

DISNEY DUMPS “DOGMA”; MOVIE, AND PROTEST, PROCEED

In what will surely be remembered as one of the biggest victories in the history of the Catholic League, Disney CEO Michael Eisner bowed to pressure by putting the squeeze on Miramax co-chairman, Bob and Harvey Weinstein, effectively telling them that the Disney/Miramax label will not appear on the new anti-Catholic movie, “Dogma.” Miramax faxed its news release to the Catholic League on April 7.

Two days prior to this decision, the Catholic League had issued a news release entitled, “Disney/Miramax Poised to Anger Catholics Again.” What prompted the release was a story in *Premiere* magazine and the *New York Post* about the movie. In it, Independent Film Channel host John Pierson was quoted as saying, “The Catholic League probably will have a problem.” Just last December, in *Playboy*, it was said, “If members of the Catholic League don’t picket this one, they’re comatose.”

The league’s recent actions were antedated by a letter of July 17, 1998 from William Donohue to Michael Eisner. “From what I have learned,” Donohue said of the movie, “it looks as though Catholic sensibilities will be offended once again.” He then said, “Perhaps it is not too late for something to be done about this.” Eisner never replied.

The Catholic League has a copy of the script for “Dogma.” In the film, Joseph and Mary have sex and a descendant of theirs is a lapsed Catholic who works at an abortion clinic; it is said of Mary that “Believing a wife never humped her husband—that’s just gullibility”; God is played by Alanis Morissette, a singer known for her nude videos and songs about oral sex; the 13th apostle resembles Jerry Springer; and the Mass is compared to lousy sex.

It is no wonder that Ben Affleck, who stars in the movie, was recently quoted as saying, “these things, definitely, are meant to push buttons.” The Catholic League, of course, has a few buttons of its own to push, and we won’t hold back.

The latest propaganda is that writer/producer Kevin Smith is a “devout Catholic.” Nonsense. “I stuck it out as a Catholic for a long time,” he is quoted as saying, “but in the end—you know, it’s called the Celebration of the Mass, but it’s no party. No one’s having a good time.”

The Weinsteins have purchased the film rights to “Dogma” and are looking for a new distributor (no date has been set for the opening). We will fight them to the end, assembling a coalition of allies to do so. One thing is for sure—Disney has finally gotten the message.

SAN FRANCISCO SHOWDOWN

An anti-Catholic group, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, held a public celebration in San Francisco on Easter Sunday. It did so with the approval of city officials and over the objections of the Archdiocese of San Francisco, the Catholic League and Catholics for Truth and Justice; the latter is a local group of activists.

When the so-called Sisters asked the Department of Parking and Traffic for permission to close off some blocks on Easter Sunday, they were denied. But the Board of Supervisors unanimously overturned that decision.

The league’s objections centered on the group’s blatant attacks on the Eucharist. For example, they have previously held a “Condom Savior Mass” wherein condoms were distributed

as communion wafers. In 1987, during the pope's visit to the U.S., they held a public exorcism of the Holy Father. After being contacted by the Catholic League, Mayor Willie Brown publicly asked the Sisters to choose another day, but he also privately blasted us for our protest (the exchange he had with William Donohue is published in this issue).

After the league took its protest to the media, two members of the City Supervisors reversed their vote, but it wasn't enough to stop the event. More than 7,000 anti-Catholic bigots took to the streets on Easter Sunday, holding a "Hunky Jesus" contest. The league hit them with an ad in the *San Francisco Chronicle* that sent everyone reeling (see inside for details).

LET THE PUS SURFACE

William A. Donohue

African-Americans have the NAACP, Jews have the ADL and feminists have NOW. Hispanics, Asians and Muslims are organized, as are many other segments of society, including homosexuals (gays have GLAAD). Catholics, of course, have the Catholic League. In each case, these groups have found it necessary to combat bigotry by establishing a civil rights organization. In most instances, the bigotry they fight is not openly expressed. There is one exception—anti-Catholicism: it is flaunted in public in a way that no other bigotry is.

How many times have you read a letter to the editor that is plainly anti-black, anti-Semitic, anti-Hispanic, anti-gay, etc.? How many times have you heard bigotry vented against these groups by callers to radio-talk shows? But when it comes to Catholics, and most especially when it comes to

Catholicism, that's a different story. Just read the middle section of this issue—it is replete with hate mail directed at Catholicism that was printed in newspapers. No other group can match this kind of in-your-face type of assault.

