

COLUMBIA PREZ APOLOGIZES FOR TAUNTS AT FORDHAM GAME

An anti-Catholic incident at Columbia University began with an apology that William Donohue deemed “inadequate” and ended with one he declared satisfactory.

On September 21, at a Fordham-Columbia football game played at Columbia, a band announcer at the Ivy League school commented during the half-time show that “Fordham’s tuition is going down like an altar boy.” The crowd loved it. Two days later, a Fordham student, Elizabeth Kennedy, contacted the Catholic League.

Donohue’s first response was to request an apology from Columbia president Lee Bollinger. He was quoted in the New York Times saying, “It angers me because I know the multicultural mantra is so much the rage on college campuses, and for elite institutions like Columbia to provide an enthusiastic response to bigotry is disturbing.”

On September 23, a spokeswoman for Columbia extended an apology for what happened. But Donohue wanted more: he wanted to hear from Bollinger and thus branded the apology “inadequate.” Donohue was particularly disturbed to learn that the offending student, Andy Hao, had his script approved by a Columbia staff person, Catherine Webster.

Donohue then sent a letter to the 16 members of Columbia’s board of trustees, to the presidents of select New York-area colleges, and to the presidents of all Ivy League colleges, expressing his concerns. He contrasted Bollinger’s inaction to the meritorious response that was provided by Stanford’s past president, Gerhard Casper, when a like incident occurred at Stanford in 1997.

In 1997, there was an anti-Catholic and anti-Irish incident during the half-time of a Notre Dame-Stanford football game. Following complaints lodged by the Catholic League and others, President Casper publicly apologized for what happened and wrote a personal letter to Donohue expressing his sincere regret. Casper also barred the band from field shows during the next three Stanford-Notre Dame games and ordered a review of its procedure for approving band scripts.

“President Casper acted responsibly,” Donohue said. “President Bollinger has not.” The Catholic League president concluded by saying, “I hope you would agree and would therefore use the example of President Casper as a role model in the event that bigotry—of any kind—were to unfortunately strike your campus.”

On October 8, at Bollinger’s request, Donohue met with the Columbia president. An apology was granted and measures have been instituted to prevent such an occurrence again. Thus did the issue end on a good note.

VATICAN WANTS REVISIONS

The Catholic League was delighted to defend the Vatican’s response to the sexual abuse policy passed by the U.S. bishops in Dallas. All the Vatican wants is for certain revisions to be made before final approval is granted.

“Fair-minded observers of the Catholic Church were hardly astonished to learn that the Vatican would encourage the process begun in Dallas to continue,” we said. We took issue with those in the media, as well as activists on the left and

right, who willfully mischaracterized the Vatican's response as a flat-out rejection of the work of the U.S. bishops.

What the Vatican insisted upon, quite rightfully so, was the need to clarify that which is currently ambiguous. For example, the definition of sexual abuse in the Dallas charter is incredibly elastic and subjective. Similarly, respect for the due process rights of priests must be further refined; this would include respect for a statute of limitations.

We drew an analogy with higher education. When a doctoral student submits his dissertation, one of two things happens: a) he is dismissed from the program because his work has been rejected or b) he is permitted to continue in the program but must make satisfactory revisions before his work is accepted. There is no third way—never are dissertations accepted without fine-tuning.

Roughly the same process governs submissions by the bishops to Rome, and that is why the Vatican's response more resembled a thumbs-up than a thumbs-down.

NOTHING COVERT ABOUT ANTI-CATHOLICISM

William A. Donohue

I regard the prejudice against your Church as the deepest bias in the history of the American people." This comment was made by historian Arthur Schlesinger, Sr. to Msgr. John Tracy Ellis. It was first published in 1956 in a book written by Ellis.

Little has changed since that time to make Schlesinger's remark dated. If anything, the virus of anti-Catholicism has deepened; not in terms of anti-Catholicism against individuals (where there has been unmistakable progress), but in terms of bigotry aimed at the Church and her teachings. Indeed, what is disturbing about anti-Catholicism these days is how visceral and open it is.

