

“ELIZABETH” IS “RESOLUTELY ANTI-CATHOLIC”

When Queen Elizabeth I, a Protestant, succeeded her Catholic half-sister Mary to the throne in 1558, England was in the midst of seething Catholic-Protestant conflict. It was spawned by her father, King Henry VIII, who broke with the Catholic Church over the pope's refusal to sanction his divorce, and persecuted those who remained faithful to Rome—ultimately beheading Thomas More.

A look at Gramercy Pictures' "Elizabeth," however, would leave one with the impression that the religious strife was all the doing of the Catholic Church. The film is "resolutely anti-Catholic," according to a *New York Times* review, complete with a "scheming pope" who sends a priest to plot against and assassinate Elizabeth.

"It does the movie dishonor that the script is needlessly, viciously anti-Catholic," Mary Kunz wrote in an otherwise glowing review in the *Buffalo News*. "Every single Catholic in the film is dark, cruel and devious. That goes for everyone, from the pope on down. The Anglicans, on the other hand, are rational and humorous, glowing with faith and common sense." While Elizabeth is portrayed as courageously following her conscience, "nothing is said about the courage and dignity of the Catholic martyrs, most notably St. Thomas More." As for Henry VIII's role in initiating the religious strife by persecuting Catholics, "The movie gets out of that with the simple phrase 'Henry VIII is dead.'"

Did all the reviewers pick up on the anti-Catholicism of the movie? No, but the progressive Catholic magazine *Commonweal* did. What's that, you say? Well, here's exactly what they said: "So is this movie anti-Catholic? Yes, but only for the sake of melodrama, not doctrine." We just

knew there would be a “but.” But (there’s that word again) at least *Commonweal* noticed there was some element of anti-Catholicism in the film, which is more than caught the eye of the U.S. Catholic Conference in its review.

“JESUS” ADS RESTORED

All the signs said were, “A gift to die for. Jesus did,” and “The gift that keeps on forgiving. Jesus.” But that was enough to have them pulled from 158 buses in San Diego.

It seems that the San Diego Metropolitan Transit Development Board (MTDB) has a policy which bars advertisement that “might be offensive to any religious, ethnic, racial or political group.” By that it is meant such things as nudity, discrimination, violence, unlawful acts, attacks on people, companies, products or institutions. Somehow the MTDB’s attorney, Jack Limber, interpreted this policy to mean that the Jesus ads had to go.

The ads were placed by Mission Valley Christian Fellowship and they received the support of many people in San Diego, including the Catholic League’s chapter officers. Gary Stahler, the league’s chapter president, along with former chapter president Carl Horst, got publicly involved in the fight to bring back the ads, and they proved to be successful. Good going.

WANT PRO-LIFERS IN CONGRESS?

Catholics who want to see more pro-life members in the House of Representatives and the Senate are urged to join the Susan B. Anthony List.

Its mission statement says that it is “organized to train and elect pro-life women candidates to federal office.” It is a non-partisan, non-profit, 501 (c) (4) venture: the organization gives to Republican, Democratic and Independent women candidates who are pro-life, and is connected to a political action committee (PAC) called the SBS List Candidate Fund.

Susan B. Anthony, who helped organize the first American women’s conference in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848, was an early feminist who branded abortion “child murder.” It is to her cause that this organization is dedicated. Founded in 1993, the Susan B. Anthony List was established to counter the influence of Emily’s List, an organization that funds pro-abortion women candidates.

Members who want more information, or would like to join, are encouraged to write to Jane Abraham, President, Susan B. Anthony List, 228 South Washington Street, Suite 105, Alexandria, Virginia 22314. You can call at (703) 683-5558 or fax them at (703) 549-5588. Catholic League officers such as Vice President Bernadette Brady and Board Member John Murnane are active in the organization.

FIEGER TAKES HIS CATHOLIC BASHING TO RADIO

Geoffrey Fieger, Dr. Kevorkian's former lawyer, has hit the radio talk-show circuit on WXYT-AM in Detroit. Having recently run an unsuccessful campaign for the Michigan gubernatorial post, Fieger railed against the Catholic Church in his show's debut on November 30. According to the *Detroit Free Press*, "Fieger said Catholic archdiocesan spokesman Ned McGrath's recent statements were enough 'to remove the tax exemption' of the church and that McGrath was 'off in Spain, training on the rack,' referring to the Spanish Inquisition."

