

PROTEST OF “NOTHING SACRED” SETS NEW RECORD

The Catholic League's boycott of the sponsors of the ABC show, “Nothing Sacred,” has already broken all previously-held boycott records for TV. Twenty major corporations have pulled sponsorship of the show, something no other organization has ever come close to doing. In addition, another quarter-million persons have signed the league's petition, bringing to 750,000 the number of Americans who have petitioned Disney to drop the show.

Thus far, the following corporate sponsors have stopped advertising on the show: Isuzu, Weight Watchers, K-Mart, Benckiser, DuPont, Red Lobster, Ocean Spray, Sears, AT&T, Glaxo Wellcome, Ponderosa, Dunkin' Donuts, Scott's Liquid Gold, Chrysler-Plymouth, Honda, Arm & Hammer, Home Depot, Borden, Alberto Culver and Montgomery Ward.

Interestingly, Chrysler-Plymouth appeared as a sponsor on the October 2 episode of “Nothing Sacred” in the New York City (WABC) and Boston (WCVB) markets, though no one from the automobile company authorized any such ad. An investigation by Chrysler-Plymouth determined that the ABC affiliates in New York and Boston “erred” in placing the ads; an apology was quickly forthcoming from the affiliates.

A total of 32 Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim organizations have joined the Catholic League in the boycott. In addition to those listed in the last issue of *Catalyst*, the following eight organizations have joined: Catholic Central Union, Catholic Coalition for Truth, Catholics United for the Faith, Christian Action Network, Dove Foundation, National Association of Black Catholics, National Cops for Life and Pro-Ecclesia Foundation.

“Nothing Sacred” may be popular with the critics (they almost uniformly labeled it the best new show on TV), but it’s a flop with the public. The ratings for the first month are in and “Nothing Sacred” is on the bottom of all the prime time shows on the four major networks.

The league’s efforts have been so strong that Disney/ABC has struck back with pledges to energize their side against us. “There will be a significant response to the Catholic League,” said co-executive producer of the show, David Manson. “We tried to be polite about their rhetoric, and perhaps that was a mistake. You will see a mobilized effort of support on behalf of the show,” he added.

Reporters have told us that Disney does not want to pull the show for fear of allowing the Catholic League the opportunity to claim victory. However, many have said it’s already too late to say otherwise.

A NOBEL PRIZE FOR ANTI-CATHOLICISM

On October 9, the Swedish Academy awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature to Dario Fo, the Italian playwright who is most known for his attacks on the Roman Catholic Church. His most famous work, “Mistero Buffo” (“Comic Mystery”), was branded by the Vatican in 1977 as the “most blasphemous show in the history of television”; it is not surprising, then, that the Vatican expressed astonishment when it learned that Fo had been given the Nobel Prize.

William Donohue released the following statement on Fo’s selection:

“I am well aware of the extent to which literature has become thoroughly politicized and debased in the West. Giving the Nobel Prize in Literature to an anti-Catholic bigot, and to a man who describes his own scatological work as ‘grotesque,’ settles the issue: the deans of literature enjoy celebrating what the common folk regard as trash.

“It is not accurate to maintain, as one Italian critic did, that this prize means that ‘everything changes, even literature changes.’ No, for that would suggest that the vector of change in the humanities has been on a course other than decline. Even more unbelievable is the comment by the Swedish Academy that Fo ‘has opened our eyes to abuses and injustices.’ That this can be said about a man whose defense of Stalinism is as well known as his hatred of Catholicism proves that the ladies and gentlemen who chose Fo have been blinded from reality for decades.”

YALE VIOLATES RIGHTS OF ORTHODOX JEWS

Five Orthodox Jewish students who attend Yale University are being penalized for objecting, on religious grounds, to mandated residence requirements on campus. The students, Lisa Friedman, Jeremy Hershman, Elisha Hack, Batsheva Greer and Rachel Wohlgelernter, do not want to live in dorms where the sexes are integrated and where bathrooms are shared by men and women; they also object to such sexual messages as condom machines and “safe sex” literature in the dorms.

Yale officials have instructed the students that the only way they can bypass living on campus is to buy their way out: the

students have been told that if they pay the room and board fee (nearly \$7,000), then they can live at home.

