

# LIPTON AD WITHDRAWN AFTER PROTEST

On June 15, the Catholic League protested an ad placed by Lipton, demanding that it be withdrawn. Just a few hours later, it was.

Patrick Scully, the league's director of communications, explained the league's position to Steven Milton, the public relations director of Unilever; Unilever is the parent company of Lipton. The ad, which was published in an "alternative" weekly newspaper, *New York Press*, showed a man waiting in line for Holy Communion holding a bowl of Lipton's onion dip. The priest was shown holding up the Host to the first person on line who was about to receive.

The ad, quite obviously, suggested that the man was prepared to dunk the Host in the dip. At the corner of the ad was a picture of the Lipton "Recipe Secrets" box that featured the onion dip.

When Scully called Milton, he learned that many complaints had been lodged against the ad. But since nothing had been done about it, William Donohue decided to issue a news release. Here is what he said:

"The Lipton ad is not poking gentle fun at Catholicism the way some other ads have. Rather, it is demeaning the Eucharist. And there is nothing more central to Catholicism than the belief that the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

"Unilever is a monster: it has sales of \$46 billion—higher than the GNP of many nations—and employs an army of 300,000 persons operating in 88 countries. For the elites at Unilever to allow their ad department at Lipton to insult Catholics like this is the height of corporate arrogance. And stupidity.

“The only way to rectify this problem is to immediately withdraw the ad and discipline the offenders. We’ll give them time to work this out but one virtue the Catholic League is not known to possess is patience.”

We were happy to learn that Unilever quickly and completely issued an apology. More important, they gave us what we wanted and withdrew the ad.

“This was a test, a market test, and it was an error of judgment on our part,” said Milton. “The result is that we have some apologizing to do and we will,” he added. He concluded by saying he was assured “that the ad will not be run again.”

This is an important victory that all Catholic League members can relish.

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## SDA WINS

Readers of *Catalyst* know that we have been protesting every newspaper ad placed by the Eternal Gospel Church. The ads refer to the Catholic Church as the “Whore of Babylon” and feed every paranoid belief about the Church taking over the world. Unfortunately, those responsible for the ads claim to be part of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church when, in fact, they are a splinter group of the SDA. Fortunately, an out-of-court settlement has put an end to this deceit.

The settlement bars the Eternal Gospel Church from using the official SDA church name in its anti-Catholic ads. The agreement ends a three-year trademark battle and effectively ends the bad public relations that the SDA has unfairly received in recent years. The Catholic League is happy because

it denies the Eternal Gospel Church the kind of legitimacy it wants.

In court documents, the SDA correctly cited the Catholic League's opposition to the ads placed by the Eternal Gospel Church. The SDA did not want to be perceived as being anti-Catholic and tried to get the splinter group to stop misappropriating its name. But it took a lawsuit, launched three years ago, to get the breakaway dissenters to take the SDA protest seriously.

Meanwhile, we are protesting the decision of the *Winston-Salem Journal* and the *Tribune-Star* in Terre Haute to run the offensive ad. Even though the clout of the Eternal Gospel Church has been diminished, we will continue to hound them.

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## IS BUSH CATHOLIC?

**William A. Donohue**

In 1998, African American author Toni Morrison stunned a lot of people when she declared that Bill Clinton was "our first black president." What she meant was that many African Americans saw in President Clinton characteristics that were generally associated with being black. Though it is too early to say, there is enough reason already to wonder whether President Bush is our second Catholic president.

George W. Bush was raised Episcopalian and turned Methodist. But his Protestant roots are not as much on display these days as is his identification with Catholicism. There is no doubt that since he became president, Bush has taken up several Catholic causes and met with scores of Catholic leaders. So much so that it has angered both Evangelical Protestants (who

say he is ignoring them) and left-wing Catholics (*Commonweal* is furious with the inroads he's making with Catholics).

What's this all about? Winning, of course. Catholics hold the key to the White House: Protestants vote Republican, Jews vote Democrat and Catholics.... It's anyone's guess. Which is why it makes sense for Bush to court Catholics.

