

ANOTHER COMEDIAN MOCKS CHRISTIANITY

In a skit which aired on the April 9 episode of ABC's *Dana Carvey Show*, Mr. Carvey performed different roles in "Rich Little's Story of Jesus." Presented as a show to be presented on HBO by Mr. Little, the skit showed Carvey as various celebrities portraying Biblical figures. Nixon was the Archangel Gabriel, Johnny Carson was vulgar as John the Baptist, and the Three Wise Men were portrayed as Laurel and Hardy.

More offensive was the characterization of Mary, who was depicted as being Carol Channing, intoning to a baby in her arms, "Well hello, Jesus, well hello, Jesus." Even more outrageous was the portrayal of Groucho Marx as Jesus, smoking a cigar and then carrying his cross in a flip manner while making jokes. Other caricatures included Jack Benny as Herod and Truman Capote as Judas. Mary Magdalene was shown as Edith Bunker, saying to Archie that she was a prostitute.

Los Angeles Times: SELECTIVE SENSITIVITY

Toward the end of Lent, religious controversy swirled around decisions made by the *Los Angeles Times* about which cartoons it chose to run. The controversy involved the *Times*' publishing on March 28 a cartoon in its "Commentary" section. It showed Bob Dole crucified with the words "Christian Coalition" around his head similar to the crown of thorns. Instead of "INRI" above his unsmiling head, so as to leave no doubts, the sign

read "DOLE." This use of Christian symbols during the holiest time of the year was suspect, at the very least, if not outright insulting.

What made this doubly disturbing was that the *Times* refused to publish a cartoon strip called "B.C." by Johnny Hart at the end of Holy Week because of the cartoon's religious message. Entitled "The Suffering Prince," the strip showed a regular character in the series writing a poem about Jesus. Although the newspaper has been a home to the strip since 1968, a spokeswoman said that the cartoon had been featuring "religious overtones" of late. That the strip might be offensive was the reason for its banishment; the offense to Christians that the other cartoon aroused was considered acceptable, however.

On Holy Saturday league advisory board member Kate O'Beirne proclaimed it the "outrage of the week" on CNN's *The Capitol Gang*.

In the end, two of the three "religious" cartoons were published due to a number of calls from the public in protest.

LEAGUE CHALLENGES ANTI-SEMITIC RAP AGAINST CHURCH

Chabad House, a Jewish educational institute in Columbus, Ohio, advertised in its Spring catalog a May 17 lecture on anti-Semitism. The ad stated, **WHEN IT COMES TO ANTI-SEMITES, IT'S SOMETIMES DIFFICULT TO DISCERN A PATTERN.** Shaped in the figure of the Star of David, the ad listed several prominent historical figures and groups as anti-Semites. Among those cited were The Mufti, Hamas and Khomeini. But also listed were

Catholic Church figures such as Pope Gregory IX, Pope Paul IV, St. John Chrysostom and Justin Martyr.

In a letter to Rabbi Areyah of Chabad House, the Catholic League registered its objections as follows:

“As the historian Paul Johnson has written, Gregory IX targeted “heretics, antinomians and deviants. Nowhere does Johnson accuse him of targeting Jews (certainly not as a group to be singled out). In any event, Gregory IX lived in the early 13th century (Justin Martyr and St. John Chrysostom go back to the dawn of Church history).

“Two questions: a) identify your sources and b) explain how you expect relationships between Catholics and Jews to improve when irresponsible statements like this are made.”

No reply has yet been received. We will report on this case if we hear back.

CARDINAL O'CONNOR HAS RIGHTS, TOO

The following article by William Donohue appeared in the New York *Daily News* on April 21, and is reprinted with permission.

Imagine someone putting a needle into the brain of a baby and sucking out his brains. It's legal, as President Clinton affirmed last week when he vetoed a bill that would have barred this barbaric procedure. That's what happens in a partial-birth abortion: a doctor delivers 80 percent of a baby, leaving the head inside the woman's body, and then extracts the child's brains so that he or she can fit through

the mother's birth canal. And when Cardinal O'Connor calls it an outrage, he is criticized not only for his position, but for merely exercising his free speech.

Cardinal O'Connor, like other priests, has every right not to check his First Amendment rights at the church door. To suggest otherwise betrays monumental ignorance of the First Amendment and is indeed suggestive of attempts to create dual citizenship—one set of rights for laypeople and another for clergy. The fact that this is an election year doesn't change a thing: constitutional rights are not seasonally conditioned.