Catholic League president William Donohue offered the following comment:

"On September 29, I wrote to candidate Fieger asking him to repudiate his remark that Jesus was 'some goofball that got nailed to a cross,' as well as his statement that Cardinal Adam Maida of Detroit was a 'nut.' On October 9, I received a letter from Stephen A. Hnat, senior policy advisor to Fieger, explaining that the 'goofball' comment was 'a deliberate distortion by the Republican Party,' and that the comment regarding Cardinal Maida 'was clarified in an interview with a television station that he [Fieger] meant no offense to Catholics and that his choice of words [sic] were insensitive.'

"It is now obvious that Fieger's previous record of Catholic bashing was never distorted by anyone and that his half-hearted apology to Cardinal Maida was dishonest. Having gotten trounced by Governor Engler, Fieger is showing his true colors once again: he has no need to run from charges of bigotry anymore—all he has to do is be himself.

"If Fieger thinks that Catholics who exercise their free

speech rights should disqualify the Catholic Church from its tax exempt status, then he should sue the Church. But he should also be prepared to meet the Catholic League in court. We'd be only too happy to teach this lawyer the meaning of the First Amendment."

To his credit, Fieger invited William Donohue to debate him on December 2, which he did. The debate proved to be a lively exchange and ended on a cordial note.

"THE SIMPSONS" GETS TOO CUTE

The Fox animated TV show, "The Simpsons," is loved by millions for its engaging characters. It was with regret, therefore, that we were forced to take issue with its November 22 episode. It was on that show that the following exchange took place while the family was driving home from a church service:

Bart: "I'm starving. Mom, can we go Catholic so we can get Communion wafers and booze?"

Mom: "No, no one is going Catholic. Three children is enough, thank you."

We asked one question of Fox: "Can you possibly explain why this dialogue was included in the show?"

We received a lengthy reply, part of which we are sharing with you. Here is what Thomas Chavez wrote, believe it or not:

"In your letter you questioned an exchange in dialogue between Bart and his mother, Marge. Because Bart is starving, he suggests they convert to Catholicism since he is aware communion wafers and wine are dispensed in the Catholic ceremony. Just like other children that are not knowledgeable,

Bart sees the wafer merely as food and wine as a forbidden drink. Because many families wait to eat after they have attended Church, it is not atypical that a child would pose a question such as this unknowingly. The writers chose not to have Marge respond to Bart's ridiculous desire to satisfy his hunger with the Sacrament but rather, elected to have Marge respond by stating why she would not be comfortable converting to Catholicism. Her views regarding birth control are obviously contrary to the Catholic Church's belief. While Marge's response may be perceived as short and curt, it also conveys the impression that one's choice of religion is based on more than the religion's rituals."

Now why didn't we think of that? Just goes to show how thoughtful the Hollywood gang really is.

DESECRATIONS

Catholic League member Rose Alfidi recently wrote to us about church desecrations in Ohio. She sent several pictures of statues, Jesus and Mary included, that have been desecrated. She interested in knowing how common a problem this is around the country. So are we. Please let us know of any such incidents in your area.

We no sooner heard from Rose when we read about some really vicious desecrations in Denver. At St. Peter's, someone used a metal pipe to punch a hole in the heart of a rare statue of the Virgin Mary, breaking the statues hands; beer was poured on the Scriptures and on a crucifix.

Whenever we hear about such matters we immediately contact the local police and inquire whether the offense is being investigated as a bias, or hate, crime. We realize that the

concept of a hate crime is controversial, but we also insist on equal application of the law.

VOUCHER FOES EXPOSE REAL AGENDA

On December 8, activists on behalf of public education met in Milwaukee to outline a 12-point action plan to protect public schools from the threat of the Milwaukee voucher program. Led by People for the American Way and the NAACP, the activists charged that private and religious schools that receive funds from the Milwaukee voucher program should be held to the same “high” standards of accountability and public reporting as the public schools.

The Catholic League made its objections public with the following statement:

“The sight of People for the American Way and the NAACP coming together to oppose choice in education for the very minorities whom they claim to represent is striking. It was not enough for them to try to rescue the collapse of the public school system in the inner cities, no, they had to establish an agenda to destroy private and religious schools as well. Make no mistake about it, the demand for ‘public reporting’ of such schools is designed to destroy the autonomy—and therefore the success—of private and religious schools. This is an example of statism at its worst.

“Perhaps the most spectacular hypocrisy of all was the venue of the lobbying: Mt. Zion Baptist Church. Now just think what these militants for strict separation of church and state would say if a pro-voucher workshop were held at a Catholic

church? We will be sure to let the IRS know of this transgression.