New York Guardian Angel and radio/TV talk-show host Curtis Sliwa is right to say that students at Columbia University can't mention the Cherokee Jeep without being charged with slighting Native Americans. But they can roar with laughter when a filthy joke is told about priests. Nothing shameful about that. This explains why the offending student actually enhanced his hero status when he refused to apologize. His basic point was there is nothing wrong with anti-Catholicism.

Bigotry against many groups is still commonplace in our society, but in most cases it's been driven underground. It most certainly is not respectable. But when it comes to expressions of anti-Catholicism, there is nothing covert about it: it's the one in-your-face type of bigotry that is extant. Here's the proof.

The Columbia University student who made the anti-Catholic joke not only did not apologize, he offered more in the way of anti-Catholic commentary when questioned. For example, he blasted the Church for the Inquisition. Forget the fact that in two years, 1937 and 1938, half a million political prisoners (or 20,000 a month) were shot in Stalin's Russia, while at the height of the Spanish Inquisition an average of 10 heretics a month were condemned: what matters is that the Columbia student justified his bigotry on the grounds that we Catholics deserve to get bashed.

Phil Donahue agrees with the student. Towards the end of the segment I did with Phil and the Columbia student, Andy Hao, Phil went on a tirade against the Catholic Church. His

comments had absolutely nothing to do with the subject, but they revealed a great deal about his deep-seated contempt for Catholicism. This is what he said: "I think the Catholic Church has been getting away for 2,000 years with the notion that everything it does is divinely inspired. Not true. It's a human institution. It's as subject to error as any other human institution."

In other words, it's time we Catholics got our comeuppance. Phil literally went on to say that the Church "shouldn't be treated with such deference and reverence." My reply was to say, "The theological differences that you may have can be argued in a civil way. But you can't use that to justify bigotry." I am totally convinced that my point went flying right over his head, so visceral is his hatred of the Church.

When confronted with arguments that justify bigotry, it's sometimes wise to give the bigot a dose of his own medicine. Andy Hao is Asian. I asked him, quite directly, if he would be offended if during the half-time festivities of a Columbia ping-pong game, someone said to the Asian players on the Columbia team, "All gooks go home." Guess what? This is when Andy's sense of humor collapsed. He thinks it's humorous to bash my religion but takes great umbrage at any assault on his ancestry.

Not for one moment can it be imagined that Phil Donahue, or any other TV talk-show host, would discuss a public act of bigotry—vented at a non-Catholic group—and side with the bigot. If gays are bashed, the gay bashers are the bad guys. If Jews are bashed, the Jew bashers are the bad guys. If Catholics are bashed, the bad guys are the Catholics.

Sociologically, this is not difficult to understand. Many on the left ascribe to a form of Marxism which views the world as comprised of superordinates and subordinates. The former are the victimizers and the latter are the victims. Superordinates include those who are wealthy; white; male; Christian; and

heterosexual. Subordinates include those who don't share the attributes of the superordinates.

This vision of society holds that once a group or institution has been assigned a victimizer status (such as the Catholic Church), bigotry against it can always be justified. The reverse is also true: once declared a member of the victim class, virtually all acts of bigotry against a superordinate can be justified. In short, there are good guys and there are bad guys. We're the bad guys.

So these are the rules of the game. Because we know the fix is on, we refuse to respect them. Indeed, we delight in breaking the rules and are deliberately subversive of them. That's the Catholic League way, and we trust it's your way as well. And they call us conservative?

THE PEDIGREE OF AN AMERICAN DOCTRINE

Philip Hamburger's *Separation of Church and State*

By Joseph A.P. DeFeo

In defending school choice or God in the Pledge of Allegiance, it is too easy to find oneself on the wrong side of the "wall of separation" between church and state. But as Professor Philip Hamburger reveals in his timely and well-researched tome, *Separation of Church and State*, few know the secret history of this American doctrine.

The phrase "separation of church and state" was employed most famously by President Thomas Jefferson in his letter to the Danbury Baptist Association in 1802; he asserted that the

principle was established by the First Amendment. According to the "separation myth," there is a straight line from Jefferson's letter to Justice Hugo L. Black's 1947 decision in *Everson v. Board of Education*, in which the "wall of separation" became official constitutional law. But Hamburger shows that the real truth is rarely pure and never simple.