The First Amendment not only guarantees Cardinal O'Connor's freedom of speech, it covers his right to freedom of religion. Integral to that exercise is his right to address issues of paramount moral and religious concern. That is why Cardinal O'Connor continues to talk about society's obligation to immigrants, the poor, the sick and the disabled. Yet the same people who applaud him in these efforts are bothered when he adds partially-born children to his list. The hypocrisy could not be more evident.

Separation of church and state, which nowhere appears in the Constitution (it was a metaphor used by Thomas Jefferson in a letter he sent in 1802 to a group of Baptists in Danbury, Connecticut), is a rendering of the so-called establishment clause. When James Madison, the author of the First Amendment, was asked what he meant by this clause, he replied that it prohibited the establishment of a national church and governmental preference of one religion over another. It did not mean a gag rule for clerics.

It is amazing how those who would prefer Cardinal O'Connor to censor himself, or to have the state do it for him, never seem to complain when politicians campaign in Protestant churches. Indeed in 1988, Rev. Jesse Jackson and Rev. Pat Robertson both ran for president, and yet no one seemed to think that these ministers transgressed the First Amendment by doing so. In the

case of Rev. Jackson, campaign contributions were actually solicited in some churches. Perhaps the Cardinal should run for president and really test the waters.

From the abolitionists to Rev. Martin Luther King to John Cardinal O'Connor, there is a long and honorable tradition in this nation of priests, ministers and rabbis engaging in public discourse. They have a legal right and a moral obligation to do so. Those who think otherwise need a fast lesson in elementary civics.

Cardinal O'Connor's critics want it both ways: they want him to continue to service the public without commenting on public policy. So it is okay when the Cardinal authorizes private funds for servicing AIDS patients, the homeless, hospitals, schools, women who need money to carry their baby to term and women who have had abortions and need counseling (yes, that is what the Church's Project Rachel is all about), but it is not okay for him to pass judgment on public policy. In other words, they want him to put up and shut up.

President Clinton said when he was elected that he would make abortion "safe, legal and rare." That he would not oppose a procedure that aborts a child mostly born (that is why the Bishops have properly labeled it "infanticide"), shows what he really means by "rare." So hurrah for Cardinal O'Connor, once again he has shown that he is the preeminent voice of moral suasion in our society.

GEORGE CARLIN: BACK TO

BASHING

Home Box Office (HBO) featured the notorious George Carlin on its Comedy Hour as part of its Original Programming for the month of April. His special, *George Carlin: Back in Town*, was not only vulgar from beginning to end, but it also took aim at Cardinal O'Connor, Catholics, pro-lifers and Jesus Himself.

- He said he was Catholic until he reached the "age of reason." He opined that he did not want to hear from Cardinal O'Connor and other Church leaders on the abortion issue until they have raised kids on the minimum wage. Priests should be told to keep their hands off the altar boys.
- He used a quote of Jesus, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," in a blasphemous way, saying he did not think Jesus meant it the way a pedophile priest would.
- On the sanctity of life, he said, "If you read history, you realize God is one of the leading causes of death." In his banter, he said, as if one religious person to another, "My god has a bigger d- than your god."
- He claimed that he wanted crucifixions, but upside down and naked. Christians could relate to this kind of capital punishment, he mused.
- He explored ancient forms of capital punishment and related them to religion. Burning people at the stake came out of religious tradition. Boiling people in oil could teach Christian children a lesson.

That Mr. Carlin would engage in such behavior is not surprising in light of his past record. This includes his legal battle to say seven offensive words on the radio, a case

he lost in the 1970s in a Supreme Court decision. That HBO, however, seeks to call bad taste comedy is more disturbing. Coupled with their production of a hatchet job on the Church's celibacy requirements, HBO is giving its Catholic subscribers reason to quit.

SECULARIZING EASTER

There appears to be a growing trend to secularize Easter. More and more greeting cards and gifts are centered around bunnies, not Christ. And when it comes to Christ, attempts to debunk his divinity are given broad coverage. The three major weeklies, *Time*, *Newsweek* and *U.S. News and World Report*, all featured cover stories at Easter that questioned the historical Jesus.

One of the most significant changes occurred when New York's Radio City Music Hall announced that its annual "Easter Show" would now be dubbed the "Spring Spectacular." In 1995 the "Easter Show" was renamed the "Easter Extravaganza" (an acceptable change), but this year the closest association with Easter was found in the small print below "Spring Spectacular," which read: "The Glory of Easter."

We got curious and called Radio City and the ad agency that handles its business. What we were told was that the change in name was done in the interest of broadening the appeal of the program.

