina illegal alien? Not to worry, it's only Catholic clergy and religious that the bigots want to bash.

Spirit Halloween, owned by Spencer Gifts, carried the objectionable costumes, as did the websites of Amazon, Halloween Costume World, Annie's Costumes, Halloween Store and Halloween Express.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT IS REVEALING

Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the apostolic nuncio who leads the Holy See's Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations, recently addressed the U.N. General Assembly stating that Christians suffer more than anyone from religious freedom violations. The archbishop's address came on the eve of the 2009 U.S. State Department's International Religious Freedom Report.

In his address, Archbishop Migliore stated, "There is unfortunately no religion on the planet which is free from discrimination. Acts of intolerance, and violations of religious freedom, continue to be perpetrated in many forms." He continued, "Christians are the religious group most

discriminated against as there may well be more than 200 million of them, of different confessions, who are in situations of difficulty because of legal and cultural structures that lead to their discrimination.”

In calling on the General Assembly to revise or repeal anti-blasphemy laws—due to abuse of these laws leading to discrimination—the archbishop said, “Such laws have been used to foster injustice, sectarian violence and violence between religions,” and stated that the laws serve as “instruments of abuse.”

He also noted that there had recently been some Christian communities in Asia and the Middle East that had been attacked because they were thought to have violated anti-blasphemy laws: “Such actions were committed by extremists in response to accusations against individuals, perceived—according to anti-blasphemy laws—as being disrespectful of the beliefs of others.”

Soon after Archbishop Migliore’s address, the U.S. State Department published its International Religious Freedom Report for 2009. In that report the archbishop’s concerns were validated.

In its executive summary, the report reveals that its “primary focus is on the actions of governments, including those that contribute to religious repression or tolerate violence against religious minorities as well as those that protect and promote religious freedom.”

According to the report, there were more cases of discrimination (23) against Christians than any other religion, and in more than half of those cases the perpetrators were Muslim (not including Turkey, which is not considered a Muslim country, even though it is overwhelmingly populated by Muslims). The religion that has the second most cases of discrimination against it is Islam (16). But in these

countries, most of the discrimination is the Muslim majority in the country attacking the Muslim minority.

This is a sad commentary on religious persecution. What is most disturbing, however, is the fact that Islam, a religion whose leaders often justify oppression on the basis of the Koran, leads the way in persecuting not only Christians and Jews, but also their own people. Kudos to Archbishop Migliore for his leadership in this matter.

Findings from the Report

The report found cases of discrimination against Christians in the following countries (Muslim countries are bolded). In 12 of the 23 countries, Muslims are the perpetrators:

- **Afghanistan**
- **Azerbaijan**
- **Brunei**
- Burma
- China
- **Egypt**
- Eritrea
- India
- **Indonesia**
- **Iran**
- **Iraq**
- Israel
- Laos
- North Korea
- **Palestine**
- Russia
- **Saudi Arabia**
- **Sudan**
- Turkey
- **Uzbekistan**
- Vietnam
- Venezuela

- **Yemen**

The report found cases of discrimination against Muslims in the following countries (Muslim countries are bolded). In 11 of the 16 countries, Muslim majorities attacked the Muslim minority:

- **Afghanistan**
 - **Azerbaijan**
 - Burma
 - China
 - **Egypt**
 - Fiji
 - **Indonesia**
 - **Iran**
 - **Iraq**
 - **Palestine**
 - **Pakistan**
 - **Saudi Arabia**
 - **Somalia**
 - Tajikistan
 - Turkey
 - **Yemen**
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THE RESURRECTION AS HISTORY

Dinesh D'Souza

***Life After Death: The Evidence* By Dinesh D'Souza. Regnery Publishing, 2009. Order online at www.regnery.com or your favorite bookseller.**

Many cultures and religions affirm life after death but only one asserts that someone actually died and returned to life.