But this doesn't adequately explain Bush's attraction to Catholics. Nor does it explain the growing attraction that Catholics have for him. After all, everyone knows that Catholics are the swing vote. Yet there is no public office holder who is working harder to please Catholics than Bush. There is something else going on here beyond the prospects of winning.

Let's backtrack. During the run for the Republican nomination, George W. Bush spoke at Bob Jones University and immediately incurred the wrath of many Catholics. Including me. The school has a history stained with anti-Catholicism. Indeed, while the school has since abandoned its racist policies, nothing has changed regarding its anti-Catholicism. The pope is still the "Anti-Christ," the Church is still the "Whore of Babylon" and Catholicism is still a "satanic cult."

Bush got beaten up pretty badly for his appearance at Bob Jones. When he released his apology to Catholics, I appeared on the "Today" show to discuss the issue with Matt Lauer. Having no reason to doubt Bush's sincerity, I had no problem saying the controversy was over. Catholics, I said, understand what repentance and forgiveness are all about. So when Senator John McCain sought to exploit this issue, I quickly condemned him for doing so.

The night Bush gave his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention, I had an opportunity to be there in a special skybox. I declined the invitation. While I have no

problem meeting with any politician for policy reasons, or to join him at some honorary event, I put the brakes on when the occasion has the appearance of an endorsement.

It should be noted that when Clinton was in office, and the White House asked me to attend a meeting on religion and public policy that the president was holding, I gladly went. But I would not have attended a fundraiser for Clinton and I would never attend one for Bush.

That's partly because I'm an independent. I began as a Democrat, then quit and became a Republican, then quit and became an independent; I have no plans to return to either party. But it's also because I don't want Republicans or Democrats thinking that they've got the Catholic League in their pocket. Look what happened to the Christian Coalition—they became the Protestant arm of the Republican Party and now they're toast.

Back to Bush. Being that I'm an Irish Catholic, it made sense for the Bush administration to invite me to a St. Patrick's Day reception in the White House. I couldn't make it for personal reasons but wouldn't have gone if I could have. The White House made the foolish mistake of inviting the biggest Catholic basher in the world, Ian Paisley, to the event. I quickly blasted Bush for allowing this to happen.

My ups and downs with Bush continued recently when I was asked to fly on Air Force One with the president to South Bend, Indiana. Bush wanted some prominent Catholics to be there with him when he gave the commencement address at the University of Notre Dame. I happily accepted. His speech was a knockout. By the way, so is that plane.

So is Bush Catholic? His Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives is modeled after Catholic Charities. The speech he gave when he dedicated the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington was profoundly Catholic. His attempt to embrace

all Catholics, whether their issue is pro-life or social justice, is evident and on going. Ditto his commitment to Hispanics, a Catholic group too often ignored.

As I said, there is something else going on here beyond vote getting. Bush is focused on matters Catholic in a way that John F. Kennedy never was. That may not make him a Catholic, but it sure looks like he's coming our way.

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## THE BATTLE OVER THE CRUSADES

By Robert P. Lockwood

Mention the Crusades and the assumption is of a ruthless Church driving Europe into a barbaric war of aggression and plunder against a peaceful Islamic population in the Holy Land. As the common portrait paints it, led by mad preachers and manipulating power-hungry popes, the Crusades were a Church-sponsored invasion and slaughter that descended into a massacre at Jerusalem, the sack of Constantinople and the persecution of European Jews.

The Crusades, of course, are a far more complicated series of events in history than these anti-Catholic assumptions. Narrowly and traditionally defined, the Crusades involved a military attempt under a vow of faith to regain the Holy Land – containing the sites of the Gospel accounts of the life of Jesus – from its Islamic conquerors.

This papal purpose, however, would become caught up in dynastic feuds, schism and heresies, economic warfare over Mediterranean trade, the reunification and rise of an aggressive Islamic military movement, and the final destruction of the Eastern Roman Empire.