Far from being the intention of the Founders, the idea of separation of church and state began as a slur. Though the First Amendment guaranteed religious freedom and prohibited the federal establishment of any church, the states were free under the Constitution to have officially supported churches. Most states had established churches with ministers receiving state salaries. Dissenters, members of religions that were not officially sanctioned, had often to pay taxes to support the ministers of the established churches; these often urged disestablishment. In a gross caricature of the dissenting position, establishment ministers accused dissenters of attempting to separate church and state, undermining the foundations of the state. Far from it, the dissenters railed against the union of church and state, which they associated with Catholic Europe and Anglican England, while maintaining that there existed an important sociological connection between religion and government. They believed that religion provided a moral foundation for government, which should govern in a manner consistent with Christianity while not tampering with religious freedom. The antiestablishment position was to restrain government, but not churches. There was, in other words, a complex middle ground between union and separation of church and state; but heated rhetoric and wild accusations made it difficult to see.

Interestingly enough, the letter Jefferson sent to the Danbury Baptists was nearly forgotten. The Baptists who received the letter had been pressing merely for disestablishment of the Congregational church in Connecticut. But in Jefferson's letter they got more than they bargained for; perhaps

conscious of their delicate position and not wanting to espouse anything so radical as to expose them to public backlash, they demurred and never advertised that President Jefferson supported them. For decades afterward, dissenters who did not want a union of church and state still wanted some elements of religion reflected in government, such as prosecution for blasphemy and obscenity, the appointment of government chaplains, and presidential proclamation of fast days and days of thanksgiving (something Jefferson steadfastly refused to do).

Although the separation myth treats the separation as an established principle since the passing of the Bill of Rights, the evidence shows otherwise. Various parties proposed amendments to the Constitution to secure the separation of church and state, since the First Amendment clearly was not sufficient to do so. After attempts to amend the Constitution, champions of separation adopted a new tactic: historical revision. They declared that separation had been implied by the First Amendment all along, and that everyone knew it.

The idea of separation only gradually lost its status as a slur in American politics. Democratic-Republicans pressed for a version of it in the election of 1800, both to silence largely Federalist establishment clergy who assailed Jefferson for his ungodliness, and to attract the votes of dissenting clergy. Although many thought the language of separation extreme, an interesting reversal occurred. The idea gained ground among dissenting Protestants, who wanted both disestablishment and a further check on the more organized established churches. The dissenters offered a particularly Protestant and increasingly anticlerical reading of "separation of church and state," in contradistinction to "separation of religion and state." Organized, hierarchical churches (such as the Catholic and Episcopalian churches) would be restrained from influencing the regime, while the private judgement of individual Protestants would be

incorporated into government.

This interpretation of separation caused a sordid turn in the development of separation. Hamburger deftly details the reconceptualization of what it meant to be American in the 19th century. The glorification of egalitarianism, individualism, and mental independence from authority and superstition ushered in an expanded anticlericalism. No longer was it merely a non-conforming Protestant ideal to reject the clergies of the hierarchical churches; it became an American value. To this day, Hamburger remarks, groups supporting separation of church and state rely on the implicit characterization of their opposition as "un-American."

In the 19th century an increasing specialization was encouraged, calling for clergy to stick to their business of saving souls while governors would do the governing. This set limits on the functions of the clergy, calling for them not to preach on political matters as though there were areas where God did not matter. It tended to create a sphere of government impenetrable to religion; governors would have to leave their religion at home.

These cultural changes accompanied shifting immigration patterns that brought in increasing numbers of Irish and German Catholics. These immigrants with their foreign religion provided an easy target: the hierarchy with foreign ties, rigid claims of authority, and apparent superstition to boot. In addition, Protestants viewed Catholics as enslaved by their clergy and lacking individual judgement. This represented the very antithesis of the newly reformulated Protestant American ideal. Separation of church and state became a separation of *the Church* and state. Fears of "Romish" ambitions in the government of the United States gave the move for separation extra momentum. Generic anti-clericalism erupted into anti-Catholicism. What had once been a struggle among various brands of Protestantism became a convenient vent for anti-Catholic and nativist fears, and lent some unity to American

Protestantism in the process.

