

UNIV. OF OREGON OKAYS OBSCENE DEPICTION OF JESUS

The University of Oregon was home this spring to a vicious attack on Jesus. Almost as obscene as the cartoon was the incredibly weak response by the university's president, Dave Frohnmayer.

The March edition of the *Insurgent*, a University of Oregon student newspaper, contained a large graphic cartoon depicting a naked Jesus on the Cross with an erection; there was also a graphic titled "Resurrection," which showed a naked Jesus kissing another naked man, both sporting erections.

The pictures were only one small part of the March edition. Indeed, the entire issue was replete with the most egregious examples of hate speech targeted at Christians. For example, there were several cartoons of Jesus—including Jesus crucified—that were so gratuitously offensive that only the most depraved would defend them. That all of this occurred during Lent, at a state institution, is all the more disturbing.

This explosion of hate speech was a response to a decision reached by one of the *Insurgent's* rivals, the *Commentator*, to publish the 12 Danish cartoons that recently so inflamed the Muslim world. An *Insurgent* editorial said that because the *Commentator* published depictions of Muhammad so as to "provoke dialogue," they had a right to trash Christians as a way of provoking dialogue.

It was due to the tepid response of president Dave Frohnmayer that Bill Donohue decided to write a letter to every member of the Oregon legislature, the governor, the state's three Catholic bishops, the president of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, and the chancellor of the Oregon

University System (click [here](#)).

Bishop John Vlazny wrote a strong letter of protest to Frohnmayer, and State Senator Doug Whitsett said he will introduce legislation “that will allow university presidents to prevent such heinous student publications and to hold perpetrators and supporters of such hateful acts accountable for their actions on state university campuses.”

Students of Faith, a group formed in response to this assault, filed a grievance, but was turned down. Indeed, the student body that fielded the grievance said “there are no grounds for demanding an apology from the Student Insurgent.”

Contact the president at pres@oregon.uoregon.edu, or write to him at the University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403. See page 4 for more information.

“CODE” IS INANE

Bill Donohue saw “The Da Vinci Code” the day it opened. Here are his comments:

“The movie theater was packed, and at the end of the film there were three or four people who clapped, and three of four who hissed. Most just walked out in a zombie-like fashion, eerily mimicking the characters on the screen.

“This was one of the most inane films I have ever seen. It takes forever to get going, and even when it finally does, it fails to sustain the momentum. Indeed, it somehow manages to revert back to its original slumbering style, delivering one of the most thoroughly anti-climatic endings ever to grace the screen.

“There are too many symbols and too many arcane codes, but the real reason the movie fails is because it lacks suspense, is hopelessly melodramatic, and is way too long. The few times the audience laughed was due to a quip made by one of the characters: these moments were much appreciated—it broke the boredom.

“As for the anti-Catholic nature of the movie, it is a credit to Ron Howard that he softened the edges. To be specific, the conversation about the divinity of Christ, and about religious belief in general, was portrayed with greater sensitivity to Christians than was depicted in the book.

“Had the movie been a success, the effect would have been troubling. But because it fails to persuade, this is one movie practicing Christians have nothing to worry about.”

IS THE SCANDAL OVER?

William A. Donohue

I won't keep you guessing: the scandal—in terms of significant numbers of molesting priests who are currently active—is over. Indeed, it's been over for years. But in terms of coming to grips with the causes of the scandal, that problem remains.

At the end of March, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) released its third annual audit on what is being done about priestly sexual abuse; supplementary data on an earlier report by researchers at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice was also published. Together, the two documents provide insightful observations on the prevalence, and timeline, of the scandal. Though not intended, the supplementary report also shines light on something

disturbing: the professors who prepared the study allowed their ideological blinders to misstate the nature of the problem.

First, the good news. So much progress has been made that I am willing to bet that there is no institution, demographic group or profession in the United States today that has *less of a problem* with sexual abuse of minors than the Catholic Church. Because comparative data are not available, it is impossible to prove if I'm right or wrong. But a review of the latest data gives credence to my conclusion.

The vast majority of the cases of sexual abuse occurred between the mid-1960s and mid-1980s. This isn't a matter of opinion: the John Jay report provides indisputable evidence. This, of course, was a time when the sexual revolution hit our society by storm; we now know that some of those winds found their way into many of our seminaries.