Jerusalem had been captured from the Byzantine Empire in 638 by Islamic forces just six years after the death of the prophet Mohammed. It was part of an aggressive military campaign that would seize Syria, North Africa and Spain from the old Roman Empire now based in Constantinople.

At the same time, differences within the Church as it developed in the East and West became more pronounced over the centuries. The Eastern Church resented the juridical authority of Rome. Thorny theological issues would divide the Church in the East far more than the West. Schisms and heresies would breakdown the unity of the Church in the East even before the major break between East and West in the schism of 1054.

The invasion of the Byzantine Empire by the Islamic Seljuk Turks in the 11th Century was the direct cause of the First Crusade. Imperial forces were destroyed at the battle of Manzikert in 1071. Ten years later, Alexius Comnenus would assume the imperial throne when it appeared that the entire Empire was on the verge of collapse. He quickly developed a cordial relationship with Pope Urban II who held a council of the Church in 1095 in which representatives of the Empire were in attendance. In desperate need of soldiers, they begged for assistance from the West to hold off the Seljuk advance. In November 1095 at a Church council in Clermont, France, Pope Urban II issued the formal call for a Crusade to rescue eastern Christendom and recover the Holy Land to make it safe for pilgrimage.

Why did Urban support the idea of a Crusade to the Holy Land and put the weight of the Church behind it? Clearly, the return of the Holy Land and the defense of the Christian communities in the Near East were the first objectives. But there were additional concerns. There was the clear threat of the Seljuks. If Constantinople fell, all Eastern Europe would be wide open to Islamic advance. Additionally, the pope certainly believed that allying with Constantinople could heal the disunity of Christianity caused by the schism of 1054.

But even more was involved. Urban was of the line of the great reforming popes that had greeted the new millennium and would continue through the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. Led by a strong papacy, the goal was to sanctify the world through a combination of the Church's need to reform its institutional life free from control by secular lords, and to build a Christian society. The defense and unity of this goal of a new Christendom was at stake.

An additional part of this reformation of Christian life was to somehow end, or deter, the incessant warfare that plagued the European community. The incessant Christian slaughter of Christians had led to the "truce of God" movement in the 11th Century as part of the general attempt at creating this new Christendom. While it seems contradictory to encourage a Crusade in the interest of peace, there was certainly the papal hope that turning the incessant warring fervor outward to defend Christendom was greater than the continuing scandal of Christians slaughtering Christians.

There were other forces at work in the Crusades, however, that would negatively impact both the image and the results of the Crusades. The Frankish lords taking part in the First Crusade viewed it as an opportunity for conquest and new lands to rule. At the same time, the Emperor Alexius in Constantinople viewed the Crusaders as recapturing land for the Empire. These contrary expectations would increase the bad blood between East and West. In the Holy Land itself, various Islamic dynasties would see the crusaders as much as potential allies than enemies. The "kingdoms" established after the First Crusade would be caught up in the regional power disputes of the Islamic leaders, as well as their own dynastic ambitions. And finally, there was the ambition of the Italian cities to extend their rising commercial power. They saw the Crusades as an opportunity to dominate trade in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Three events of the Crusades are most commonly used as a club



against the Church: the anti-Jewish riots in the Rhineland of Germany and the massacre at Jerusalem in the First Crusade; and the sack of Constantinople in the Fourth Crusade.

Shortly after the call for a Crusade, mobs of the poor began to assemble and “march” toward Constantinople. In the Rhineland these disparate mobs of peasants and townsfolk began to launch attacks on the Jews. Throughout the Rhineland, however, the Church became the sole protector of the Jews in the face of these mobs. At Worms, the bishop opened up his home to protect the Jewish community, but the mobs broke in and slaughtered them. As the rag-tag army approached Cologne, Jews were hidden in Christian homes and the archbishop was able to protect most of them. At Trier, most of the Jewish community was protected in the archbishop’s palace. Eventually, these peasant armies were destroyed – by Christians and Turks – and most of western Christendom viewed it as just penalty for their anti-Jewish atrocities. When the Second Crusade was preached, St. Bernard of Clairvaux went to the Rhineland to stamp out anti-Jewish riots, and they effectively ceased as part of the crusading movement.