Though Catholics are not directly involved in this case, the Catholic League very much wants to assist the students. What is at stake is a principal of religious liberty: practicing and observant believers should have their rights respected by college administrators. If Catholic students come forth and request the league's assistance in this matter, they will, of course, be defended.

Currently, it is unlawful for private colleges and universities to discriminate against students on the basis of race and ethnicity, but when it comes to religion, there is no such prohibition. If this case is tested in court, religion may very well be added to the list of unlawful practices. Regardless of what happens in court, the Catholic League believes that what Yale is doing is an outrageous violation of the religious freedom rights of the objecting students.

William Donohue wrote to Yale president Richard Levin requesting that he reconsider the request of these students. Levin answered by saying "Although I respect the position of the Catholic League, I stand by the Yale policy for freshman and sophomores." Assuming that the students' attorney, Nathan Lewin, goes forward with this case, the league plans to file an amicus brief in support. Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz also stands ready to defend the students.

Here is the statement that the league made to the press about this issue:

"The Catholic League has been asked to review the situation confronting five Orthodox Jewish students at Yale University. It is our conviction that these students cannot be expected to maintain their religious commitments while being subjected to an environment that is so demonstrably antithetical to their beliefs. The degree of accommodation that they are requesting

is reasonable and without burden to others.

“To force students to violate their deeply-held religious beliefs for the sake of satisfying Yale’s sexually-correct living arrangements is unconscionable. It is also difficult to see how the much-vaunted goal of diversity can be accomplished when pluralism is so summarily abridged.

“The Catholic League is asking Yale administrators to reconsider their decision. In the event they do not, the league is prepared to join with others in taking whatever steps are necessary to secure justice.”

WHOOPI GOLDBERG ATTACKS THE POPE

On the September 26 edition of the ABC show, “20/20,” actress Whoopi Goldberg made several very harsh and unfair statements about Pope John Paul II. Interviewed by Barbara Walters about her new book, Goldberg said that this pope “infuriates” her; she indicted him for rejecting gays and young people.

The night prior to the interview, William Donohue had a chance to preview the interview and expressed his complaints on the NBC show, “Extra.” The following news release sums up his position:

“Whoopi Goldberg is known for two things: her acting and her political extremism. Unfortunately, her fondness for the politics of radicalism allows her to rail against the pope. But even so, she should learn to get some things right. Pope John Paul II welcomes gays as well as straights into the church. He no more rejects homosexuals because he disapproves

of sodomy than he rejects heterosexuals because he disapproves of fornication and adultery. As for young people, the millions of young men and women who attended World Youth Day in Paris this past summer, and in Denver in 1993, removes all doubt that he is loved by youth.

“The Catholic League cannot overlook that it is the Disney-owned station, ABC, that is featuring Goldberg’s tirade. It was Disney that gave us the movie, ‘Priest’; it was ABC’s Peter Jennings that allowed abusive comments to be made about Mother Teresa during her funeral; and it is ABC that is currently treating us to ‘Nothing Sacred.’ It’s enough to make Catholics wonder whether there isn’t something devilishly wrong with these folks.”

Upon hearing Donohue’s comments on “Extra,” Goldberg called the Catholic League president to discuss the matter with him. But Donohue was doing a TV interview at the time and so Goldberg spoke to league research analyst Tamara Collins. The actress asked Donohue to read her book and then call her about his concerns.

That same day, Goldberg had a personal letter delivered to Donohue, along with a copy of her book. Donohue read the book and decided it wasn’t worth getting back to her about it. He said it was “pure filth, the kind of screed that one might expect from an immature adolescent boy, not from an adult professional woman.”

The flap between Goldberg and Donohue wound up in the pages of the *National Enquirer*. Whoopi!

PROTEST OF AP STORY GETS RESULTS

In September, there was a report by the Associated Press (AP) that caught our eye and merited a response. In a story about the tragic gang-rape of a sixteen-year-old girl in Mexico City, the reporter commented that the crime was “an extreme one even in a heavily Roman Catholic and male-dominated society.”

The league sent a letter to AP stating that the article smacked of anti-Catholic bigotry. We noted that “it is highly unlikely that anyone would describe Israel as ‘heavily Jewish’ and ‘male dominated.’”