Hamburger notes that the extent of the connection between anti-Catholicism and the growth of the ideal of separation of church and state has been expunged from the separation myth. But the facts are undeniable—and not without irony. Among various proposed safeguards of religious liberty were loyalty tests and oaths for Catholics, barring them from office or voting, and even a proposed constitutional amendment that would sever the American Catholic Church from Rome. Public monies were denied to Catholic schools from the 1840s onward, although it was granted to the public schools, which taught Protestant doctrine. The difference, the reasoning went, was that public monies could not be used to educate children according to the dictates of the Catholic Church, although it could be used to educate children according to the dictates of the majority of individual Protestant consciences.

Many nativist and racist organizations naturally saw a way to limit the power of Catholics in promoting separation. The Ku Klux Klan included a promise to uphold separation in its membership oaths, and campaigned heavily against the Catholic Church and for separation. Even the man who finally made separation official federal law, Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black, was a prominent Klansman.

Other groups that supported separation were the secularists. They and other non-Christians wished to eliminate the Protestant interpretation of the First Amendment and instead sever government connections to all religion whatsoever. With their help, separation ultimately grew from a restraint placed only on the government to a restraint applied discriminatorily to a few churches, to a restraint replaced on all churches. By the time this evolution occurred, Hamburger comments, it was too late for the Protestants who opened this door to do anything about it.

Despite the almost irresistible opportunities for irony

provided by his material, Hamburger's tone is sober. He points out that the idea of separation has prevented clearly constitutional transactions between church and state, has worked to restrain rather than protect religion, and has become an instrument for enforcing "a majority's oddly conformist demands for individual independence and strangely dogmatic rejections of authority." Although skeptical of the wall of separation's ultimate value, Hamburger concentrates more on history than polemics.

Hamburger does not concentrate heavily on more recent applications of the separation principle. The fact that it is still used in a less-than-scrupulous manner supports his case. Separation supporters wink at candidates canvassing for votes in black churches while they scream bloody inquisition over the Catholic Church's opposition to abortion. And the principle of separation is not even applied consistently against the Catholic Church: although her position on abortion is met with cries of violation of the separation of church and state, her stance on social justice and the pope's position on the death penalty are quoted without qualms.

In his effort to remove some of the whitewash slapped over the history books, Professor Hamburger is moderate and exacting. He identifies a conspicuous gap in the scholarship of American religious freedom scholarship, and fills it ably.

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DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE REFUSES TO DROP KISSLING

As we went to press, the Democratic National Committee (DNC) was still refusing to budge on its relationship with Frances Kissling's anti-Catholic organization, Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC).

The DNC has taken a lot of heat over the past few months, forcing it to change strategies, but at the end of day it has yet to drop CFFC from the "links" section of its website. However, the Catholic League is not bound by the timetable of an election year, and will thus continue its protest until justice is done.

The Catholic League has placed ads against the DNC in such Catholic weekly newspapers as the National Catholic Register, Our Sunday Visitor and the Wanderer; it has also run the ad in the influential Washington publication, Roll Call. In addition, the Catholic League sent to every member of the House and Senate a copy of an article on CFFC written by William Donohue.

Our campaign has not been without effect: the DNC has been deluged with angry phone calls, letters, faxes and e-mails. The controversy has also triggered a strong response from the bishops. Finally, it has forced the DNC to try new ways of diverting attention from its ties to Kissling.

At the request of the Most Reverend Wilton D. Gregory, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Rev. Msgr. William P. Fay, the USCCB's general counsel, wrote a letter to DNC chairman Terry McAuliffe protesting the DNC's listing of an anti-Catholic group in the "links" section of its website. Bishop Gregory also wrote a letter of support to Donohue.

In his letter to McAuliffe, Msgr. Fay stressed that the bishops' conference has publicly said that CFFC is not a Catholic organization and that indeed it works against the teachings of the Church. He cited the May 10, 2000 statement by Bishop Joseph A. Fiorenza, then head of the bishops' conference, taking CFFC to task for misrepresenting itself as a Catholic group. Msgr. Fay not only asked McAuliffe to remove CFFC from its website, he requested that the DNC add the USCCB's website (www.usccb.org) to its "links" section.