Like all revolutions, this one would come to an end, but not before much damage had been done. To understand what happened, recall that in 1980, Ronald Reagan was elected president. In 1981, AIDS was discovered. The two together symbolized that the sexual revolution had run its course: Reagan's election represented a yearning for a more traditional moral voice, and AIDS represented the consequences of promiscuous gay sex. In other words, new cultural winds were evident, the result of which were felt in the seminaries.

So what about the scandal today? In 2005, 783 credible accusations of abuse against 532 priests were made. Sounds bad. But consider that 87 percent of the new allegations involved abuse that occurred before the 1990s, and that the majority of the cases took place in the 1960s and 1970s. For the year 2005, there were 21 allegations that involved minors as victims, but only five were found to be credible; two were still under investigation and in two instances there was insufficient information.

For the sake of argument, let's group the two cases under investigation with the two cases where there wasn't enough information and add them to the five where there are credible allegations. That brings us to a total of nine priests. Now do the math: we had approximately 42,000 priests in 2005, which means that .02 percent had a credible accusation made against him last year.

It is unlikely you've read this before. That's because there was an almost total media blackout on the audit (the best reporting was done by the *Washington Post*). To top it off, the most startling statistic of them all—the one which shows that 99.98 percent of the priests throughout the United States had no credible accusation made against them in 2005—was *nowhere* reported! Now you know why I'm willing to bet that no institution, demographic group or profession has less of a problem today with sexual abuse of minors than the Catholic Church.

But there is one remaining problem. Nowhere in the report does it even mention the word "homosexual," but there are 14 mentions of "pedophile" and 12 citations of "ephebophile." Yet fully 81 percent of the victims are male, and most are postpubescent males. This is properly called homosexuality. The term "ephebophile," meaning sex with older teenagers, is rarely used by experts outside the Catholic Church, and in any event is an ideologically coined term. It is not for nothing that the term is never used to refer to heterosexual acts.

By the way, the 81 percent figure is the exact figure that was found previously. To put it differently, the John Jay report covering the years 1950-2002 found that 81 percent of the victims were male—the same figure reported in the audit for 2005. So much for the positively stupid argument that has been floating around for years that the reason why there are so few female victims is because priests only had access to altar boys until recently. Well, it's been 12 years since girl altar servers became a reality, yet it's still the males that the

molesters want.

Many times have I said that while most gay priests are not molesters, most of the molesters are gay. While it is true the Vatican has taken steps to address this reality, it remains sadly true that some of those providing reports and advice to the bishops are still living in a state of absolute denial.

MAN THE GATES: THEOCRATS ARE AT THE DOOR

by William Donohue

Remember when presidential candidate George W. Bush was asked in 1999 to name his favorite philosopher, and he named Jesus? For the secularists—those men and women who are more frightened by the public expression of religion than by its absence—this was a pivotal moment in American history. For everyone else, Bush's answer was seen as being very nice.

One of those who has never gotten over Bush's response is Kevin Phillips. Now he has written a book, *American Theocracy*, that records his concerns. Though only a third of the book deals with the subject's title (the rest touches on the federal debt and our dependence on oil), the section on politics and religion is getting most of the attention.

Phillips has come a long way since his first book, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, was published in 1969. Written at a time when Richard Nixon won a narrow victory over Hubert Humphrey, Phillips spotted a trend where others only saw anecdotes: He maintained that the key to an ascendant Republican majority lay in the abandonment of the Democratic

party by Southern voters. He proved to be correct.

While it is true that the Republicans and Democrats have changed a great deal over the past several decades, it is also true that Kevin Phillips changed as well. Whatever affinity he once had for Republican politics has long since disappeared. Now he is happier writing an excerpt of his new book in the left-wing *Nation* magazine than in the conservative *National Review*.

Phillips is a worried soul these days. What worries him are people like you and me. Catholic League members, along with traditional Christians and Jews, are a problem. That's because most of these people believe it is wrong to kill innocent human beings. Moreover, most of us refuse to sanction a wedding between a couple of guys. It's the practical application of a religiously informed conscience that is deeply troubling to him: when people of faith bring their convictions to bear on public policy issues, they are promoting a theocracy. Or so he believes.