“I can see your point,” remarked AP Vice President and Executive Editor, William Ahearn. He promised to share our letter with the editors who handled the story.

STANFORD APOLOGIZES

On October 4, a bigoted attack occurred against the Irish and Catholics by students from Stanford University. Before the game with Notre Dame and during half-time, Stanford’s band parodied the Irish famine and staged a mock confrontation between a Catholic cardinal and the devil; the Irish were labeled “stinking drunks.”

The Catholic League issued the following statement to the press:

“It was only right that Stanford’s athletic director, Ted

Leland, apologized for the outrageous behavior of his band. But it is not enough. Not when everyone knows that if Native Americans had been parodied as drunks, the university would have taken a much more censorial approach. And just imagine what the reaction would have been had the band performed a mock debate between an Indian witch doctor and an evil spirit.

“The Catholic League does not desire to have the culprits forced into one of those mind-control sensitivity training seminars that are popular with the multiculturalists at Stanford. But it does demand that sanctions be taken against the offending students. At the very least, the students who partook in this bigoted exercise should be required to make a public apology to the Irish, Catholics and Notre Dame. Not to make this a precondition for continuing with the band would be to give the green light to bigotry.”

William Donohue asked Stanford president Gerhard Casper what he was going to do about the matter. President Casper wrote back saying that “The band has issued a public apology. The Athletic Department also has apologized, is revamping its procedure for reviewing band scripts, and has barred the band from field shows for the next three Stanford-Notre Dame games. I have apologized.”

The league is pleased with this response.

OREGON 'S **UNENVIABLE** **REPUTATION**

The Catholic League has no sure way of knowing which state has the worst record in tolerating anti-Catholicism, but if we had to guess, Oregon would be right there in the running. That's

interesting because Oregon has a disproportionate number of people who are agnostics and atheists. It may also explain why Oregonians are more anxious to give doctors the right to kill their patients than anywhere else in the nation.

It seems that advocates of doctor-assisted suicide in Oregon cannot make their case without bashing Catholicism. A measure barely passed in 1994 allowing assisted suicide but it was never implemented due to court challenges. Now the controversy has returned, with November 4 being the day when voters will decide whether the Oregon law that allows doctors to kill their patients should be repealed (though the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld the right of states to ban doctor-assisted suicide, it has not said that such acts are unconstitutional).

The league hopes that the voices of life are louder than the voices of death in Oregon (if we had to bet, we'd bet they're not). But whatever the outcome, the battleground is strewn with anti-Catholicism. It is one thing for suicide fans like Barbara Coombs Lee to make anti-Catholic remarks, quite another when leading mainstream newspapers join the fray.

It seems that the pundits in Oregon can't get over the audacity of the Catholic Church to actively oppose doctor-assisted death. They take the old view—the one associated with their un-schooled brothers in the Klan—that Catholics and their Church ought to sit back and relax and leave the driving to non-Catholics.

When Catholics don't lay down and die, we get statements from the *Register-Guard* in Eugene that "powerful national interests led by the Roman Catholic Church" are leading the charge. This, of course, is preferable to being told that Oregonians may have to "conform to the dictates of the Pope" if the Catholic side prevails (Coombs Lee made this remark).

It would be so refreshing to read that Oregonians reject the culture of death. It would be equally refreshing to note that

they reject anti-Catholicism as well.

CBS SHOW “MICHAEL HAYES” EXPLOITS CHURCH

The October 14 episode of the new CBS show, “Michael Hayes,” featured a confrontation between a U.S. District Attorney and a Catholic priest that had a decidedly ideological twist to it. The priest is observed and videotaped by the authorities while hearing the confession of a man involved in a terrorist plot.

Previously, we learn that the same priest gave sanctuary to IRA terrorists while working in Ireland. Now the priest is faced with a similar dilemma: to abide by Church rules and not break the seal of the confessional or to tell the authorities what he heard from an obviously guilty party to murder.

The judge proclaims that she will watch the tape and render a statement on its admissibility, but the viewer never learns the nature of her decision because the priest unexpectedly decides to testify as a witness for the prosecution, thereby violating his duties as a priest.

