

DISNEY ASKED TO DUMP MIRAMAX; FEUD ERUPTS WITH LAWYERS, HILLARY

The battle over “Dogma” is in full-swing. The Catholic League is in possession of the script and will soon make available a booklet that describes why the film is so offensive (it is scheduled to open in October). On June 22, at a press conference on the film, William Donohue dubbed it “Howard Stern-type humor,” filled with filthy language and irreverent situations.

The press conference, which was held at the New York Catholic Center, was very well attended by the media. It was called to formally protest “Dogma,” to reply to a threatening letter that was sent by attorneys for Bob and Harvey Weinstein (see p. 4), and to launch a petition drive asking Disney to sever all ties with the Weinsteins (see p. 9); the brothers were told by Disney in April not to release the movie under the Miramax label—it was this decision that led the duo to spend \$14 million of their own money to purchase the film.

The letter from Los Angeles attorney Dan Petrocelli pledged to hold the league responsible for any violence that might occur over the movie. Donohue immediately faxed Petrocelli the following memo: “You erroneously sent your threatening letter to 101 First Avenue. Our address is 1011 First Avenue. Please make a note of it.”

In a news release on the subject, Donohue said that “Fascistic attempts to silence us will never win.”

Donohue sent a letter to Michael Eisner at Disney asking him to dump Miramax; on June 23, in a *New York Times* op-ed page ad, the league made public its appeal to Eisner (see p. 2). A letter was also sent to Tina Brown, the former editor of

the *New Yorker* and now chief at *Talk* magazine (a new venture funded by the Weinsteins) asking her to publicly comment on the Petrocelli letter.

Finally, a letter was sent to Hillary Clinton requesting that she break her relationship with the Weinsteins, two of her best Hollywood friends that are also among the most generous donors to the Clinton Legal Expense Trust.

The First Lady was also asked to denounce “Dogma” the way she did “My Best Friend’s Wedding”; she berated the latter movie because Julia Roberts smoked too much in it. “Since anti-Catholicism is a more potent toxin than smoking,” wrote Donohue, “I ask that you now speak out against ‘Dogma.’”

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS APOLOGIZES

Father Thomas Haren walked into the Library of Congress on January 22nd and was told by a security guard that he had to remove the sweatshirt he was wearing over his Roman collar. He was informed that his sweatshirt was “political” and therefore could not be worn in the library. The sweatshirt read, “St. Jerome Church Marches for Right For Life.”

When he returned to Cleveland, Father Haren complained to the head of security for the Library of Congress. He got no response. Then he wrote to James Billington, the Librarian of the Congress, and got nowhere. Next stop was to contact his congressman, Dennis Kucinich, who, in turn, wrote a letter making plain his objections. But no one answered. Lawyers got involved after that, but they, too, got the same treatment.

Then Father Haren contacted the Catholic League.

William Donohue told the Library's general counsel that he would take this case to the courts, the media, or both. In short order, Father Haren received an apology from the Library's Director of Security.

"We agree that the Library acted inappropriately by denying you entry to the Library because you were wearing a garment with a church-related statement," said the director. "I apologize to you for the inconvenience and any embarrassment caused by this regrettable incident."

TAKING ON THE HEAVYWEIGHTS

William A. Donohue

Six years ago, on July 1, 1993, I took over as president of the Catholic League. When I began, I routinely had to explain to reporters who we were. Now we get calls, on a daily basis, from Los Angeles to London, asking for an interview. And when I read the *Los Angeles Times*, I find statements like the one of June 18: "The dispute between the powerful Catholic League and Miramax...has heated up."

Are we powerful? Not powerful enough is what I say, for if we had the power that some attribute to us we would be out of business. But the reality is that anti-Catholicism is alive and well. This is not to say, however, that we aren't having an effect. Just read the story in this issue about the Fox response to Catholic League members over "The Simpsons." Or consider what *USA Today* reported following the showing of "Dogma" at Cannes, France: "It's not Catholic people but the Catholic League that Miramax co-chief Harvey Weinstein is

concerned about"; this was said at an in-the-street impromptu news conference.