It's too bad we're not like the Europeans and Canadians, Phillips says. What he means by this is that it's too bad we continue to go to church in relatively large numbers. For example, he correctly observes that the Europeans and Canadians are marked by "a secular and often agnostic Christianity." And he is honest enough to say that "none of the western countries in which Reformation Protestantism bred its radical or anarchic sects nearly five hundred years earlier—England, Scotland, Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands—still [have] congregations of any great magnitude adhering to that theology."

Phillips does more than just make an observation about the decline in church attendance in Europe and Canada—he finds it comforting. Indeed, he is not pleased that "even sympathetic commentators" in Europe talk about the "catastrophic decline" in church attendance. Why should the near absence of

Christians in church be labeled “catastrophic,” he reasons, especially when those making such determinations are not unhappy with the results?

Unfortunately for the U.S., Phillips avers, we’re not following the lead of our more enlightened European brothers. As a matter of fact, we’re plagued with a Jesus-fearing president and a Republican party that has captured the heart and soul of the faithful. That’s what makes us a theocracy—we’re a nation ruled by religion. How did we get that way?

At one point in his book, Phillips says, “In the 1960s and 1970s, to be sure, secular liberals grossly misread American and world history by trying to push religion out of the public square, so to speak. In doing so, they gave faith-based conservatism a legitimate basis for countermobilization.” Fair enough. So what’s the problem? The very next sentence shows his political colors: “But in some ways the conservative countertrend itself has become a bigger danger since its acceleration in the aftermath of September 11.”

To know what Phillips is talking about, consider the issues he thinks has the imprint of the theocrat written all over them: abortion, euthanasia, the Equal Rights Amendment for women, gay marriage, etc. Phillips thinks that those who are opposed to these “rights” are dangerous. That’s his choice, but in doing so he also shows some sloppy thinking.

Take abortion. It’s not just those who go to church who are against abortion—many Americans of little or no faith oppose killing the unborn. For example, one of the most consistently pro-life voices over the last few decades is that of Nat Hentoff. Nat, who is a good friend of the Catholic League, is a Jewish, atheist, left-wing writer whose commitment to civil rights includes protection of the unborn. And what about all those young people today, many of whom are not exactly weekly attendees at church, who are convinced that sonograms don’t

lie: They've seen the pictures and know that a fetus is a human being.

The intentional killing of Terry Schiavo did more to spur a long overdue national discussion on the merits of doctor-assisted suicide and euthanasia in general than all the books on the subject combined. To think that those who defended her right to live are mostly theocratic warriors is nonsense.

Phillips talks about "the excitement of women" in the 1970s who wanted an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and the "minimal" support the ERA got from traditional Christians and Jews. Evidently, he is wholly unaware of the fact that when the ERA was put on the ballot in a referendum in New York and New Jersey, women turned out in record numbers to overwhelmingly defeat it. That's not my interpretation—it's what was reported in the New York Times. These are hardly the kind of theocratic zealots that Phillips would have us believe: New York and New Jersey are not part of the Bible belt.

"To religious traditionalists," Phillips writes, "homosexuality threatened the institutions of family and marriage." He admits that in all eleven states where there was a referendum on this issue, it lost. He further notes that in seven of the eleven states, "conservative denominations [were] strong." What he declines to say is that even in places like Oregon—where church attendance is notoriously low, and where agnostics and atheists are a sizable segment of the population—the voters turned against gay marriage.

Like all writers, Phillips chooses his words carefully. When speaking of the plight of Terry Schiavo, he uses terms like "a vegetative patient's right to die." And when he talks about crimes against fetuses, he always makes sure the reader gets his point about "crimes against fetuses." Regarding the latter, Phillips has in mind things like the federal Unborn Victims of Violence Act, a bill that makes it a crime to intentionally assault a pregnant woman's baby. In his mind,

only theocrats want to protect the baby from being harmed or killed.

Like so many others who are terrified of the faithful bringing their religion to bear in the public square, Phillips frames the issue as those who favor science versus those who favor theology. Evidently he never heard of Pope John Paul II's encyclical on faith and reason. Nor is he aware of the Catholic tradition that sees no inherent tension between the two. This is what happens when a writer draws mostly on the thinking that is prevalent in some Protestant circles, and concludes that all of Christianity adheres to such positions.