That's because anti-Catholicism, unlike other strains of bigotry, is publicly acceptable. Elites, in particular, voice their animus against Catholicism with aplomb. And when protesters get vicious, they are rarely condemned for their behavior. This is a problem not only in the U.S., but abroad. Take Canada, for example.

I was honored to be the keynote speaker at the Banquet Dinner of the Human Life International (HLI) conference in Toronto that was held in April. When I got to the airport, I hopped a cab to the International Plaza Hotel, the site of the conference. The cabbie said, "Oh, that place. The last time I passed by, they had police in riot gear out in front." Though they were gone by the time I got there, I was nonetheless stopped and questioned by a policeman as I entered the hotel.

As it turned out, earlier in the day there were hundreds of protesters in front of the hotel. The source of their protest was, of course, the conference. The protesters were aghast that Catholics had come from around the world to protest the killing of kids in the womb. So that is why they carried viciously anti-Catholic signs and taunted Catholics as they entered the hotel. Four years ago in Montreal, thousands of anti-Catholic bigots took to the street to protest the HLI conference.

Father Paul Marx is the founder and chairman of HLI, and he is ably assisted in his important work by Father Matthew Habiger and Father Richard Welch. The goal that these three decent men have carved out is to stop abortion, and for this they are subject to abuse. Those who hate them hate who they are just as much as they hate their work. That is why they flaunt their anti-Catholicism.

The Toronto media gave the event a lot of coverage. What they didn't do was to object to the anti-Catholicism of the protesters. That's because their ideological sympathies were with the anti-Catholic feminists, homosexuals and abortion providers who protested. It is not much different here in the states.

Surely it should be possible to object to the Catholic League's protest of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence without engaging in Catholic bashing. And it ought to be possible to object to Father Marx's work without advancing anti-Catholicism. But somehow it never works that way. The hatred of Catholicism is so deep, and so pervasive, that it rises to the surface—just like pus—whenever Catholics rally for a cause that is politically incorrect. Catholics like Sister Helen Prejean (of "Dead Man Walking" fame), who are passionately against the death penalty but not abortion, have no idea what I'm talking about.

Matt Lauer recently asked me on the "Today" show if I wasn't making a mistake by bringing attention to the antics of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. I answered by saying it was more important to fight bigotry, especially when it is being embraced by government officials. It was also important for another reason: once again, it brought the pus to the surface. In the long run, it is better to have anti-Catholicism out in the open so that everyone can see it for what it is. However, even here there is a problem.

What is so novel about anti-Catholicism, as opposed to other forms of bigotry, is that those who object to it are often labeled bigots just for doing so. The ADL, in particular, is guilty of getting more exercised about the nature of the Catholic League's protest than it is with Catholic bashing itself. That says a lot about what passes as defamation these days at the ADL.

Cultures change, and that is why we will not be deterred. Four

years ago, when we protested the Disney/Miramax movie, "Priest," the pundits said we couldn't be serious about taking on Disney. As you can tell from the cover story, they don't say that anymore.

WHY CATHOLICS PUT UP WITH CATHOLIC BASHING

by

DeaL W. Hudson

Crisis Magazine Editor & Publisher

In spite of the success of the Catholic League, two questions need to be answered: 1) Why is Catholic bashing is the only acceptable prejudice left in the United States? 2) Why do Catholics continue to put up with it?

So I decided to put these question to some experts, all regular contributors to *Crisis* magazine. Here is what they said in their own words.

Hadley Arkes: "Catholics have gradually accepted the premises of the other side by absorbing the tonality and the manners of the prejudice. So many Catholics are untutored in their faith that they respond positively to the cultural cues of modern liberalism."

Ralph McInerny: "The lack of concern among Catholics is probably an extension of their self-loathing. This is self-inflicted by self-doubt has created a disposition to start apologizing the moment you hear any criticism." There is clearly a failure of nerve among Catholics and no longer much

gratitude for the gift of the Church.”

Robert Royal: “Catholics are generally doing well in America; they like America, and they think anti-Catholicism is a kind of fringe position. They do not realize how the prejudices spread by the media create a real threat to the faith.”

Fr. James Schall: “So many are weak in their faith they do not see the very fact of Catholic bashing. With the general decline of knowledge about the faith, and move toward false tolerance, there is little willingness to admit that Catholic doctrines make them different.”

Fr. George Rutler: “Catholics for the last several generations have been trained to melt into the fabric of society, so it is very threatening to be considered counter-cultural. Catholics don’t want to rock the boat any more than is necessary.”