This claim is made exclusively by Christianity. No one says of Moses or Muhammad that after their deaths they were seen again in the flesh. So if the Christian claim is true, it shows not only the possibility of life after death but also legitimizes the specifically Christian understanding of the afterlife. So let's for the purpose of argument treat the resurrection as an historical claim no different from any other historical claim.

Here are the four historical facts that have to be accounted for. First, Christ was tried by his enemies, convicted, and crucified to death. Second, shortly after his burial, Christ's tomb was found to be empty. Third, many of the disciples, but also one or two skeptics, claimed to have seen Christ alive in the flesh, and interacted with him, following his death. Fourth, inspired by the belief in Christ's bodily resurrection, the disciples initiated a movement that, despite persecutions and martyrdom, converted millions of people to a new way of life based on Christ's example and his teachings. These facts are in the mainstream of modern historical scholarship. They are known with the same degree of reliability as other facts that are taken for granted about the ancient world: say the fact that Socrates taught in the marketplace of Athens, or the fact that Caesar crossed the Rubicon, or the fact that Alexander the Great won the battle of Gaugamela.

In history, we take the facts that we do know and we try to make sense of them. Historian N.T. Wright, in a mammoth study, argues that the hypothesis that Christ actually rose from the dead may sound intuitively implausible to many but it has great explanatory power. In other words, if it happened, it makes sense of all the other facts listed above. It would help us to understand why the tomb was empty, why the disciples thought they saw Christ after his death, and why this astounding realization motivated them to evangelism and strengthened them to face persecutions and martyrdom without renouncing their new convictions. Wright goes much further,

though, suggesting not merely that resurrection is a sufficient hypothesis but also that it is a necessary one. What he means is that no alternative hypothesis can explain the given facts with anything approaching the same degree of plausibility. Since skeptics have been advancing alternative theories for two thousand years, this is quite a claim. So let's briefly review some of those alternative theories.

Perhaps the most popular one, at least since the Enlightenment, is that the resurrection is a myth; the disciples made it up. "The myth of the resurrection," writes Corliss Lamont in *The Illusion of Immortality*, "is just the kind of fable that might be expected to arise in a primitive, pre-scientific society like that of the ancient Hebrews." The disciples expected that their leader would return, so they concocted the story that they saw him alive after his death.

While this is the view perhaps most widely held by skeptics today, it is actually the weakest attempt to make sense of the facts. First, as Wright shows, the idea that dead people don't come back to life is not an Enlightenment discovery. The ancient Hebrews knew that as well as we do. Second, Christ's Jewish followers did not expect him to return to life. Jews believed in bodily resurrection but not until the end of the world. The disciples were utterly amazed when they saw Christ in the flesh, and some refused at first to believe it. Third, it is one thing to make up a story and another thing to be willing to endure persecution unto death for it. Why would the disciples be ready to die for something they knew to be a lie?

A second theory is that the disciples stole the body. This theory is a very old one; in fact, it was advanced by Christ's Jewish opponents to account for the empty tomb. Jewish polemics against Christianity for two centuries continued to emphasize this theme. The theory, however, has several obstacles. Christ's tomb was barred by a stone and guarded by Roman soldiers. How could the disciples have gotten by the guards? Moreover, if the disciples stole the body, they would

know for a fact that Christ wasn't raised from the dead. We come back to the problem with the previous theory: why would the disciples' mourning turn to gladness? Why would they embark on a worldwide campaign of conversion? Why would they refuse to recant their beliefs on pain of death?

What really requires explanation here is not how the disciples stole the body but why Christ's critics would so tenaciously advance such an implausible explanation. The answer seems obvious: they had to account for the fact that the tomb was empty. The empty tomb is significant because we know that Christ's followers were proclaiming his resurrection in Jerusalem almost immediately following his death. If they were simply making this up, it would be easy to disprove their claims by producing Christ's corpse. This didn't happen, and the obvious explanation is that neither the Jews nor the Romans could do this.

