

MESSAGE RECEIVED

We were beginning to wonder whether the *Star-Telegram* was ever going to get the message. But, happily, they have. We finally have good reason to believe that the Fort Worth, Texas, newspaper will not be insulting Catholics any time too soon. Here's what happened.

Like a lot of newspapers, the *Star-Telegram* likes to run snappy little quotes on various subjects from time to time. On May 12, it ran the following crack by feminist author Erica Jong: "Every country gets the circus it deserves. Spain gets bullfights. Italy gets the Catholic Church. America gets Hollywood." Lest someone think the newspaper wasn't endorsing Jong's views, consider that the quote was introduced with the comment, "Words we like, with quote marks."

The *Star-Telegram* heard what we had to say about the matter because they published a letter by our own Louis Giovino. After noting the endorsement, he said, "I can guarantee that you would never publish a quote that was anti-Semitic or racist or homophobic." He concluded by saying, "But then again, your paper makes it clear that you 'like' anti-Catholicism."

We were pleased they ran Lou's letter, thinking that perhaps they got the message. We were wrong. On June 3, under a "Memorable Quotes" banner, they printed a quip made by Bill Maher on his TV show, "Politically Incorrect." Here's the remark: "Pope John Paul today confirmed his opposition to gay marriage. Said they were unnatural. Then he put on a pointy hat, his dress, and returned to never having sex at all."

This time William Donohue decided to unload. After noting that the *Star-Telegram* had printed Giovino's letter, and then noting that the Maher quote was subsequently chosen for publication, Donohue said:

“I have just one question: don’t you have any racist, anti-Semitic or gay bashing quotes you can flag? Since you are obviously not offended by bigotry, I think it is only fair that you take a swipe at blacks, Jews and homosexuals. That way you could preserve your reputation as an advocate of equal opportunity.”

Looks like that one got their goat. David House of the newspaper e-mailed a letter to Donohue saying that he was “working on the problem created by the quotes that were published coincidentally on May 12 and June 3.” Saying, “We take this matter very seriously and want to give it due consideration,” House assured Donohue that the *Star-Telegram* was “no advocate of bigotry.” He said he was a practicing Catholic who loves the Church.

Donohue commended House for his fair and quick response. Message received.

THE ACLU’S IDEA OF FREE SPEECH

One of the problems with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is that it tends to get over-heated on a regular basis. This is especially the case when the subject turns to the public expression of religion.

Few doubt that the Ten Commandments historically symbolize the roots of American culture, but that hasn’t stopped the ACLU from trying to uproot our heritage. Which is why it filed suit this past spring in Kentucky’s Pulaski and McCreary counties for allowing the dreaded monument to be placed on public property. The civil libertarians also sued Kentucky’s Harlan

school district for the same alleged offense.

In a demonstration of its national scope, the ACLU sued over the same issue in Denver, Colorado; Plattsmouth, Nebraska; and Elkhart, Indiana. The latter lawsuit made the biggest headlines when the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal of a lower-court ruling barring the public display of the Ten Commandments.

The Mojave National Preserve in San Bernardino County, California, is home to a large cross. The ACLU has sued to get it removed. The legend of the state flag in Nashville, Tennessee, is "In God We Trust." The ACLU has sued to get it removed. There is a chapel in Cumberland High School in Harlan County, Kentucky. The ACLU has sued to get it removed.

When school officials at Washington Community High School in Chicago said they would allow an invocation and benediction at the graduation ceremony, the ACLU stepped and asked that it be cancelled.

But the ACLU did not find it objectionable for a Cumberland High School student in Rhode Island to record a sexually explicit song about a teacher that he posted on Napster. That is why they defended the kid when he was suspended for 10 days.

At Virginia Military Institute they have a tradition of offering a blessing before dinner. The ACLU doesn't like this tradition and so it has sued. State officials in Indiana have on occasion given proceeds from the state lottery to religious groups. Among the groups that have received funding is the Marion Indiana Easter Pageant. Because it hosts a pageant depicting the death and resurrection of Christ, the ACLU has sued.