George Marlin: “In New York, Catholic bashing is considered chic, and so-called Catholic politicians are too gutless and too embarrassed to stand up for their faith, let alone punish the bashers. What it comes down to is that Catholics are embarrassed; they want to be part of the ‘in’ crowd, part of the upper crust where they think they will be welcome by going along with the flow of anti-Catholic sentiment. But they are not welcome there, and they will never be accepted.”

Ann Burleigh: “People pick their battles carefully, what they will go to the mat for. Catholics are often confident that they have a fuller truth, so bashing doesn’t seem to really matter. People want to concentrate on the things they can do to evangelize, so you let the chips fall where they may. The prejudice is very real but you can’t allow yourself to get bitter.”

Jody Bottum: “We are the Catholic, which means universal, Church. It is really hard to think of ourselves as a minority. The Catholic Church is also very old; we have seen it come and seen it go, and learned to take the long term view of things.

Catholics in America aren't bothered by it, so they learned to look past it."

Michael Uhlmann: "There is quite a bit of nativism in American political culture. The nineteenth-century arrival of Catholics immigrants challenged the assumption that America was a Protestant culture. Nativism resurfaced Blaine Amendment to ban public funding of private schools, but the real target was Catholic schools."

Michael Novak: "It would be surprising if they didn't hate the Church. Most people define themselves in relation to Catholicism. They call themselves "enlightened" in relation to the Middle Ages; "Protestants" are defined in relation to the Catholic experience. Both unbelievers and other Christians define themselves in relation to the Church. All of our history books have a built-in anti-Catholic bias."

There are probably many more reasons that Catholics sit passively by while their faith and their pope are being mocked on television, the stage, news programming, and in the movies. At the same time we are protesting the treatment of Catholics in the public square, we should be trying to understand the roots of our own apathy. One doubts that Catholic bashing would be remain so prevalent if Catholics themselves were tired of it.

WHITE HOUSE LIES ABOUT HORMEL

In late March, the Catholic League learned that the Clinton administration was moving quickly to resurrect the nomination of James Hormel as Ambassador to Luxembourg. On March 30, we released a statement to the press stating our long-standing objection: it is not Mr. Hormel's sexual orientation that we

find objectionable (we have never opposed any nominee or candidate for public office on these grounds), rather it is his approval of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence that we abhor.

On the same day as our new release, William Donohue wrote a letter to every member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee registering the league's concerns. Then, the very next day, at a White House press briefing, Press Secretary Joe Lockhart said there was "no basis in fact" that James Hormel saluted a group of actors who mock nuns and the Catholic sacraments. Baltimore broadcaster Les Kinsolving raised the question with Mr. Lockhart.

Kinsolving asked Lockhart if President Clinton agreed with Mayor Willie Brown of San Francisco that the "Sisters" should cancel their public celebration on Easter Sunday. Kinsolving also wanted to know if the President would ask Hormel to join with Mayor Brown in opposing the Easter event that the "Sisters" are planning. Lockhart characterized the questions as a "sort of ad hominem attack on Mr. Hormel."

William Donohue defended Kinsolving, calling Lockhart a liar:

"White House Press Secretary Joe Lockhart lied to reporters when he said 'there was no basis in fact' to the charge that James Hormel saluted the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence in San Francisco. In 1996, Hormel laughed approvingly as this anti-Catholic group paraded in front of him while he was doing commentary on KOFY TV; Hormel was covering the Lesbian, Gay, Transgender Pride Parade.

"Lockhart did not make a mistake yesterday—he lied. He said to Les Kinsolving that 'having spoken to Mr. Hormel directly on this subject, it has no basis in fact.' But the truth is there is a video of Hormel greeting the 'Sisters'; the Catholic League has a copy of this video. In addition, Senator Tim Hutchinson gave Hormel the opportunity to repudiate this

group, and Hormel refused to do so. None of this is news to Lockhart. He prefers to discredit critics of Hormel by saying that Hormel is the victim of 'ad hominem' attacks. This is spin control as perfected by the masters in the White House."

Donohue's charges against Lockhart were picked up by the press. It remains to be seen how this will flush out in the end.

GAY GROUP REWARDS BIGOTRY AGAINST CHRISTIANS

On March 28, at the 10th annual Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) Awards, the best Off Off Broadway honor went to the anti-Christian play by Paul Rudnick, "The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told."

William Donohue took note of this award with a news release to the media:

"If the Catholic League had given an award to an anti-gay play, we would have come under fire from every cultural maven in the artistic community. But when gays give awards to plays that bash Christians, that's perfectly acceptable. Of course, there is no such thing as an anti-gay play—there are only anti-Christian plays. GLAAD lies when it says it is opposed to defamation. Indeed it rewards it. As long as it's Christians getting defamed, that is.