The following comment on the show was made by William Donohue:

“This episode of ‘Michael Hayes’ is based on the real-life event that took place in 1996 in Lane County jail in Oregon. At that time, the D.A. in Eugene surreptitiously taped a priest in the confessional and sought to use it in court. The Catholic League protested this move as a violation of the First Amendment right to freedom of religion. The D.A. subsequently apologized and pledged never to do this again.

“The worst part of this show is the conclusion that justice is better served by having a priest violate the seal of the confessional. In doing so, it promotes the pernicious idea that religion should bow to the power of government whenever there is a conflict between church and state. Adding to the politics of the show is the portrayal of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church—in this case the Archbishop of New York—as being unconcerned about anything outside of its own parochial concerns.

“TV land seems to delight in putting a negative spin on Catholicism these days. But what is happening around the nation is encouraging: Catholics are rallying to defend their Church in an unprecedented way.”

LOS ANGELES MUSEUM HOSTS ATTACK ON VIRGIN MARY

The Museum of Contemporary Art is hosting an exhibition by Robert Gober that is a direct attack on the Virgin Mary. Gober, who describes himself as an ex-Catholic gay man upset with the Church’s teachings on sexuality, has decided to express his outrage by defiling the Mother of God. His work was displayed in September and will continue to December 14.

In the promotional literature for Gober’s work, it says that after sculpting Our Blessed Mother in clay, and then draping her in a robe made of plaster, the artist “pierced his Virgin Mary with a phallic culvert pipe.” The point of this is then explained: “The fact that the corrugated pipe’s screwlike ribs penetrate the body bloodlessly evokes the Immaculate Conception by which the Virgin Mary was conceived in her

mother's womb without the violent stain of original sin, as well as the miraculous conception of Christ himself. Yet, the culvert deprives the Virgin Mary of the womb from which Christ was born."

William Donohue provided this statement to the press:

"The Catholic Church is under attack by those who are obsessed with sexual license precisely because they see the Church as their nemesis. Under special attack these days is the Virgin Mary. It is not hard to understand why: her natural goodness and purity stands in stark contrast to the moral destitution of her adversaries.

"As I wrote to the Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, 'there is a difference between creativity and creative license, the latter of which best describes Goyer's work.' I also made the point that the Catholic League does not want the work censored by government. But, I hastened to add, he was 'under no obligation to promote it [Goyer's work], unless, of course, you identify with the message.' 'That would be tragic,' I continued, 'because that would make you, like Goyer, a bigot.'"

Members can write to Richard Koshalek, Director of the Contemporary Art, 250 South Grand, Los Angeles, CA 90012.

"NOTHING SACRED" ABOUT THOSE PRIESTS

William Donohue's analysis of the fifth episode of "Nothing Sacred" is as follows:

"The priests on 'Nothing Sacred' are what we call in the real world 'losers.' Fr. Ray identifies himself to an old friend as a social worker (Fr. Eric also describes him this way). This is accurate: he is not a priest. Laboring under more doubts about the *job* he's in, Fr. Ray runs away and says, 'Sometimes I wish I could just disappear.' So do we.

"The few who like the show have repeatedly said that Fr. Ray is balanced by Fr. Leo and Fr. Eric. Their idea of balance was shown last night when Fr. Leo dutifully apologizes to Rachel, the girl who had the abortion, about his 'judgmental' attitude. Moreover, neither he nor any of the other priests showed one ounce of compassion for Rachel's mother: when she learned that her daughter had an abortion, and was taken aback by the news, no priest made any attempt to comfort her (read: abortion is unfortunate, not wrong). And it was instructive to see that Fr. Leo is so depressed about his *job* that he, like Fr. Ray, runs away. Keep going we say.

"The best was Fr. Eric. When asked by high school kids about Adam and Eve and the Holy Spirit, Fr. Eric is totally dumbfounded. Indeed, the doubting students prove to be quicker and brighter than their teacher. In short, elementary teachings of the Church can't be defended by this jerk of a priest.

"Adding to the fun was meeting Fr. Philip. Like Fr. Ray and Fr. Leo, he's depressed. He's also an alcoholic, has spots on his hands (from what we can only guess) and confesses that he has no family or friends. In short, he fits in like a glove.

"The show is pathetic. But I must admit it does provide the Catholic League with lots of laughs."