The First Crusade with papal blessing was made up of four Frankish armies that assembled at Constantinople. It successfully took advantage of Islamic Arab disunity and, on July 15, 1099, the Crusaders took Jerusalem. The papal legate, however, had died. Without his restraint, the crusading army – reduced to about 12,000 – stormed the walls and engaged in a horrific slaughter of the Islamic and Jewish population. .

The Crusaders essentially held four areas in the Holy Land – Jerusalem, Antioch, Edessa and Tripoli. They had only small numbers to defend themselves and would need to rely on western military aid to survive. After first seeing the Crusaders as possibly useful allies in their internecine conflicts, the Islamic world in the Near East became more unified in its resistance. In 1144, Edessa was retaken. A Second Crusade failed and in 1169, Saladin came to power in Egypt and in 1187

Jerusalem was retaken. Tyre, Antioch and Tripoli remained as the only Christian-held outposts.

The Third Crusade in response to Saladin's successes was launched and would create much of the romantic legends and myths that surround the Crusades. Richard the Lion Heart of England would engage Saladin in a ritual of attacks and counterattacks, as well as chivalrous courtesies. While he succeeded in the siege of Acre and securing the port of Jaffa, Richard was unable to retake Jerusalem and left the Holy Land in 1192, ending the Third Crusade.

The Fourth Crusade began as a fundamental part of the reforming zeal of Pope Innocent III. He negotiated with the Emperor Alexius III, who had ascended the imperial throne in 1195 after overthrowing his brother, for a healing of the schism and a joint effort to retake the Holy Land. But under the machinations of the Doge of Venice, Enrico Dandolo, the Crusade was taken from papal hands and turned toward Venetian goals. An attack was launched for control of Dalmatia and a horrified pope condemned this betrayal of crusading goals. The armies then turned toward Constantinople where, in league with the son of the deposed Byzantine emperor, a revolution was hatched to secure Constantinople as a Venetian puppet. When the citizens of Constantinople rejected the young pretender and refused to pay-off the Crusaders, the city was attacked. It was virtually destroyed, its art works stolen or destroyed, its citizenry ruthlessly murdered. A Western Empire was set up that would last just a short time and Innocent, seeing in it the hope of reunification of Christendom, finally accepted it. But the attack on Constantinople was never planned or ordered by the Church.

The sack of Constantinople ended the Fourth Crusade and effectively determined that the Crusades would not succeed in its original purpose. The empire would not recover and in 1453 the Turks would capture Constantinople, kill the emperor, and end the Byzantine Empire. The Church was not reunified, as the

Greeks would never forgive the West for the atrocities at Constantinople. The schism of 1054 would become permanent. Other crusades followed, but by 1291 the Latin kingdom in the Holy Land came to an end.

Though initiated at the request of the Byzantine emperors and by the dream of successive popes for a safe Holy Land and a united Christendom, the Crusades and the crusaders were never controlled by the Church. Even the First Crusade, though inspired by lofty ideals, essentially became a means for Frankish knights to recreate small feudal kingdoms in a backwater of the Islamic empire. The negative results of the Crusades are clear in the sack of Constantinople and the hardening of the divisions in Christendom between East and West. But to point to the Crusades as a symbol of a power-crazed Church engaging in slaughter to pursue its own nefarious ends is to misunderstand history and simply to look for an excuse for contemporary bigotry.

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## SHOWTIME BOYCOTT UNDERWAY

In the last edition of *Catalyst*, we ran the entire ad that appeared in *Variety* asking Viacom CEO Sumner Redstone to join with us in condemning Showtime for producing the anti-Catholic movie, "Sister Mary Explains It All" (Showtime is owned by Viacom). Showtime issued a lame statement simply saying they do not believe in promoting intolerance. As a result, we are calling for a boycott of Showtime.