“The idea that private and religious schools should be held to the same standards of accountability as public schools is laughable given the embarrassing track record of the public schools. Do these activists propose that private and religious schools descend to the level of the public schools? Is that what they mean by equality? What these lobbyists have proven is that they are the genuine source of downward mobility in America today. They just don’t get it.”

WRESTLING “CRUCIFIXION” ALTERED

On Monday, December 7, on the USA Network, wrestling star “Stone Cold” Steve Austin was strapped by his wrists to a cross-like structure while Gregorian chants played and an image of a Celtic cross flashed behind him; those responsible for the “crucifixion” were associates of the “Undertaker,” another wrestling favorite.

When contacted by *TV Guide Online*, William Donohue commented, “Mocking Christ is not within the parameters of acceptable theatrics, even in professional wrestling; at this time of the year, it is particularly egregious.” Donohue then called the World Wrestling Federation (WWF) to complain.

Donohue’s exchange with an official from the WWF proved beneficial. When Donohue was told that this really wasn’t meant to be a “crucifixion”—that is was some kind of Egyptian image—Donohue replied that what mattered was what most people perceived the characterization to be, and that, he

stressed, was the image of a “crucifixion.”

Donohue was then asked if he could make any suggestions. His answer struck the WWF official as reasonable, and the recommendation was accepted. Donohue said that the controversy could be ended if the next time this happens, the “crucified” wrestler extends his hands directly over his head, instead of stretching them straight-out.

UNWORTHY OF OUR ATTENTION

It began with a phone call in November, from a public relations consultant for a “realist painter” whose work was to go on display in New York’s Forum Gallery on December 1.

It seemed that the agent was “concerned” about a painting entitled “Pieta,” featuring Mary as “a mulatto maiden in bondage (leather and rubber),” and a frontally-nude Jesus “partially wrapped in cellophane.” He wanted to “confidentially” provide the league with a press kit containing photos of the work, and get our take on it.

We looked it over and decided that it was a less than impressive work which did not merit the notoriety that our criticism would give it. Were it not for the title, we would not have recognized it as a depiction of Mary and Jesus, and even the bondage was not clearly decipherable. We chose to ignore it.

Then we began to get phone calls from *New York* magazine. They were doing a story on this art show, and, aware that we had (“confidentially”) received a press kit from the artist’s agent, wondered what we thought. When we dismissed the work as unworthy of a reaction from us, the reporter called again: If

it stirred interest and controversy, would we then comment? And again: Did our “no comment” represent a “change in policy” for the league?

The answer is no. We often make the decision that a particular production, while perhaps offensive to Catholics, is of such poor quality that it will discredit itself without any help from us. And we will not be manipulated, by those who produce such works, into providing for them the kind of notoriety which they cannot attain for themselves.

AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY JUSTIFIES BIGOTRY

This past fall, an anti-Catholic group, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, held a “wig drive” in San Francisco to benefit the American Cancer Society (ACS); over \$1300 and 100 wigs were collected to service women who have suffered hair loss as a result of breast cancer. As is customary, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence paraded as drag queens at the benefit drive, mocking Catholic nuns in the process.

The Catholic League quickly registered a complaint with the ACS. Our concern was the extension of a legitimate platform by the ACS for this anti-Catholic group. We were told that the California division would respond, which it did. Here is what Patricia Fells, CEO of the division, said in reply: “We do not judge our donors based upon their religious beliefs or sexual preferences. Because cancer impacts all communities, we draw our donors and volunteers from all religions, races and socio-economic groups. To do otherwise would be hypocritical.”

The league went public with its reply:

"The Catholic League, like the American Cancer Society, does not judge its donors based upon their religious beliefs or sexual preferences. But quite unlike the ACS, we would never knowingly take money from any group whose identity was clearly linked with bigotry against any segment of our society. That's the difference between our idea of inclusion, which holds to ethical standards, and their idea, which holds to none.

"Are we to assume that the American Cancer Society would accept donations from the 'Al Jolson Society'—a group of white men adorned with black faces who paraded stereotypically as African Americans? Not on your life. Indeed, Ms. Fells would have no problem being a first class-hypocrite by rejecting donations from such a group. But her tolerance for anti-Catholic bigotry is very different, and that is why she gladly justifies accepting funds from the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence."

Members can write to Patricia Felts, CEO, American Cancer Society, California Division, 1710 Webster Street, Oakland, California 94612.