First take "The Simpsons." Over the past year, we ran several stories on how this cartoon series continues to trash Catholics. We've written letters and have listed the name and address of who to contact; we even put this on the front page of our March edition of *Catalyst*. Now look what **you've** done.

Those of you who took the time to write a letter were the ones who turned the tide. This is not my opinion, rather it is the position as expressed by Fox. They were flooded with letters, and it just got to be too much for them, so they put out the word—lay off Catholics.

I hope this convinces our letter writers that your work is not in vain. Just as important, I hope it convinces those of you who have been meaning to write a letter, but never seem to get around to it, that it is worth the time and effort to get involved. It can't be said too strongly—letters count.

The hate mail we received over the news that the Catholic League prevailed at Fox was amazing. Think about what's going on. Here we have people, plenty of them, who can't wait to express their hatred of the Catholic League, all because we pressured Fox to knock it off. What they are saying, in essence, is that we Catholics deserve all the bigotry we get. In short, they hate us.

Turning to "Dogma," the attempt by the attorneys for the Weinsteins (the lawyer who wrote to us is the Petrocelli who represented the victim's families in the O.J. civil case) was a monumental flop. It not only failed to intimidate me, it emboldened me (as always, I got splendid advice from our General Counsel, Patrick Foye). Never will anyone intimidate the Catholic League from speaking out in defense of the Catholic Church. Never. It just gets my Irish back up even more when bigots try (it drives Pat nuts, too).

One of the more curious things about the threatening-letter fiasco was its timing. On April 8, I replied to actor Ben Affleck's revealing statement that "The movie ['Dogma'] is definitely meant to push buttons." My reply was that "The Catholic League has a few buttons of its own to push, and we will not hold back."

Now why would a high-powered law firm from L.A. wait until June 15 to send me an Overnight Priority Federal Express letter about some innocuous statement I made over two months earlier? When asked by the *Boston Globe* to explain the time gap, I told the reporter that the only thing I had done about "Dogma" since April was on June 15: that was the day that the lawyers for the *New York Times* saw my op-ed ad for June 23 (they had to approve it)—the ad that appeals to Disney to dump Miramax. The threatening letter arrived in my office the next day, June 16. Curious, isn't it?

There is nothing wrong with a good clean fight. But when one fighter accuses the other of things that are patently absurd, and tries to take the fighter out by hitting below the belt, then that is a different story. That's cheating. It should go without saying that we will continue to be responsibly aggressive, even if the other side doesn't play by the rules.

Those of us who work at the Catholic League have been called more names, and have been bombarded with more hate mail, than I care to discuss. But the good news is that these filthy-mouthed bigots aren't winning. You should see all the fantastic mail we get from our supporters, men and women just like you. The number of priests, nuns, religious and lay people who support us—with prayers, praise and donations—is unbelievable. It is for you that we continue to fight the good fight.

We're taking on the heavyweights and we're winning. So please sign the petition that calls for Disney to dump Miramax. Remember, petitions, like letters, count.

LESSONS OF LITTLETON

The recent school shootings in Littleton, Colorado and Conyers, Georgia raise significant questions regarding the proper relationship between church and state.

The Catholic League made its position clear to the media and was only too willing to address this issue on national TV. We discussed the moral vacuum in the schools that has been evident over the past generation, and its implication for values and behavior. We also dealt with other concerns as the following statement to the media make clear:

“President Clinton and the First Lady went to Littleton to console the surviving families of the Columbine High School massacre. Hillary Clinton told the crowd how ‘we’ have prayed for survivors and their families. This meeting took place in Light of the World Catholic Church. Prior to going to the church, President Clinton told reporters that ‘We thank God that the injuries to the students do not seem to be life-threatening.’

“By choosing a church as their venue, and by acknowledging their reliance on prayer, the Clintons made a statement that transcends the symbolic.

They didn’t choose a public hall or a Wellness Center for their meeting. Nor did they choose a site sponsored by Wicca or some New Age religious group. But more important is this: why, if religion is what most people repair to in times of crisis, do so many of our elites treat it as if it were a communicable disease?