It is important that all Catholic League members who subscribe to Showtime drop their subscription and join our boycott. Those who do not get Showtime are urged to write to Redstone and let him know what you think of his passivity. You can do

so by writing to Sumner Redstone, CEO Viacom, 1515 Broadway,  
New York, New York 10036.

Below is a list of the organizations that have joined our  
boycott of Showtime:

Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Alliance Defense Fund  
Phoenix, Arizona

American Catholic Lawyers Association  
Ramsey, New Jersey

Americans United for the Pope  
Massapequa, New York

Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation  
St. Louis, Missouri

Catholic Coalition of Westchester  
Yonkers, New York

Catholic Central Union  
St. Louis, Missouri

Catholic Defense League  
St. Paul, Minnesota

Catholic War Veterans  
New York, New York

Catholics United for the Faith  
Steubenville, Ohio

Family Defense Council  
Jamaica, New York

Jews for Morality  
Brooklyn, New York

Maple Ridge Bruderhof  
Ulster Park, New York

Parents Television Council  
Los Angeles, California

Polish American Congress  
Brooklyn, New York

Pro-Life Action League  
Chicago, Illinois

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# **MEDIA BIAS AT CNN AND SALON.COM**

Media bias is an issue we track closely. Overall, the Catholic League sees much about media coverage of the Catholic Church that is admirable. But it is also true that bias against the Church is more pronounced in the media than just about any other prejudice. Some clear examples of the problem recently caused us to issue a press release.

We noticed that in one week there were 231 stories on accused spy Robert Hanssen. Only one U.S. media source, CNN, made mention of his religion; he was dubbed “a devout Catholic” on May 31 on “CNN Live At Daybreak.”

Then there was the incredible story of African Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo marrying a South Korean woman in a group ceremony arranged by Reverend Sun Myung Moon. Only one television network, CNN, made a circus of the story. On May

30, CNN legal analyst Greta Van Susteren interviewed George Stallings about the bizarre incident.

Stallings, an African American and former priest, was excommunicated in 1989 when he broke away from the Catholic Church. In her introductory remarks, Van Susteren said, "If there's one thing the Catholic Church doesn't like, it's a loose cannon...." She then opined, "There were no 'best wishes' from the Vatican."

On June 1, the AP reported a story entitled "Catholic League Accused of Racism." The story concerned a Catholic athletic league in Chicago that denied entry to a black Catholic grammar school, citing safety reasons. When we called AP noting that some people might infer from the headline that it was the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights that was accused of racism, our concern was acknowledged and the title was quickly changed to "Catholic Athletic League Accused."

That, however, didn't stop the online magazine, Salon.com, from listing "Catholic League charged with racism" on its "From the wires" segment. We found it curious that this story was listed by Salon, even though other stories from the wire that appeared at the same time AP posted this story were not. Moreover, AP did not list the story under its "Top Stories" page but instead listed it under "U.S." Thus, Salon deliberately gave the story a prominence that AP did not.

Our comment to the media was as follows: "Kudos to AP for acting responsibly. As for CNN and Salon.com, it's no wonder both are tanking: ideology is driving them mad. Finally, Greta ought to know something about 'loose cannons.' Ted Turner founded CNN."

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# ATTACK ON “ABSTINENCE-ONLY” SEX ED IS FLAWED

On June 12, those opposed to congressional reauthorization of federal funding for abstinence-only sex education held a press conference in Washington, D.C. The coalition of 35 national organizations released a statement decrying abstinence-only programs. Two major arguments were made: funding of such programs amounts to censorship and is an affront to the principle of separation of church and state.

The Catholic League took strong objection to this position and in particular was troubled by the flawed church-state argument. “Those organizations that are opposed to abstinence-only sex education are, predictably, those who reject traditional moral values,” we said. To be specific, we cited anti-Catholic groups like Catholics for a Free Choice and the sexperts at the Sexuality Information & Education Council of the United States (SIECUS).

Along with the ACLU, People for the American Way, NARAL and Planned Parenthood, this motley crew of well-heeled activists has long been at odds with the ethic of moral restraint that undergirds abstinence-only education. And in the case of many of these groups, they have a vested financial interest in the effects of promiscuity.