Meanwhile, the ACLU's chapter in Hawaii made quite a spectacle of itself—even embarrassing the national office—when it voted to disallow a debate between ACLU president Nadine Strossen

and U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. Thomas was called “an anti-Christ” and a “Hitler.” Ergo, he has no right to speak.

So this is what the ACLU means by free speech.

BBC BASHES CATHOLICS IN “A LOVE DIVIDED”

“A Love Divided” is another BBC-produced movie that we didn’t appreciate. It is based on an allegedly true story about a Protestant woman, married to a Catholic, who brings her children up Protestant in Ireland in the 1950s after pledging to bring them up Catholic. As the story goes, when a local priest objects, the woman flees to Northern Ireland. Irish bishops then join a boycott of all Protestant goods and services and a national uproar follows.

Catholic League researcher Louis Giovino saw the film in New York when it opened in select theaters. “Cruel caricatures of the Catholic clergy abound,” he said. The first caricature is of “an arrogant bishop,” followed by “a demagogic priest.” Giovino agreed with Stephen Whitney of the Newark *Star-Ledger* who said, “it rather strenuously portrays the Catholic Church and the Republic of Ireland as a haven for bigots and bullies.”

Giovino told the press that “The film portrays Catholics as being anti-intellectual.” He drew attention to the part where “the wife tells her husband to ‘think for himself’ instead of listening to the priest.” Not unexpectedly, Giovino offered, “The priest is portrayed as a figure who has complete control over the minds of people.” In the end, he said, the movie

“portrays the Catholic Church as small-minded and the Irish as a bunch of bigots.”

This didn't sit too well with William Donohue. In a news release on the subject, he opined, “I await a movie produced by the BBC about the life of Oliver Cromwell and how he ‘interacted’ with the Irish.” Donohue said that in the meantime it was important to note that the producer of the film, Gerry Gregg, has been described by the *Sunday Business Post* as having produced documentaries which “have dumped on Sinn Fein or the Catholic Church, or both.”

For example, Donohue said, “Gregg is on record for saying that Ireland is a ‘corrupt, hypocritical, inegalitarian society.’” Using sarcasm to make his point, Donohue observed that Gregg's base point of reference was “his gentlemanly England: his home still outlaws marriage between its splendidly egalitarian princes and lowly Catholics.” Donohue also commented that the actress who plays the victimized wife, Orla Brady, had previously charged that the pope is “a voice for evil.”

When Mel Gibson's “Braveheart” and “The Patriot” were released in England, Donohue said, “the WASPS went mad.” Indeed, after “Braveheart” was released, there reportedly was an outbreak of anti-English prejudice in Scotland.

“Fortunately,” Donohue remarked, “America is more civilized which is why the Catholic League does not expect an outbreak of anti-Catholicism in the U.S. now that the anti-Catholic film, ‘A Love Divided,’ has been released.”

The only good news is that the film didn't make it to most theaters. Indeed, less than 10 people were at the first showing in the lone New York theater that showed it. We know this because Lou got stuck with this assignment.

BERRY REPLIES

In the May *Catalyst*, we ran a short piece citing William Donohue's criticism of author Jason Berry. The article, "Put Up or Shut Up," took Berry to task for saying, "Theologians who question ancient church teachings on sexuality are routinely forced into silence." Donohue then publicly challenged Berry to identify who these people are.

Berry got back to Donohue naming three theologians and a few other prominent Catholics who were disciplined by the Vatican for their views. Unfortunately, when Berry was asked to shorten his response for *Catalyst*, he was unable to do so because of other commitments.

Donohue addressed this issue as follows: "From Jason Berry's correspondence, I feel confident that he is a loyal son of the Church. But I also think he overextends himself by making sweeping generalizations."