“In the Georgia shooting, it has been reported that at least one teacher ‘herded her students into a closet and recited

Bible verses to them.’ Will she now be fired for violating laws requiring separation of church and state? That’s what happened in New York City last June when Mildred Rosario lead her sixth-graders in prayer following the death of one of their classmates. The civil libertarian police couldn’t wait to hang her.

“What these shootings tell us is that we as a nation are clearly schizophrenic about religion. Ninety-four percent of the American people believe in God, the President and the First Lady do their counseling in a Catholic Church, almost everyone prays when they learn of lives cut short, social scientists confirm the relationship between religion and citizenship, and yet we are taught to be skittish about religion. Makes no sense to us.”

CATHOLICS—GET OUT!

Vincent and Letizia Coppola recently spent a small fortune renovating their home in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Manhattan Beach. Italian immigrants, they had a big round sculpture of Madonna and Child engraved on their second floor balcony that extends in front of their house. The stone carving drove immediately led to threatening letters from neighbors in this largely Jewish community.

The first letter was bad enough: “You have some nerve putting such an offensive symbol in your home. This is not Bensonhurst or Bay Ridge [largely Catholic neighborhoods in Brooklyn], where all of your mob friends live.” The second letter was worse: the Coppola’s were told to sell their home “to a fine, honorable Russian Jew and move back to Bensonhurst.” They were then warned that “action will be taken” if Jesus and Mary are

not removed.

Bias investigators from the Police Department went to work and so did the Catholic League. The Coppola's want to stay put, but they also don't want to be harassed. We have extended our help and will do what we can to assist them.

GINGER SPICE SHOULD BUTT OUT

Ex-Spice Girl Geri ("Ginger Spice") Halliwell landed in the Philippines in June advocating condom use and "safe sex." Saying that it was "everybody's fundamental right" to use condoms, Halliwell made her remarks on the first day of her tour as United Nations goodwill ambassador. She was criticized by officials of the Catholic Church for doing so.

The Catholic League response, which led to national TV coverage, was as follows:

"Couldn't the U.N. have chosen someone with better credentials than Ginger Spice to do their bidding? Halliwell brings to the table nothing but problems.

"In her latest solo video, 'Look at Me,' Halliwell mocks Catholicism by appearing as a nun. Now she chooses a Catholic non-white minority nation to lecture them on why the world has too many people. Why doesn't she dress as a princess and peddle her message at home?

"From Margaret Sanger to Ginger Spice, the population-control movement has been characterized by troubled persons who have an animus against Catholicism and an aversion to non-whites. That such bigotry is celebrated by the United Nations brings shame to the world body.

“Ginger should do us all a favor and butt out. Even Ted Turner has to feel cheated knowing she’s on his team.”

ANTI-ISLAMIC RHETORIC

On June 24, the Catholic League was asked by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) to join with them in condemning some disturbing statements that were directed at the Muslim community by a foreign policy analyst for the Senate Republican Policy Committee. We did not hesitate to do so.

“The Muslim Advance and American Collaboration” is the title of a piece by James George Jatras and the subject of the controversy. Published online by *The Christian Activist*, Jatras painted the Islamic religion in terms that, while historically defensible, were too sweeping and disparaging. Because of the sensitive position that Jatras holds, CAIR was troubled.

The Catholic League appreciates the support that CAIR gave us in fighting the anti-Catholic play, “Corpus Christi,” and so we were glad to return the favor in this instance; the league’s name appeared in an ad sponsored by CAIR in the *Washington Post* asking Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott to take appropriate action so that incidents like this do not happen again.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY WINS

In May, the Religious Liberty Protection Act (RLPA) sailed through the House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on the Constitution. The bill protects religious practices from governmental interference. RLPA prohibits the government from placing a substantial burden on religious practices "unless it is the least restrictive means of furthering a compelling interest such as health or safety."

The legislation was supported by more than 80 religious groups and civil rights organizations, representing all the major world religions. The Catholic League was happy to join with the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in supporting the bill.