“If it is censorship to provide federal monies for abstinence-only sex education,” we maintained, “then it is also censorship to allow public funding of Planned Parenthood: this group spends tens of millions of taxpayer dollars in programs that reject abstinence-only.”

We are especially incensed by the dishonesty that marked this coalition. The position that says abstinence-only programs should be banned because they violate the principle of

separation of church and state is one that implodes. As we pointed out, the Unitarian Universalist Association and the United Church of Christ were among the 35 organizations that made up the anti-abstinence coalition. “Ergo,” we contended, “according to the logic of the coalition, the presence of these two religious bodies signals the imposition of a religious view on the public.”

Finally, the evidence shows that abstinence-only programs like True Love Waits, Sex Respect and Best Friends work best of all. The ones favored by the likes of SIECUS are not as successful.

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## **COURT RULES ON RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IN THE SCHOOLS**

Every spring there are rulings from the bench that touch on serious matters of religious liberty. This past spring was no exception. Perhaps the most important decisions this time centered on issues affecting the rights of students. Most of the outcomes were encouraging.

In May, a federal appeals court ruled once again that public school students have the right to choose a fellow classmate to give a prayer at a high school graduation; the case involved Duval County in Florida. The ruling made it clear that school officials have no control over the selection of who is to speak or what the speaker says.

Last spring, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that student-led prayers at public school football games in Santa Fe, Texas, were unconstitutional because they were officially sanctioned. But on May 24, 2001, the 11th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals



said the Florida and Texas cases were “fundamentally different.”

In the Texas case last year, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected student-led prayers before a public high school football game because it reflected the official policy of a school district. The policy not only allowed students to vote in favor of a prayer before the games, it provided measures to supervise the vote. The result of all this, the high court ruled, was to effectively put the school district on record as endorsing religion. The situation in the Florida case, however, was more of a straight free speech issue.

“It is well known,” we said in a news release, “that the same radical civil libertarian and separation of church and state extremists who maintain that it is constitutionally protected speech to allow a student to use obscenities in a valedictorian address are the same ones howling for censorship whenever a prayer is cited in public.” These extremists, we commented, “want to deny students the right to invoke the name of God at a graduation ceremony but would defend to the hilt the right of students to curse God before the same crowd. That, they would say, is free speech.”

The issue of student-initiated prayers came up again in June. On June 18, the U.S. Supreme Court let stand an Alabama law allowing group prayers at football games and other school functions. Walter Weber, senior litigation counsel for the American Center for Law and Justice, was the attorney most responsible for the win.

“By not taking this case,” Weber said, “the Supreme Court has let stand an important federal precedent.” He explained that in this case, “the federal appeals court ruled that student-led and student-initiated prayer and other religious speech is still constitutionally protected in this country.” Weber, who also serves on the board of advisors of the Catholic League, dubbed the ruling “a critical victory for free speech and for

religious liberty.”

Can religious groups meet after school hours in public schools? In a 6-3 ruling in *Good News Club v. Milford Central Schools*, the U.S. Supreme Court declared that it was discriminatory to ban a Christian club from meeting after school hours simply because the club was religious in nature. Writing for the majority, Justice Clarence Thomas argued that to deny the religious club the right to meet constituted “viewpoint discrimination” and therefore violated the First Amendment principle of free speech.

The Catholic League was delighted with this decision. The club, we hastened to say, is entirely voluntary. Indeed, those opposed to the club are free not to join. But they have no right to impose their secular agenda on students. “If students can meet to discuss atheism,” we said to the media, “then surely they can meet to discuss Christianity.” We also mentioned that, “The losing side in this battle is made up of those who are driven more by an animus toward the public expression of religion than by any alleged fidelity to the Constitution.”

On the heels of the *Good News Club* case came another key ruling on an almost identical issue. On June 19, the U.S. Supreme Court ordered the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to reconsider its ruling upholding a school board policy barring religious groups from holding services on school property after school hours. The case involved the Louisiana Christian Coalition’s quest to meet after school on school grounds.