"The fact of the matter is," Donohue said, "the Catholic Church allows more dissent than currently exists among reporters at major newspapers." He cited the recent case of the 36 persons who were fired from the New York *Daily News*. As they were being kicked out, they were told not to violate the gag order that exists in their severance document. It reads, "The individual has not and will not in any way disparage, discredit, defame or belittle the company, its employees and practices."

This clause was rescinded when it was made public, but the fact remains that if the Vatican ever had something like this in a theologian's contract, accusations of an inquisition would follow. That is why Donohue differs with Berry. As

important as anything, however, is the recognition that neither Donohue nor Berry wants anyone to think that they are trying to impugn the character of the other. This is just an honest disagreement.

SPIN DOCTORS DEFEND “CORPUS CHRISTI”

Readers of *Catalyst* are aware that over the past few months we have protested the anti-Catholic play, “Corpus Christi.” The Terrence McNally play, which opened Off-Broadway in New York in 1998 (and never made it to Broadway because it was so bad), was recently performed at Florida Atlantic University (FAU) and is scheduled to be performed at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW) in August. In both instances, those who defended the play proved themselves to be the ultimate spin doctors.

Richard Gamble is a professor at FAU. Acting like a schoolboy who was beaten up in the playground, he lashed out at William Donohue in the pages of the *Florida Catholic*. Donohue’s response was also published in the Catholic newspaper.

Gamble began his tirade by referring to the Catholic League as the “so-called Catholic League.” Donohue’s riposte was to say, “What his point is, God only knows, but then again I do not teach at the so-called Florida Atlantic University.”

More important, Gamble charged that Donohue told “a lie” by saying that the play depicts Christ having sex with the 12 apostles. “Nowhere in this play does the Jesus character (‘Joshua’) have sex with any disciple, nor is this play even about sex.” Donohue dubbed this a “remarkable conclusion.” The

fact that no one actually has sex on the stage is irrelevant, Donohue said, "It is the whole point of the play." He then asked, "What does Gamble think it's about—redemption."

Gamble even went so far as to contend that the attacks on the play have caused "irreparable damage" to FAU. Donohue denied the charge and closed by saying, "But it could be argued that it is the result of illogical letters written by some of their faculty."

The Fort Wayne *Journal-Gazette* and the *Indianapolis Star* both ran editorials on the play that found great fault with the play's critics but none at all with play's content. The *Star's* editorial was literally hysterical.

The *Journal-Gazette* went bonkers when an Indiana citizen announced he was going to sue IPFW for putting on the play. The Catholic League did not defend suing as the proper course of action, but it also did not defend the newspaper for glossing over the reason why things reached this point.

As Donohue pointed out, had the school's chancellor, Michael Wartell, acted responsibly and acceded to the league's modest request, the prospect of a lawsuit might never have materialized. All we asked for was for Wartell to sit down with the participating faculty and students and explain why their free speech rights were hurtful to Christians. Because Wartell did nothing but hide behind the First Amendment—as if that were the sum total of his duties—angry citizens decided to up the ante.

The *Indianapolis Star* was worse. In an editorial of June 13, heroes were made of those who initially defended the play when it opened in New York; they were praised for their devotion to free speech. Donohue informed them that their heroes refused to debate him on TV at that time: every single major playwright in New York who defended the play turned down Donohue's invitation to debate him.

The rap that the league opposed the play because Jesus was gay was also off base: had the play depicted Christ having sex with 12 women—or one woman—we would have objected just as strongly.

We are pleased that Catholics, and Protestants, in Florida and Indiana made their voices heard. Both schools depend on public money and both are guilty of violating the public trust. We encourage Christians everywhere to get involved in the culture war and take back their rights.

VOUCHER SEE-SAW

We've been on a voucher see-saw for what seems like an eternity. As usual, the same two topics dominate the discussion: the undeniable success of private, especially parochial, education and the undeniable opposition that school choice still provokes.