The reason we called was because someone in Catholic circles had given us a tip. It seems that when he called the person in the ad agency that handles the account for Radio City, he was told that the reason for the change of names was, "We're trying to take the Christianity out of Easter." That's a more

honest way of handling the issue instead of falling back on the need for “inclusive language.” We only regret we weren’t given the same explanation.

In any event, that didn’t stop the Catholic League from raising the issue with the president of Radio City Productions. We’ve asked him to return to the original title of the show. We’ll keep you posted.

HOLOCAUST DOCUMENTATION COMMITTEE

Polish American Congress

177 Kent Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. – (718) 383-8131

Frank Milewski, Chair

Michael Preisler, Co-Chair

Auschwitz No.22213

Dear Dr. Donohue:

As a Polish Catholic who spent 3½ years in Auschwitz as a prisoner of Hitler’s SS, I fell compelled to express my objections to the April 17th telecast of Frontline’s SHTETL. It is fraud and it is shameful the Public Broadcasting System is party to it.

I have dedicated many years to speaking on the Holocaust and how great a catastrophe it was for the Jews and Christians of Poland. Foremost for me is to recall and relate my experiences with scrupulous accuracy. Nothing is more powerful than truth and honesty when telling this terrible story. Nothing is more reprehensible than the manipulation

and embellishment of the historical record to force a specific interpretation.

The film distorts and misrepresents the centuries-long relations between Jews and Poles especially during the Holocaust period. Because Poland had been subjected to so much Nazi and Communist propaganda during World War II, it was easy for me to recognize some of the same tactics SHTETL uses to falsely accuse and condemn the Polish people.

Its purpose is clear: to damage our image in any way possible, not only because we are Poles but also because we are Catholics.

Like myself and anyone else who suffered through the Holocaust, SHTETL's Jewish producer undoubtedly is unable to restrain his passion when dealing with this subject. But nobody – not even a Jew – has the right to tamper with the truth simply because the truth may not be to his liking.

The techniques are self-evident. One is to focus on what is the rare exception, magnify and exaggerate it and, when useful, misrepresent it. Every interaction between Poles and Jews is closely scrutinized with the hope some sort of inference of anti-Semitism might be extracted from it.

Producer Marian Marzynski deliberately holds his interviews with aged and uneducated Polish farmers rather than with professional individual who would have been able to recognize his devious intentions – to portray the Poles as guilty as the Germans.

His other technique is to capitalize on the fact the average viewer's knowledge about Nazi atrocities is generally limited only to the Jewish experience. SHTETL's resolute silence on anything that could show how Polish Catholics like me went through the same hell the German barbarians prepared for the Jews allows the anti-Polish allegations Marzynski formulates to appear more acceptable.

Marzynski opens SHTETL with a dedication to his father who was killed "only because he was a Jew." I understand his deep emotions when he says it because this is the disaster the Germans inflicted on Poland's Jewish citizens. But "only" is an exclusive word that does not take into account the fact that Poles also were killed "only because they were Poles." This is why so many Polish men, women, children, priests and intellectuals were murdered inside and outside the concentration camps. Through a bizarre stroke of luck, I myself evaded the Auschwitz gas chamber by only a few minutes.

SHTETL deliberately conceals such essential information. Instead, it wants the viewer to believe we were merely onlookers untouched by German brutality. To show Polish Catholics beaten, shot, hanged or gassed by the Nazis would naturally pull out the underpinnings from the anti-Polish scenario he tries to construct. But it vividly illustrates what the German and Soviet propagandists proved to the world: a half-truth can often do more than a whole lie.

Were there Poles who betrayed Jews? Whatever the number, it was relatively insignificant. But if betrayal is to be a primary focus of SHTETL, Marzynski should not have obscured the fact that Jews betrayed other Jews not only in Bransk but elsewhere in Poland. Moreover, there were some Jews who even betrayed the very Poles who were hiding them and both were murdered as a result.

More people were executed for rescuing Jews in Poland than in any other occupied nation in Europe. More people willingly took this risk despite the fact Poland was the only country in Europe where the Nazis declared death as a penalty for giving a Jew any kind of aid. Marzynski admits 5,000 of the 11,000 trees at Yad Vashem honor Poles. But this number is only a fraction of the total, many of whom were murdered together with the Jews they were hiding. Despite SHTETL's strenuous efforts to smear the Polish

people and suppress the story of our suffering it does reveal certain significant facts. The many photos shown of individuals from the pre-war Jewish community disclose the great freedom and opportunity Poland offered Europe's Jews for 800 years. Poland gave them haven when they were expelled by other nations. I am proud the land of my birth welcomed them and permitted the development of a rich and resilient Jewish culture. So much, in fact, that Jewish education, prosperity and well-being often surpassed that of the average Pole.