The lone loss for religious liberty came when the high court said it would not accept a challenge to a lower court decision that said it was okay for a public school teacher to forbid a first grade student from reading a Bible story in class. Asked by his teacher to read his favorite story to the class, Zachary Hood from Medford, New Jersey, chose a story from *The Beginner’s Bible*. That was his mistake. The teacher abruptly

censored little Zach's speech and now he's lost in the courts as well. Anyone want to bet the teacher is a flaming civil libertarian?

The Catholic League is not unaware that there are some religious zealots who would use the schools for their own sectarian purposes. But the greater danger these days comes not from religious militants but secular militants.

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## **ABC ASKED TO SEVER LINK WITH BELIEFNET**

In June, ABC News said it would be dropping its religion correspondent, Peggy Wehmeyer. Wehmeyer was the first, and only, full-time religion correspondent in network television; she will be let go in October due to budget cuts. As a substitute, ABC said it would establish a new partnership with Beliefnet, an Internet site that focuses on religion.

We were aware of Beliefnet but didn't know too much about it. Given its prospective prominence with ABC, we decided to do a little investigating. What we found was disconcerting.

Beliefnet advertises itself as "an unbiased environment for high-quality information, inspiration, and interaction" about religion and spirituality. But even a cursory look at Beliefnet reveals that its approach to Catholicism is baiting at best and bigoted at worst.

There is a section on Beliefnet that poses questions about the major world religions. Questions posed to Muslims and Jews are mostly objective in nature and designed to elicit important sociological information. Questions posed to Catholics are

different. Invitations to dissent from Catholic teachings, especially on matters dealing with women and sexuality, are rampant; Muslims and Jews are not offered opportunities to be dissidents.

Some questions and answers are downright insulting, e.g., one of the possible responses to a question on what Catholics think about priestly celibacy is, "It's a perverted concept that stands in the way of healthy sexuality—no wonder so many priests are pederasts." Here's another example: both rabbis and Catholic bishops wear skullcaps, known, respectively, as a yarmulke and a zucchetto. Beliefnet, however, poses questions like, "Why does the Pope wear a beanie?" and "Why do Jews wear head coverings?"

There is a "Discussion" section on Catholicism that not only asks many politically-charged questions on women in Catholicism, it specifically invites non-Catholics to participate as guests. But the same section on Jews is not only respectful of Judaism, it specifically says that it is open only to Jews. Many other such examples could be given.

William Donohue had agreed to meet with the president of Beliefnet and another official to discuss his concerns.

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## MUSEUM MESS

The May *Catalyst* featured a story on the controversy over an offensive photo collage of Our Lady of Guadalupe on display at the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The issue has largely been resolved. The outcome is a mess for both sides.

The usual chorus of artistic liberty was sung by the free

speech crowd. They defended the artwork, "Our Lady," even though it showed the popular saint wearing nothing but a rose-petal bikini. On the other side were good Catholics, most of whom were Hispanic. Their protest was vigorous, non-violent and reasonable in demand.

After much discussion and fanfare, a decision was reached by the museum's Committee on Sensitive Materials that the artwork would remain until October 28. The free thinkers were happy that the art would stay but unhappy that it would be withdrawn four months earlier than expected. Catholics who objected were happy that they did not have to endure this inequity in December, the month of Guadalupe celebrations and Christmas, but were unhappy that it wasn't pulled altogether.

The Catholic League drew public attention to the inconsistencies that were evident in the museum's guidelines and in the decision to display "Our Lady." We congratulate all the Catholics in Santa Fe who protested this art and extend our heartfelt gratitude to Archbishop Michael Sheehan and museum official Frank Ortiz for leading the fight.

While our side didn't get exactly what we wanted, we wouldn't have gotten anything had we laid down and died. Perhaps most important, had our side been passive, it's a sure bet that things would have gotten worse. Now, at least, the other side knows that if they strike again, our side is ready and able to do battle.