Donohue then released a statement to the media saying, "Bishop Gregory continues to exercise exemplary leadership and the letter by Msgr. Fay to Terry McAuliffe lays the issue on the line with moral clarity." Donohue branded Kissling "an open enemy of the Catholic Church," maintaining that if it weren't for "the Warren Buffetts of this world," she wouldn't exist (the Buffett Foundation is a generous donor to Kissling).

The DNC's response to all this was to pad the "Catholic" section of its website. Initially, the DNC listed only CFFC in this section. Responding to the heat, it decided to add a legitimate Catholic source, Catholic-USA.com (it is an umbrella website that lists many authentic Catholic entities—including the Catholic League). But this resolved nothing as CFFC remained on the DNC's website.

When things heated up again, two new organizations were added to this section, Network and Call to Action. Again, the DNC dodged the issue, leading Donohue to charge McAuliffe with "playing a shell game with Catholics." With the temperature rising, the DNC decided to pad its "Catholic" section even further, this time adding two Catholic magazines, *America* and *Sojourner*.

This did nothing to mollify the Catholic League. In fact, it made things worse. "DNC Rebuffs U.S. Bishops; Continues to Play Games with Catholics," is what the headline of our news release said.

The DNC has not only refused to drop CFFC, it has refused the request of the bishops to list the USCCB on its website. "Now McAuliffe may argue that the USCCB is already listed on its website," Donohue told the media, "because one of its 'Catholic' listings, Catholic-USA.com (an umbrella site), has the USCCB listed (under its former name, NCCB/USCC)." But this argument, Donohue said, "is disingenuous because America is already listed on the Catholic-USA website." This means the DNC effectively rebuffed the bishops. And by doing so, the DNC risks offending all Catholics, as well as people of all faiths.

Then came the news that Frances Kissling was going to be interviewed on the October 12 edition of the PBS show, "To the Contrary." Donohue immediately sent the following letter to McAuliffe:

It is disconcerting that the DNC continues to list Catholics for a Free Choice on its "links" page. This is troubling because I do not believe you would intentionally sponsor an association between the DNC and an anti-Catholic group. Apparently, you believe that Frances Kissling's group is merely pro-choice. That is why I am asking you to reconsider your decision, especially in light of what I am about to tell you.

This Saturday, October 12, the PBS show "To the Contrary" will feature Frances Kissling. They are flagging this segment as follows: "Frances Kissling's mission: defrocking the Catholic Church and its massive political power. We profile her on the next 'To the Contrary.'

This settles the matter. Kissling is being profiled not because she is a pro-choice leader, but because she is a declared enemy of the Catholic Church.

Given this evidence, I implore you to immediately drop the DNC's link with Catholics for a Free Choice. Thank you for

your consideration.

The interview with Kissling proved to be revealing. "Frances Kissling is so openly anti-Catholic," said Donohue, "it is a wonder that DNC chairman Terry McAuliffe continues to stand by his woman." Donohue drew on Kissling's own remarks to make his point. Here is some of what she said.

Kissling states in the program that her goals are:

- * "to neutralize the political power of the Church"
- * "to defrock the Catholic Church of its massive political power"

Kissling made the following charges against the Church:

- * The hierarchy of the Church "has lost all moral credibility"
- * "The current thrust in the Church [is] to claim that every critic is anti-Catholic"

For comments like these, Kissling was complimented by hostess Bonnie Erbe, who said of the CFFC president that she's "the woman who's leading the charge against the Church."

In his remarks to the press, Donohue said her goals are those of "the Church's enemies." He also said that "Loyal sons and daughters of Catholicism do not speak this way." Regarding Erbe's quip, Donohue said, "Thanks, Bonnie—you unwittingly summed up Kissling's resume for us."

McAuliffe's obstinacy on this issue must be met with an even greater determination on the part of Catholics. It is the duty of Catholic League members to get their friends and relatives to write, call and fax the DNC.