It seemed as though everyone was in favor of this bill. But there was one exception: the ACLU. Initially, the ACLU supported the RLPA, but then it discovered that if it became law, it would protect landlords who deny lodging to unmarried couples on the basis of religious conviction. The ACLU, sensing this could hurt homosexuals, quickly reversed its position. So much for its commitment to the First Amendment guarantee of religious liberty.

ANTI-VOUCHER ACTIVISTS TURN ANTI-CATHOLIC

It never fails to happen. Whenever school voucher programs are under serious consideration, up pops dishonesty and anti-Catholicism. What recently happened in Pennsylvania is a perfect example.

In May, Governor Tom Ridge of Pennsylvania put forth two new proposals to reform education. The "Academic Recovery Act" would allow for parents who have their children in school districts that are suffering academically to opt for school choice immediately; parochial schools were listed as an option. Educational Opportunity Grants, the second part, would give considerable help to poor families and some help to middle-class families in selecting the school of their choice.

Governor Ridge's program, which was endorsed by the Catholic League, withdrew his proposal in June when it was clear that he did not have the votes to win. He pledged, however, to continue the fight for school choice. What bothered the league most was not the outcome but the way the fight was fought by the anti-choice crowd.

During the third week in May, 14 school superintendents from Bucks County signed a letter that compared the effects of school choice to the genocidal war in Kosovo. "The current war in Kosovo is a graphic example of what happens in a society that separates its people and fosters elitism," the statement said. "The democratic principles that our society must preserve if it is to flourish," the letter continued, "are weakened by voucher plans that undermine the public good, and in time, if adopted, may lead to the Balkanization of our society."

In other words, if poor parents are given the same rights as rich parents, and some send their kids to Catholic schools, it is only a matter of time before ethnic cleansing hits Pennsylvania. And remember, those who believe this are school superintendents. Is it any wonder that their schools are in such a mess?

The anti-choice insanity hit another level on June 7 when the head of the state's largest teachers union, David J. Gondak, abused his authority by telling his members to indoctrinate their students with anti-choice propaganda. He told the

Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA) to teach students that the Gov. Ridge proposal was “stealth voucher legislation” and that a “voucher scheme.”

The PSEA showed how really desperate it was by posting a photograph of Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet on its home page. In other words, if vouchers are accepted, Pennsylvania will turn fascist.

But no one stooped lower than Representative Joseph Preston, Jr. of Pittsburgh. His blatant anti-Catholicism triggered a move by the Catholic League to seek his censure by the state legislature.

On June 9, Rep. Preston said that school vouchers would enable certain religious schools to pay for the cost of lawsuits involving pedophilia. He specifically referred to “certain religions hit hard by a lot of lawsuits,” saying that “millions of dollars of certain faiths” were used to pay for court settlements.

“I don’t want to see our money to be able to go for those different lawsuits for certain people who do not act appropriately,” said Preston. When questioned about which religion he was referring to, he got angry and said he was referring to different “systems” which have made court settlements. However, it was widely understood by those at the press conference that the lawmaker was targeting the Catholic Church. And these remarks were preceded by several caustic, and inaccurate, comments about Catholicism.

The morning after Preston made these anti-Catholic statements, William Donohue called him for an explanation. He then issued the following comments to the press:

“I spoke to Rep. Preston today and found him to be rude and dishonest. When I asked him to explain himself, he accused me of being defensive about my group, thus acknowledging what everyone knows—his bigoted remarks were aimed at Catholics. He

then contended that he was referring to certain 'systems,' not religions. When I asked him to identify those systems, he could not do so.

"I am writing to every member of the Pennsylvania legislature requesting that Rep. Preston be censured for his remarks. In addition, we will do everything we can to inform the voters in his Pittsburgh district that they are represented by an anti-Catholic bigot."

Rep. Preston has since "apologized" but refuses to say to whom he is apologizing. This is why we are continuing with our effort to censure him.

Meanwhile, in neighboring New York, Senator Charles Schumer drew the league's anger over his remarks before the Spring Education Conference of the United Federation of Teachers. On May 15, Schumer told the crowd that "Those who argue that we ought to have vouchers and those who argue that the money ought to be sent to the private system—look who they are. They're not interested in educating—they're interested in proselytizing."