What I found to be the most disturbing and saddest scene is the one where the students at the school in Israel meet the central Polish figure in SHTETL, Romaniuk. I was shocked at the virulent anti-Polish prejudice and hatred they displayed. I have seen hatred before, mostly during my years in Auschwitz. Now I understand better why my own daughter, when she told her Jewish friends her Catholic father is an Auschwitz survivor, was met with anger and called a liar. "Impossible," they told her because no Christians ever were in Auschwitz. But I can only pity these young people. They also are victims – victims of those like Marzynski who inculcate others with their own prejudice and hatred. For whom integrity is subordinate to a personal agenda. Who tells the Israeli students his father died in a Warsaw ghetto and, in another part of the film, says his father cut a hole in the floor of a train, jumped out to join the partisans and was killed in a battle. I believe PBS is obligated to point out this contradiction if it airs the film.

I can also pity them for their exposure to false witnesses like Marzynski uses to condemn Poles in a situation which suggests a partisan action against Russian communists and their collaborators and not an action directed specifically against Jews.

In conclusion, the film confirmed my long-held suspicion

that most of the misrepresentations about Poland and her Jewish citizens evolve from the fact the country is so visibly Catholic. It does not require a trained eye to see SHTETL's preoccupation with pictures of Christ, crosses and crucifixes, priests and the religious ceremonies in which they take part. The silent message resonates loudly. The subtle and the subliminal prompt the viewer to attribute Marzynski's anti-Semitic scenario to the Catholic Church as the ultimate source.

It is astounding that someone like Marzynski, whose life was saved by Polish Catholics when he was a child, would display such malevolence to the religious beliefs of those to whom he owes his life.

As someone who was part of this terrible tragedy for both Poles and Jews, I must ask why only so many anti-Polish films continue to be made which stress nothing but the negative between Jews and Poles. We have had strong and positive relationships throughout history and they seem to have been totally forgotten. In memory of everyone, Jew and Christian who perished in the war, we must look at what unites us instead of what divides us. We owe it to them.

Sincerely yours,
Michael Preisler
Auschwitz #22213

AP RED FLAGS CATHOLIC

RELIGION

On March 31, the Associated Press ran a story about a suburban Chicago man suspected of assassinating a Philadelphia policeman a quarter-century ago. The story, which was distributed to newspapers all over the country, mentioned that the accused was "23, a Catholic school-educated telephone repairman, when the shooting occurred."

The Catholic League sent a letter to the president of AP asking whether the news organization would have cited the educational background of the accused if he had attended a public school or a yeshiva. We are awaiting a reply.

The league is not asserting that what AP did was "Catholic bashing," but it is saying that a double standard exists: to red flag the Catholicity of a suspected assassin is unwarranted and feeds the negative impulse of those not well disposed to Catholics in the first place.

Contact: Louis Boccardi, Associated Press, 50 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, NY 10020

NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER HELPS SAVE EWTN

The newly formed New England Chapter of the Catholic League got off to a fast start by challenging a local cable TV operator on plans to drop the Eternal Word Television Network. Continental Cablevision had done a survey 32,000 subscribers and found that viewers preferred to drop EWTN in favor of accessing the QVC shopping network. But that didn't sit well

with many Catholics, and especially not with Dr. Louis S. Competiello, a practicing physician and president of the New England Chapter of the Catholic League.

Dr. Competiello entered into a discussion with EWTN and Continental Cablevision. His work proved fruitful: Continental Cablevision agreed to continue programming of EWTN on a part-time basis and promised to restore full service as soon as possible.

BIZARRE NOVEL ATTACKS POPE

In a novel so weird that it almost redefines what “weird” means, 15 authors have teamed up together to write *The Fifth Column*. The book, a hodgepodge of contributions by Jonathan Franzen, Rick Moody, A.M. Homes, Randall Kenan, Jim Lewis, Susan Daitch, Matthew Stadler, Claire Messud, Dale Peck, Iva Pekarkova, David Foster Wallace, Carol Anshaw, Irvine Welsh, Gary Indiana and Neil Gordon, makes little sense, though a published excerpt in the *Village Voice* (which flagged the book on its cover by saying, **Sex With The Pope!**) removed all doubt about its sentiments toward Catholics.

In the piece by Gary Indiana, the Pope is described as performing oral sex on a woman. Neil Gordon completes the novel by having the Pope the killed.

The novel is one more testimony to the extent to which Catholicism is hated by some of our cultural elite gurus. That it took 15 persons to craft this trash is further testimony to the intellectual impoverishment of contemporary wannabee writers.