"When 'The Most Fabulous Story' surfaced in December, I said that I had no intention of seeing a 'routine homosexual play' that featured 'full-frontal male nudity, filthy language, discussions of body parts, butch lesbians, effeminate gay men,

ranting against nature, damning God for AIDS, etc.’ I can only guess that the reason why this play captured the Off Off Broadway award and ‘Corpus Christi’ didn’t win the Broadway and Off Broadway award is because the boys managed to keep their pants on in the Terrence McNally play.”

REVISIONS GRANTED

In the January-February edition of *Catalyst*, we ran a story that described how a British publisher, Cadogan, released a travel book that contained a particularly nasty description of the Vatican. We registered an objection to this gratuitous slam and have now learned that forthcoming editions of the volume will be revised. We are pleased with this outcome.

UNIONOMICS

Dozens of organizations recently took out an ad in the *New York Times* opposing school choice. Among them, curiously, were many labor unions. We wrote them, received some responses, and are still confused. Par for the course.

CAMPAIGN AGAINST CATHOLICS FOR A FREE CHOICE

On March 24, Catholics for a Free Choice, headed by Frances Kissling, announced that it was starting a postcard campaign asking organizations to write to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan requesting that he review the Vatican's non-member state permanent observer status.

Kissling objects to the Holy See's status because of the Vatican's opposition to abortion. She wants it to have the same status as her group, which is that of a non-governmental organization (NGO); NGOs have more limited rights than member states. Currently, the Holy See's representative can take part in General Assembly debates and U.N. Conferences but cannot vote.

Upon hearing the news, the Catholic League announced a retaliatory strike against Kissling:

"Catholics for a Free Choice is a fraud: denounced by the National Catholic Conference of Bishops for its false credentials, Kissling's effort is nothing more than a well-funded letterhead comprised of anti-Catholics. Were it not for the likes of the Ford Foundation, there would be no such group; it has no members.

"The Catholic League will answer Kissling's campaign by starting its own: we will commence with a postcard campaign asking U.N. officials to revoke the NGO status of Catholics for a Free Choice. We are writing to Catholic organizations nationwide requesting that they contact Nitin Desai, Under Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs, and Hanifa Mezoui, who heads the NGO Section of the same department.

"From its inception, Catholics for a Free Choice has misrepresented itself as a Catholic organization. To be a

Catholic and lobby for abortion is as incongruous as it would be for a Catholic to lobby for slavery. It is time for the U.N. to give Kissling the boot.”

Members are urged to write to Mr. Nitin Desai, Under Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs, Room DC 2 – 2320, United Nations, New York, New York 10017, and to Ms. Hanifa Mezoui, Chief Non-Governmental Organization Section, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Room 1 – 1480, United Nations, New York, New York 10017.

THE BIGOTS AT PLANNED PARENTHOOD

On Tuesday, March 16, the day before St. Patrick’s Day, Planned Parenthood of Connecticut distributed green condoms at the state Capitol in Hartford. The condoms read, “Kiss Me I’m Irish,” “Put on the Green,” and “Four Leaf Cover.” State Senator Louis DeLuca has called for an investigation into how the state chapter of Planned Parenthood spends the \$1.1 million it gets annually in state funds.

The position of the Catholic League was to support Senator DeLuca and to raise the ante as well:

“Planned Parenthood, which began as a racist eugenics movement, has a history of Catholic bashing. That is why its latest in-your-face demonstration in Hartford is so emblematic of the organization.

“The Catholic League is writing to every member of the Connecticut legislature asking them to support Senator DeLuca’s investigation of the state chapter of Planned

Parenthood. But we are also asking that they send a more direct message to the organization by completely defunding their operation. It is one thing to advocate condoms, quite another to insult an ethnic group and the members of a world religion. That such a stunt was also pulled by the Planned Parenthood chapter in Newfoundland proves that this is a coordinated attack.

"We are sending to Planned Parenthood of Connecticut, and to the national headquarters in New York, copies of the *Catholic League's 1998 Annual Report on Anti-Catholicism*; their contribution will be duly noted in the 1999 report. It wasn't until October of last year that a chapter of Planned Parenthood had done something to merit inclusion in our 1998 report, suggesting that the Connecticut bigots are a little quicker on the draw."

We are happy with the responses that we have thus far received from some state legislators in Connecticut.