Write:

Mr. Terry McAuliffe

Chairman

Democratic National

Committee

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Washington, D.C. 20003

E-Mail: dnc@democrats.org

Call: (202) 863-8000

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MESSIANIC MADNESS

A group called Queens College Messianic Group brought a peculiar brand of anti-Catholicism to Queens College this fall. The group is related to Chosen People Ministries, an organization that is similar to Jews for Jesus. Their antics at the New York City campus managed to anger both Catholics and Jews.

No sooner had the new school year begun when Queens College Messianic Group began passing out hundreds of Chick Publications' tracts to students (Chick is one of the most prolific publishers of anti-Catholic literature in the nation). One of the tracts, "Love the Jewish People," blamed the Vatican for the Holocaust and asserted that "Hitler worked closely with the Jesuits."

Father Paul Wood is the Catholic chaplain at Queens College. We were glad to offer some advice to him when he called. He was joined by a campus rabbi and minister in petitioning the president of the college to make a statement about the group. William Donohue also wrote a letter to Queens College president James L. Muyskens asking that he do so.

Father Wood's and the rabbi's objections were featured in the campus newspaper and some concessions were granted by the Messianic Group. The head of the organization said he did not know that Chick Publications was anti-Catholic; he promised not to distribute its literature again.

Dr. Muyskens wrote to Dr. Donohue saying he shared our “distaste” for what happened. He said the offending students had extended an apology and that an open letter was being sent to the entire Queens College community “emphasizing respect and sensitivity towards all faiths and denouncing false and defamatory information and attacks on any faith or denomination.” Donohue congratulated Muyskens for his efforts.

This is not the first time Father Wood has spoken up when anti-Catholic bigotry has hit his campus. He has the courage and intellect necessary to get the job done. He is a model campus minister.

NEW HAMPSHIRE WITCH HUNT

Mark A. Abramson, a New Hampshire attorney, went to court in October seeking all Catholic clergy personnel and probation files, archives and complaints of sexual abuse made to the Diocese of Manchester. The names of the alleged victims were not released by Abramson. This, in turn, led diocesan lawyers to file a motion forcing the release of the names.

Mark A. Abramson showed no interest in obtaining the personnel files of ministers, rabbis, imams, teachers, social workers or psychologists. Just priests. His sense of fairness also allowed him to oppose due process rights of Roman Catholic priests: they have no right, in his mind, to know the identity of their accuser.

In our comment to the media, we said: “The Diocese of Manchester ought to release all its priest personnel files to Abramson, but with the names of

the priests deleted throughout. For justification, they can cite Abramson's tactic of withholding the names of priest accusers as being exemplary: what's good for the goose is good for the gander. This way everyone will be presented with reams of personnel information positively unrelated to any human being."

For his "witch-hunt" efforts, we are including Mark A. Abramson in our 2002 annual report on anti-Catholicism. Indeed, we mailed him several copies of our 2001 annual reports so he could get an idea what his entry will look like. Please write to him at Abramson, Brown & Dugan, 1819 Elm Street, Manchester, NH 03104.

ANY MINISTERS OR RABBIS?

A District Attorney from Massachusetts, Bristol D.A. Paul F. Walsh, Jr., has released the names of 20 priests accused of sexual misconduct in complaints to the Fall River Diocese. Walsh admitted that his decision to name priests facing accusations too old to prosecute would be heavily criticized. He said he did so because he was angry at the way diocesan officials had handled these matters.

A well respected Boston criminal defense lawyer, Harvey Silvergate, blasted Walsh for being "unprofessional, unethical and in many ways immoral." What bothered Silvergate was the fact that the statute of limitations had run its course and the priests were being indicted in public.

William Donohue wrote the following letter to D.A. Walsh:

"It has come to my attention that you have released the names of Catholic priests who have been accused of sexual abuse. My

attempts to find similar lists of accused ministers and rabbis in your jurisdiction have been unsuccessful. I would appreciate it if your office would provide me with this information.”

On October 4, Walsh answered Donohue this way:

“I am in receipt of your letter of September 27, 2002 concerning your attempts to locate names of abusers. To help with your request if you could provide me with details of the efforts you’ve made to date (copies of letters, correspondence, phone calls to which agencies and other sources) I might be able to better accommodate you.