A third theory holds that Christ didn't really die but was merely in a swoon or trance. In the tomb he revived, made his getaway, and then showed up before the disciples. There are two main problems with this theory. For starters, it presumes that Roman soldiers didn't know how to kill people. Typically crucifixion is death by asphyxiation, and if Roman soldiers weren't sure the victim was dead they would break his legs. Christ's legs were not broken, evidently because the soldiers were convinced he was dead. So the idea of Christ reviving in the tomb is far-fetched.

But even if he did, he would have been barely conscious, at the point of death. Imagine a man in this condition rolling back the stone, eluding the guards, and then presenting himself to his followers. Their expected reaction would be, get this man to a doctor! But this is not what happened. The disciples, disconsolate over Christ's death, did not claim to experience a wounded man in a swoon; they claimed to see a man who had triumphed over death and was fully returned to life and health. Because of its complete incongruity with the

historical evidence, even historian David Strauss, a noted skeptic about the resurrection, rejected the swoon theory.

Finally there is the hypothesis of the hallucinating disciples. We find this view defended in Gerd Ludemann's *The Resurrection of Jesus* and also in the work of John Dominic Crossan, Marcus Borg and the Jesus Seminar. Ludemann says that in the same manner that today people claim to have "visions" of the Virgin Mary, the disciples then had "visions" of a Christ returned from the dead. According to Ludemann, these visions proved contagious and "led to more visions" and eventually just about everyone was reporting Jesus sightings. The hallucination theory has gained credibility in recent years with the emergence of a substantial number of people who claim to have seen UFOs, or Elvis returned to life.

But the great problem with the hallucination hypothesis is that hallucinations are almost always private. Except in very rare cases, more than one person does not have the same hallucination. If ten people report seeing something very unlikely, it is not convincing to say they are simply dreaming or imagining things, because you then have to account for why they are all having the same dream or imagining the same thing. Historian Gary Habermas asks us to envision a group of people whose ship has sunk and who are floating around the sea in a raft. Suddenly one man points to the horizon and says, "I see a ship." Sure, he may be hallucinating, but then no one else is going to see the same ship. Now if the others on the raft also see it, forget about the hallucination theory, it's time to start yelling for help because there really is a ship out there.

Apply this reasoning to Elvis sightings and it's obvious that if several normal people say they saw Elvis in Las Vegas, they most likely didn't make it up. Probably they saw one of the many Elvis impersonators who regularly perform in night clubs and casinos. In the same way, when people report witnessing a UFO they are almost certainly not hallucinating; rather, they

did see something in the sky but didn't know what it was. The problem in most cases isn't hallucination but misidentification.

Now Christ is reported to have appeared many times to the disciples. Paul notes that on one occasion he appeared to more than 500 people. Many of these people were reportedly alive and in a position to dispute the veracity of Paul's account. James, who was a skeptic about Christ's ministry, reportedly became convinced Christ was the messiah only after seeing his resurrected body; so too the apostle Thomas, the famous doubter, was convinced of the resurrection only after he touched the wounds of Jesus. Paul himself was by his own account a persecutor of Christians until Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus. Never in history have so many diverse individuals, from different backgrounds and on different occasions, reported the same hallucination. Nor can hallucinations account for the empty tomb, or for why the Jews and Romans could settle the whole controversy by producing Jesus' body.

The remarkable conclusion is that for all their veneer of sophistication, none of the alternative theories provides a remotely satisfactory account of the historical data before us. The resurrection hypothesis, however fanciful it appears at the outset, turns out upon examination to provide the best available explanation. There is no attempt here to definitely prove the resurrection. One of the most striking discoveries of historical research is how little we know for certain about the past. What I am trying to show is that the resurrection cannot be cavalierly dismissed as religious myth. Rather, based on scholarly standards uniformly applied, the resurrection survives scrutiny and deserves to be regarded as an historical event.

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