

ANTI-CATHOLICISM MARKS NEW MAGAZINE, NOTORIOUS

The premier issue of a new magazine, *Notorious*, featured an article by Sean Bosker that described his experience of “going to confession” at four New York-area Catholic Churches. In his piece, “I Confess: Gettin’ Off Easy,” Bosker instructed non-Catholics how to engage in a mock confession. Himself a non-Catholic, Bosker detailed what it was like for him to confess to various sins—all of which involved sex—and then receive “penance” for his transgressions. He advised readers to “Remember that priests are probably as grateful for some discussion of T and A in the afternoon as anyone.”

Bosker “went to confession” at New York’s St. Brigid’s and St. Patrick’s Cathedral, as well as Blessed Sacrament in Staten Island and Our Lady of Sorrows in New Jersey.

The Catholic League’s news release was as follows:

“David Anthony, the publisher of *Notorious*, says that his magazine was conceived as a cross between *GQ* and *Playboy* on the one hand, and *Cosmopolitan* and *Vogue* on the other. He failed: it is more like a cross between the *Star* and a Jack Chick publication.

“What Bosker did puts the lie to the notion that there is a strong inverse relationship between education and prejudice. While it is true that those with high degrees of formal education tend to be less racist and less anti-Semitic than others, history shows that when anti-Catholicism is measured, those who are the doyens of the culture tend also to be the most bigoted. *Notorious* is only the latest expression of that verity, demonstrating once again why anti-Catholicism has been labeled ‘the last respectable bias.’”

HBO SHOW WON'T AIR AGAIN

The Catholic League has had an interesting relationship with HBO (Home Box Office) over the years. The bad news is that HBO airs its share of shows that are offensive to Catholics; the good news is that when we complain, they listen and make changes. Such was the case with the Denis Leary "Lock-N-Load" comedy show.

League members who saw the show called to complain. "The worst that I have ever seen." "Totally blasphemous." "Easily the most blasphemous, ranting, filthy-mouthed non-comedian I have ever heard or seen on TV." Considering what Leary did, these remarks were hardly an overreaction.

The Catholic League conveyed its thoughts to HBO: "There are simply no words to adequately describe the offensiveness of this act—from Leary's opening jokes about the crucifixion of Christ; to his flagrant determination to shock and offend by being flanked by sacred Catholic images throughout his orgy of profanity; to the closing segment in which he ridicules and caricatures priests and the sacraments, and hurls obscenities at Pope John Paul II."

What was particularly disturbing about this show was Leary's unmistakable intent: in an interview he had earlier granted to the *Las Vegas Review Journal*, Leary said he planned to use the show to defame the Catholic Church.

An HBO senior official whom William Donohue has dealt with previously responded in a professional manner. After hearing from the league, both he and the president of HBO watched the show and were also taken aback. They agreed it was outrageous and pledged not to air it again.

YALE CASE ADVANCES

The November *Catalyst* carried a story about the five Orthodox Jewish students at Yale University who objected to the sexually-charged living arrangements on campus. They were told by Yale that they could opt to live off campus only if they agreed to buy their way out: they were told to pay room and board fees of \$7,000. The students protested, objecting on religious freedom grounds to the living arrangements, and the league agreed to represent them in a friend of the court brief, if necessary.

Intransigence on the part of Yale has moved the clock forward. Catholic League board of advisor attorney, William Bentley Ball, has summoned his considerable experience and energy to join with the lead counsel for the students in representing them. We will keep you posted.

CRITICS CAN'T SAVE "NOTHING SACRED"

Never before in television history has a show been more praised by the critics and more panned by the public than "Nothing Sacred." Virtually every TV critic in the country has used superlatives to describe the show while demonstrating nothing but utter contempt for the public that refuses to like it. One gets the distinct feeling that if they had it their way, the critics would put a gun to every American's head and demand, "Watch it and Like it, or Else"!