“I thank you for your interest because it shows that you share my concern that sexual predators should be known to the public and prevented from abusing more innocent victims.”

On October 9, Donohue fired back:

“Thank you for your letter of October 4. The reason I wrote to you initially (September 27) was in response to a news report that said you were releasing the names of priests accused of sexual misconduct. I did not read that you were similarly going to release the names of ministers and rabbis who have been accused of the same crime, and that is why I wanted to know whether such a list exists. If it does, then please forward a copy to me. If it doesn’t, then I’d like to know what accounts for your selective interest in this subject.

“In short, when you say that you are delighted that I share your concern that sexual predators should be known to the public, it may very well be that my concern is more genuine than yours: the selective pursuit of wrongdoers is what is commonly known as a witch hunt. Wouldn’t you agree?”

Donohue is awaiting a reply from Walsh.

Note: Both of the above stories show how “the pursuit of

justice" on the part of some D.A.'s results in the pursuit of injustice.

FACT OR FICTION: IT'S CATHOLIC BASHING JUST THE SAME

Whether it's based on fact or fiction, or whether it's portrayed on the stage or on the screen, the Catholic bashers are a busy lot these days. They are as good at twisting the facts as they are at developing fictional accounts. Truth doesn't matter. What matters is results.

In 1858, Church authorities in Bologna learned that a 6 year-old Jewish boy, Edgardo Mortara, had been baptized as an infant by a Catholic servant. They quickly had him abducted and brought to Rome where he was raised Catholic.

This story, recounted in a 1997 book by David Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara*, is now the source of a play and an upcoming film (financial problems have temporarily put the movie on hold). "Edgardo Mine" is a play by Alfred Uhry which opened for a month, October 17 to November 17, at the Hartford Stage in Connecticut.

By today's standards, what happened to young Mortara was shocking. But to judge anything, all the evidence must be presented—not just some of it. On this score, Kertzer is a failure. Neither he nor any of his "artistic" copycats have much interest in asking some important questions.

Why was Mortara baptized in the first place? Because the servant girl thought he was dying and was in need of salvation. Why was he taken from his family? Because it was the considered judgment of the Church at the time that a baptized Christian could not be raised in a Jewish home. He had to be removed lest the Church be party to apostasy. The validity of Baptism was also being tested. And so what happened to this poor kid? As he grew up he developed a father-son relationship with Pope Pius IX. He even became a priest.

“Evelyn” is a movie starring Pierce Brosnan that is based on an allegedly true story. It is about a father who fights the Irish government and the Catholic Church, which took custody of his children after his wife abandoned them. Set in 1953, the film details the horrid conditions the kids lived under. In this respect it is reminiscent of “The Magdalene Sisters,” a film that portrays the brutal lifestyle afforded wayward young women at the hands of the nuns who cared for them.

None of these “real-life” stories carry any meaning when ripped out of historical context. When Edgar Mortara was taken, slavery was legal in the U.S. and the English had just finished starving the Irish to death. And these were good times compared to what was happening in less-civilized nations. Tough nuns, especially Irish nuns, have sometimes overstepped, but at the end of the day, it needs to be asked what would have happened to these throw-away young girls had the nuns done what everyone else in society did to them, namely shut their doors to outcasts?

It’s not just some of the film-makers who are bigots; some of the reviewers are as well. Take Jami Bernard, movie critic for the New York *Daily News*.

“There’s more bad news for the Catholic Church with ‘The Magdalene Sisters,’” writes Bernard, “a fine and furious portrait of a real-life miscarriage of justice.” She proceeds

to say that 30,000 Irish women were “enslaved, beaten and humiliated in the name of cleansing their soul.” Then she compared their conditions to that of a “concentration camp.” Thus did she denigrate Jews who died at Auschwitz.

When twisting the facts isn’t attractive, there is always the option of making up lies out of whole cloth. A new movie, “The Religion Hour” (“My Mother’s Smile”), does just that. It revolves around an atheist who is informed that his mother is about to be sanctified. The movie was dubbed by *Entertainment Weekly* as an “absurdist diatribe against hypocrisy in religion.” *Variety* came right out and branded it “anti-Catholic.”