To get an idea of how the false dichotomy between faith and reason works, consider abortion. Phillips would have us believe that if practicing Christians are more pro-life than their more secular cohorts, then that makes abortion a religious issue. But it is not the Bible that teaches that human life begins at fertilization: it is what science teaches. It was scientists, not theologians, who discovered DNA, and it was they who determined that all the properties that make us human are present at conception (and not at some later stage). To acknowledge this scientific reality hardly makes one a theocrat.

Though Phillips does not come right out and say it, the inescapable conclusion of his book is that secularists need to seize control of society and the faithful need to have their wings clipped. The former, he is convinced, are the good guys who don't want to impose their morality on anyone; the latter are the bad guys who want to shove their religion down everyone's throat.

Here's how it works. Phillips holds that those who want to overturn thousands of years of tradition by radically restructuring the institution of marriage so that two guys can marry really have no interest in imposing their morality on the rest of us, but those who resist are considered judgmental

and intolerant. That the proponents of gay marriage want unelected judges to trump the authority of the people's representatives is similarly seen as democratic, even at the cost of jettisoning the consent of the governed, a hallmark of democratic rule. It takes more than arrogance to reach this conclusion.

John Adams once wrote that the Constitution "was made only for a moral and religious people." That's because self-government depends on a self-governing people, and it is difficult to reach this objective absent the cultivation of a morally sound and religiously observant public. This doesn't mean that a free society is enhanced by allowing religious zealots to take command of the reins of government, but neither does it mean that the faithful are a menace to liberty whose place in society needs to be curtailed.

Kevin Phillips has no real reason to worry—most of the people he thinks are theocrats are no more inclined to live under theocratic rule than he is. It is we who need to worry about the solutions people like him have for problems they sincerely believe exist.

“THE O’SHAMELESS FACTOR”

On May 17 and 18, Fox News Network host Bill O'Reilly did what he often does—he did a segment based on the work of the Catholic League without giving attribution. Specifically, in the piece he did on the University of Oregon, he never mentioned that the reason why the story received national attention is because of the Catholic League and worldnetdaily.com (the latter did a story based on our news release, and we, in turn, mentioned the website in our second

release).

O'Reilly is utterly shameless, but we wouldn't expect any more from the likes of him.

“DA VINCI CODE” BOMBS WITH CRITICS

Here's a sample of what critics who previewed "The Da Vinci Code" on May 16 had to say about the movie:

- "Dud"; Unwieldy"; "Plodding." (Reuters)
- "A Bloated Puzzle"; "The movie is so drenched in dialogue musing over arcane mythological and historical lore and scenes grow so static that even camera movement can't disguise the dramatic inertia"; "No chemistry exists between the hero and the heroine." (*Hollywood Reporter*)
- "Almost as bad as the book." (*Boston Globe*)
- "High-minded lurid material sucked dry by a desperately solemn approach"; They've "drained all the fun out of the melodrama." (*Variety*)
- When the movie "takes a brief wrong turn, and Howard momentarily loses control of his huge, streamlined vehicle, it's hard to say where to put the blame." (FoxNews.com)
- "Critics Crucify 'Da Vinci Code.'" (Australian Associated Press)
- "Critics largely panned the cinematic version"; "The movie did receive some lukewarm praise, but the majority of the

response was highly critical”; “One scene during the film, meant to be serious, elicited prolonged laughter from the audience. There was no applause when the credits rolled; instead, a few catcalls and hisses broke the silence.” (CNN)

- “At one point, some of them responded in the auditorium with laughter to one of the developments in the plot—something director Ron Howard would not have anticipated.” (Press Association Newsfile)

- “Shrugs of indifference, some jeering laughter and a few derisive jabs”; “The Cannes audience clearly grew restless as the movie dragged on to two and a half hours and spun a long sequence of anticlimactic revelations”; “Some people walked out during the movie’s closing minutes...and there was none of the scattered applause even bad movies sometimes receive at Cannes.” (AP)

Bill Donohue said, “If Ron Howard is being laughed at by those predisposed to believe the worst about Catholicism, he’s an utter failure.”