Entertainment Weekly chose Kevin Anderson (Father Ray) as "Best New TV Actor," *Newsday* labeled "Nothing Sacred" as the best new show on TV next to "South Park," *TV Guide* picked Anderson as one of two "Best Newcomers" on the tube, the *New York Daily News* branded the show as one of the "joyous additions" of the year, *USA Today* listed it as the sixth best program of the fall season (praising ABC for "not caving into the tyranny of Nielsen ratings") and Anderson was nominated for a Golden Globe award.

Yet the last episode of "Nothing Sacred" for 1997 showed that it had dropped again in the ratings, making it one of the least viewed programs on all of TV. And although its ratings were no better than "C-16," "Over the Top," "Timecop," "Total Security" and "You Wish," ABC decided that "Nothing Sacred" must stay. Indeed, a total of 14 network shows were cancelled by year's end, making the decision to keep "Nothing Sacred" transparently political.

The bad ratings have had no effect on the scriptwriting. In the episode that aired December 18, Father Ray and two other priests assaulted police officers and state officials. Had their violence been directed at those who operate abortion clinics, instead of at immigration officials doing their job, it is a sure bet that those who liked this episode would have been highly critical. But because their violence was politically acceptable, no such howls of protest were heard. The show also included a scene whereby Father Eric pleaded with Rachel, the still unrepentant woman who had an abortion, to receive Holy Communion.

The series continues this winter and spring on Saturday nights at 8:00 p.m. It will have to rely on ABC "color checks" for commercial air time since almost all the sponsors who started with the show have bolted. There are now 34 companies that have officially withdrawn their sponsorship of "Nothing Sacred" (more if one were to count those that refuse to advertise again but don't want to be listed by the league as

having “pulled”). In addition, the U.S. Postal Service, which at first had planned on advertising on the show, decided not to after learning of the controversy.

Since the December *Catalyst* was printed, the following companies have joined the list of sponsors who have withdrawn their advertising: John Paul Mitchell Systems, Meineke, Fantom Technological Direct, A&M Products, Nissan, RadioShack and Chattem (maker of Gold Bond Foot Powder). About all that is left are ABC promos and John Denver CD's.

One final note. In a survey just released by the Pew Research Center, 71 percent of Americans report that they have never doubted the existence of God (up from 60 percent a decade ago). Too bad Disney/ABC couldn't have created a priest who was one of them.

SONY NO BALONEY

In December, a senior official at Sony called the league to say that a serious mistake had been made by their San Antonio office: it had inadvertently released, in a few parts of the country, a CD that Sony had agreed to retire, *O Come All Ye Faithful*. Readers of *Catalyst* will remember that the Catholic League threatened a boycott of Sony unless it agreed to retire the album altogether. Our objection was that proceeds of the Rock for Choice CD were going to fund the pro-abortion movement, using our sacred holiday to do so. Sony agreed to our demand over the summer.

Sony took immediate steps to block all distribution of the CD and apologized for the mishap. The league not only accepted the apology, we even advised those who were prepared to mount an offensive against Sony that it was truly a mistake and thus

required no action. We even urged a U.S. Senator's staff to drop the matter.

The league is pleased with Sony's forthrightness in dealing with the error and is most heartened by the readiness of those who are on our side to swing into action, if necessary. We feel confident that this is one CD that will never see the light of day again.

IT'S THOSE CATHOLICS!

In November, a woman was jailed in Miami for prostitution. For some reason, the news wire service, Reuters, felt compelled to note that the 39-year-old hooker was "a former Catholic high school student." Had she at one time worked for Reuters, we doubt that her former status would have been mentioned.

In December, a New Jersey newspaper, *The Press*, did a story entitled, "Former janitor at St. Raymond's in Villas gets 8 years for sex assault on 5-year-old boy." What the story didn't say was that the crimes took place after the offender left St. Raymond's (he had worked there for less than a year). Had the janitor saved the young boy's life, we doubt that his former status would have been mentioned.

Par for the course these days. For Catholics, that is.