The Catholic League issued a news release saying that Schumer's remarks "smack of demagoguery, pure and simple." The next day he called Donohue to explain that his previous comments spoke to his fear that the Nation of Islam and the Christian Coalition would abuse a voucher program. He said he never meant to imply that Catholics would do so. Donohue accepted his interpretation but only after he expressed his own understanding.

HATE MAIL

If anyone doubts that Catholics are hated by many in this country, let them read these letters. All of them were e-mailed to us following the article by Howard Rosenberg in the Los Angeles Times reporting that Fox will no longer tolerate cheap shots at Catholics on "The Simpsons." See the article on this subject on page .

We have not corrected the spelling or the grammar of these letters. The only thing we have done is omit the full spelling of the obscenities.

How dare you. Where do you get off telling anyone what they can and cannot say. What would really make you happy a second inquisition.

I think the leagues response to the Simpsons joke represents a clear case of the denigration of Catholicism by representing Catholics as a bunch of humourless, bigoted halfwits so inept at defending their religion they have to resort to attacking cartoons. – PS I do actually believe Mary was a virgin, like all good catholic girls she used to take it up the s—.

Censorship s-- *almost* as much as Christ, but not quite.

Hi, I would like to report my anti-Catholic bias as a result of your complaints to Fox over a Simpson's episode.

Why do you folks feel it necessary to protect only catholicism on tv, radio, or in print? Do you find the jew jokes on southpark funny? Is it your job to censor other peoples rights? Make a huge announcement to all your loyal followers (occult) and tell them to not watch the show.

Well, you first pressured a network to take off the air a thoughtful portrayal of a young priest dealing with inner city issues and his own human foibles. Now, you waste your efforts

with "The Simpsons" Super Bowl spoof issue.

Anybody has as much right to insult you or ridicule your religion as you have a right to believe in Jesus Christ. Personally, I am Protestant, and the Catholic religion, at times, makes me sick.

Your group is getting quite hypocritical in its mission. You claim to be for "civil rights", but you are trampling on one of the most sacred rights of all; that of FREE SPEECH. Sadly, I must say it's people like YOU who are spreading anti-Catholic sentiment more than almost any other single group.

My complaint is against you. The arrogance and bullying you employ does more to portray Catholicism in a negative light than any of the media offenses you rail against. Those who brought us the Spanish Inquisition clearly believe that they are entitled to play censors not only for the Roman Catholic faithful, but for all the un-redeemed non-Catholics as well. I resent it.

How can you allow any other religion or group be joked about in any similar fashion... Jokes are made about Jews, Hindus, obese people, the young, the old, men, women, any and all distinct groups. But you only cry out when this little joke is made that threatens your group.

Your attack on the "Simpsons" TV program is liable to create anti-Catholic attitudes. It certainly has for me.

Can't you guys take a joke? Is your tottering empire really threatened by the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence or the Simpsons?

You people make me sick. I'm really ticked off about you guys harassing the Fox network television for the Simpsons.

For nearly fifteen hundred years the Catholic Church tried to tell people what to think. The result of that disastrous

policy can be easily seen by an endless list of suffering and ignorance that was sold as enlightenment. If the League truly believes in its message, if it truly wants to earn the respect of the populace, then it needs to get rid of these antiquated methods of creating strawmen, demonizing, and blood-to-fire lynchings.

Your decision to hound the Fox network over a very minor reference to the Catholic church is likely to generate more “anti-catholicism” as you call it.

My un-catholic friends are hurt and even down-right angry with your reactions to the situations.

You guys are nothing more than a bunch of communists...I hope you rot in the hell that you preach about all the time...

I hope all you rott in hell. People have the right to say whatever they want about Catholics...like you s—!

You arrogant fools. You really think that the world thanks you for intruding on minority groups and bullying bigger ones due to your vociferous slanging matches that would not seem out of place in a schoolyards? Here's news – NO ONE CARES. Insane groups of bigoted psychotics like you should be hunted down and shot. I make no pretense at being a nice, gleeful, happy, caring Christian, so I don't mind saying that I hate you all. You wanna find anti-Catholic stuff? Read my letter.