MONUMENTAL HYPOCRISY

Jami Bernard of the *Daily News* admonished critics of “The Da Vinci Code” that “It’s just a movie, folks.” Interestingly, as Bill Donohue said on a radio show, Bernard, who is Jewish, went ballistic when “The Passion of the Christ” was released. Wasn’t that “just a movie?”

HOWARD REFUSES PLEA FOR DISCLAIMER

Two weeks before the “Da Vinci Code” opened, director Ron Howard was quoted as saying there will be no disclaimer in the film.

Bill Donohue’s response was as follows:

“The book which the film is based on begins with three ‘facts,’ all of which are malicious lies, yet Ron Howard says no disclaimer is needed because ‘this is a work of fiction.’ He is disingenuous.”

Here is a list of the groups that got a disclaimer about a fictionalized TV show or film:

Asians:	“Year of the Dragon”
Blacks:	“Birth of the Nation”
Gays:	“Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back”
Jews:	“Merchant of Venice”
Mormons:	“Big Love”
Muslims:	“True Lies”
Native Americans:	“Pocahontas II”
Nearsighted:	“Mr. Magoo”
Wolves:	“White Fang”

“That’s right—even wolves merited a disclaimer: Disney put a disclaimer in ‘White Fang’ saying there is no evidence of a healthy pack of wolves attacking a human in North America. Forget about wolves, if Howard were as sensitive to Catholics as those responsible for ‘Life is Beautiful’ were to Jews, he would have acceded to our request to inject a disclaimer. That 1998 film—a dark comedy about the Holocaust—opened with a voice-over saying it is a fable. So is ‘The Da Vinci Code.’”

“John Calley, a co-producer of ‘Da Vinci Code,’ has admitted that the film is anti-Catholic. As I said in our *New York Times* op-ed page ad on March 6, ‘if the film is remembered for the vicious lies it tells about Catholicism, it will not be John Calley’s reputation that will be sullied.’ Apparently, Ron Howard is more of a gambler than I thought. Had he done what other directors have done before him and put in a disclaimer, the risks to his reputation would have been minimal. Now it’s show time for Mr. Howard, and not just his movie.”

GUESS WHO BELIEVES “DA VINCI CODE” FABLE

According to Reuters, those in England who read the Dan Brown novel are twice as likely to believe the tale that Jesus had children with Mary Magdalene. Perhaps the most astounding figure is the 30 percent who believe this and haven’t read the book, not the 60 percent who read it and believe it to be true. To explain this, consider the data in the U.S.

In a *USA Today/Gallup* poll taken this month, 72 percent of Americans said that no movie had ever had a profound effect on their religious beliefs in any positive or negative way; 21 percent said they saw a movie that strengthened their beliefs; and 4 percent said they saw a film that caused them to question their religious beliefs. A Barna Group survey reported yesterday that 24 percent of those who read the book said it was helpful in relation to their “personal growth or understanding.” And only 5 percent said they changed any of their religious beliefs because of the *Da Vinci Code*.

Why the disparity between England and the U.S.? There is an inverse correlation between religiosity and belief in the *Da Vinci Code*'s thesis: the more likely one is to attend church, the less likely he or she is to believe the book's thesis. For example, the 2001 British census revealed that 72 percent consider themselves Christian, but only 8 percent regularly attend church services. Now consider that in the 2004 presidential election, 59 percent of regular churchgoers voted for Bush and only 35 percent of regular attendees went for Kerry. Couple this with the Barna data which found that liberals were twice as likely as conservatives to have altered their religious beliefs after reading the book, and the implications are obvious: those most likely to swallow the *Da Vinci Code*'s moonshine are those with the weakest faith, and those who are liberals (often one and the same).

"In other words," Bill Donohue said, "it's always easy to seduce liberals—just invite them to reject religion, especially Christianity—and watch them lap it up."

"60 MINUTES" ISN'T FOOLED

On May 1, CBS's "60 Minutes" did a segment on the *Da Vinci Code* that tore to shreds Dan Brown's "facts." Ed Bradley interviewed several professors and writers, all of whom blasted the book for its historical inaccuracies. Bradley put the definitive question to Bill Putnam, an author who investigated the book's thesis. Putnam was asked, "When you look at the list of hoaxes that have been perpetrated throughout history, where would you place this one?" He replied, "At the top."