“Jesus Has Two Mommies” is a gay fantasy come to the stage. It is also the favorite of Catholic bashers in Somerville, Massachusetts. For some reason, the well-heeled and exceptionally tolerant-types in this community can’t get enough in the way of anti-Catholicism. On December 6-7, the bigots will turn out in droves at the Somerville Theatre.

Peter Greenaway is a celebrated screenwriter. He’s also quite mad. His film, “The Baby of Macon,” was recently shown in Huntington, Long Island. The movie is about a 17th century woman who claims she had a virgin birth. It is also about the way she and the Catholic Church exploited her child. The flick features full nudity, a gynecological examination, eating of afterbirth and a Church-sponsored gang rape. The Cinema Arts Centre where it was shown called it “a volatile mixture of anti-clericalism and violence.” We call it names we’d rather not put in print.

So this is the state of anti-Catholicism in the “arts” for the fall of 2002. Hope the bigots chill out over the winter.

EQUAL PLAYING FIELD PROVES ELUSIVE

The Catholic League is often criticized for commenting on exhibitions, movies or plays before they have opened. We are also condemned for protesting bigoted portrayals of Catholics on the screen and for trying to punish the offenders. But none of this seems to apply to others.

We protested the Museum of Sex before it opened, and rightly so: we took a tour online and what we discovered was raunchy with a scholarly veneer. This, of course, didn't satisfy our critics—they said we should have at least waited until the museum opened to comment.

These same people, however, were nowhere to be heard from a few months back when New York Jews (and the Catholic League) pounced on the Jewish Museum for scheduling an exhibition that trivialized the Holocaust. Those who objected to this exhibition did so on the basis of reading a publication that offered a graphic description of what was to be displayed. That was enough to make a judgment call. Similarly, the online tour of the Museum of Sex offered sufficient grounds to make a call. But the outcry against the protesters—in both situations—was quite different.

"Barbershop" is a film that went over big in the African American community, this despite the fact that Rev. Jesse Jackson and Rev. Al Sharpton registered strong objections. They sought to have a segment that made fun of Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr. deleted from the yet-to-be-released DVD version. The reaction among blacks to Jackson and Sharpton was split, though it is fair to say most were not supportive of their efforts. It needs to be emphasized, however, that few

blacks slammed the two leaders for their protest. More revealing, fewer whites slammed them. Yet when the Catholic League objects to a film, it is not uncommon for Catholics, and especially non-Catholics, to accuse us of disrespecting the free speech rights of the offending party.

It's even worse than this. In the scene that Jackson and Sharpton took exception to, the black man who made fun of Parks and King was subjected to immediate rebuke by everyone else in the barbershop. Yet if a Catholic is portrayed in a parish dumping on Catholicism, he or she is never jumped on for doing so. If anything, everyone else chimes in. The ABC show that we got booted, "Nothing Sacred," was replete with such examples, beginning with that insufferable hippie priest Father Ray.

When the Catholic League complains about a TV program or a film, we are constantly told to lighten up—it's just a show or a flick. Why, then, do both the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) have Hollywood bureaus that do nothing but monitor the entertainment industry?

Both organizations provide all sorts of resources to see to it that their group is fairly portrayed on the screen. Now if it's just make-believe, why do they spend the bucks? And if it's more than that—if what is depicted may have real-life consequences—then why are we being ridiculed for objecting to unfair characterizations? They can't have it both ways.

In reality, what we see and experience affects our perceptions. That is why civil rights groups object to patently unfair portrayals. It explains why the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) supported Governor James McGreevey of New Jersey for calling on New Jersey poet laureate Amiri Baraka to resign

after reading an anti-Semitic poem. But if the Catholic League had called upon the African-American writer to step aside for reading an anti-Catholic poem, we'd have been accused of trying to censor Baraka. No such charges were levied against the ADL.

We could repeat examples like this all day. The bottom line is that an equal playing field for Catholics is still proving to be elusive. A better example of why we exist would be hard to find.