At about the same time that the U.S. Senate was voting down another school choice provision, the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago was unveiling the latest data. Students in Catholic schools in Chicago, the report showed, scored as much as 25 points higher than national norms on standardized tests.

If evidence mattered, the debate would be over and our side would have won. But evidence speaks to rationality and when jobs and religion are involved, rationality often gives way to lesser impulses. Like fear. Fear that the public school industry will lose its near-monopoly status and fear that parental rights will benefit Catholic schools. The former fear is easy to understand as it speaks to the economic self-interest of the teachers' union; the latter is harder to understand as it speaks to bigotry.

One of the old canards about vouchers is that they would “drain money away from the public schools.” A recent editorial in the Jesuit-published magazine, *America*, offered a much needed reality check to those who utter such nonsense. “Public schools are not the beneficiaries of the funds that governments allot for education,” said the editorial. “Children are the beneficiaries of those monies,” it continued, “and through these children the wider community also benefits by having its rising generations educated.”

Thanks to Caroline Hoxby, a Harvard researcher, we now have empirical data that strengthens the *America* position. She released a study over the winter that details how a voucher program in Milwaukee actually had the effect of strengthening the public schools there. Competition, she found, works as well in education as it does in other sectors of the economy.

But no matter, we still have to fight this fight on the playing field of intolerance. For example, the Washington State Constitution still reflects the animus against Catholicism that motivated its wording in the first place. And the usual trio of teachers’ unions, civil rights organizations and separation of church and state activists are well financed and totally opposed to choice in education.

Nonetheless, at the end of the day it is hard to keep ignoring the evidence. And it is only a matter of time before non-whites push their highly politicized leaders aside and insist on moving the voucher issue to the front burner.

One piece of good news: Toward Tradition, a Jewish organization led by Rabbi Daniel Lapin (he is a good friend of the Catholic League), has issued a excellent pamphlet on the subject, “Diligently To Thy Children: The Case of School Choice.” Those interested in obtaining a free copy should write to David Klinghoffer, Toward Tradition, P.O. Box 58, Mercer Island, WA 98040 or e-mail him at towardtradition@towardtradition.org. Tell him you read

about this in the Catholic League journal, *Catalyst*.

ALE OR ART?

In a June 22 article on the Catholic League, *Washington Times* reporter Jennifer Harper asked William Donohue who were the most difficult people he has had to deal with during his eight years on the job. “The worst, the most clearly arrogant of the bunch are the artists and academics,” Donohue said. Both segments of the population, he offered, “use the First Amendment as a shield.”

Donohue, a former college professor, knows first-hand how duplicitous many academics are. But his interactions with the artistic community were relatively scarce before coming to the league. Now he knows more than he wants to about the self-absorbed personalities that color this group. Steven C. Dubin also knows Donohue’s thinking on the subject but isn’t too happy with what he’s discovered.

Dubin, like Donohue, has a Ph.D. in sociology. That’s where the similarities end. Dubin loves the arts and is especially fond of Catholic bashing art. He also dislikes Donohue intensely.

In his book, *Displays of Power: Controversy in the American Museum from the Enola Gay to Sensation*,” Dubin traces many recent hot issues that have dominated the art world. His paperback edition now has a “New Afterword” that is entirely given over to the Brooklyn Museum of Art controversy that featured the dung-laden Virgin Mary portrait. The new chapter has much to say about the Catholic League’s response to the “Sensation” exhibition.

Dubin interviewed Donohue at length over the phone in 1999 about the "Sensation" brouhaha. After blasting Donohue for leading the charge against the exhibit, Dubin settles in at the end of his book critically analyzing Donohue's motives. "If you have any doubts that this was a contrived affair," he smugly tells his readers, "make note: when I asked whether art interests him, the Catholic League's William Donohue breezily replied, 'No. Pubs do. I go to bars, not to museums.'"

Talk about ending a book on a sour note. Horror of horrors, Donohue prefers ale to art.