

WASHINGTON TIMES DOES A 180

A fight has been avoided, thanks to Michael Mahr, advertising director at the *Washington Times*. Here's the scoop.

The Eternal Gospel church of Layman Seventh Day Adventists (SDA) recently surfaced once again with another one of their insipid, anti-Catholic statements, this time in the pages of the *Washington Times*; a similar ad appeared on June 27, 1997.

Both the 1997 and the 1998 ads take the Catholic Church to task for not recognizing Saturday as the Sabbath. The ads are particularly hard on the pope and are laced with passages from Scripture designed to impute evil to the Church. Some of these silly charges have long been made—the Church as “WHORE” and “BEAST”—but some are new: the SDA ads actually charge that the pope is responsible for breaking down the walls that separate church and state.

Though the league finds the ads troubling, it finds it worse than disturbing that an established newspaper like the *Washington Times* would provide space for this bigotry. After all, the newspaper is not some rag found in artsy communities and college bookstores.

When William Donohue complained to *Washington Times* editor-in-chief Wesley Pruden in 1997 about an SDA ad, Pruden said that he was not responsible for the advertising section. He did say, however, that the ad was insulting. Furthermore, he said that he had brought this matter up with the appropriate persons in the advertising department, concluding that “I don't think this will happen again.” Well, it did.

This time Donohue sent a letter to the newspaper's advertising director, Michael Mahr. He cut to the quick: “The time for equivocation is over. Before I decide what to do, I need to know whether the *Washington Times* is finally willing to make a firm commitment never to run such an ad again.”

Meanwhile, James Cardinal Hickey, archbishop of Washington, wrote about this matter in the archdiocesan newspaper, *Catholic Standard*. He quite rightfully branded the ad as “an attack on the Pope” and as a throwback to the bad old days when it was perfectly fine to hurl bigoted invective against the Roman Catholic Church and especially the Holy Father.”

In a letter dated September 16, just two days after Donohue’s letter was sent, Mahr responded by saying that he personally reviews all controversial ads. He then dismissed Donohue’s concerns by saying, “I appreciate your sensitivity to the ad and regret it has offended you.”

In a news release of September 21, Donohue said that “we will conduct a publicity campaign against the newspaper that it will surely regret. We’ll see who gets the last laugh.”

On September 23, Michael Mahr called Donohue to say that the Washington Times would never run these ads again. He said that he was flooded with letters and e-mails, many of which came from priests, registering outrage at the ad. We are very pleased with Mr. Mahr’s decision and consider the matter settled once and for all.

DOUBLE DOSE OF CATHOLIC BASHING

It’s bad enough when a bigoted artist (it’s getting to be an oxymoron) trashes our religion, but what is even worse is the specter of a journalist who tries to outdo the artist. That’s what happened recently in Portland, Maine when the *Maine Sunday Telegram* reviewed the Stone Pinhead Ensemble’s performance of “Harold B. Thy Name.”

Billed as a “dark musical comedy,” the play was advertised as one which will “poke, provoke and annoy anyone with an ounce of Christian belief.” More specifically, it is an in-your-face assault on Catholic sensibilities: the setting for the play is the Vatican.

Even more reprehensible was the review in the *Maine Sunday Telegram* by Cathy Nelson Price. “Any play that calls the Catholic Church ‘the most feared of all the Jesus cults’ has a lot to offer in the world of satire,” Ms. Price gushed. She delighted in the ridicule of “an old pope,” Irish and Polish cardinals, and “two Vatican insiders” who “represent the Catholic Church’s alleged venality and Mob ties.”

“What (author/director J.T. Nichols) writes isn’t anything that hasn’t already slammed the Catholic Church in the news,” Nelson Price explains: “lurid tales of altar boys and priests, celibacy versus self-abuse, money laundering, women’s roles.” And she finds nothing wrong with this caricature: “It’s not a question of cleaning up the script,” only of improving the acting—the better to bash the Church more effectively.

We wrote to the editor-in-chief of the newspaper saying, “Reporting on the contents of an anti-Catholic production is responsible journalism. Endorsing and applauding those contents, however, makes the *Maine Sunday Telegram* complicit in promoting Mr. Nichols’ anti-Catholic bigotry.”

Members are urged to write to the editor-in-chief, Jeanine Guttman, at P.O. Box 1460, Portland, Maine 04104.

NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION DOES ABOUT-FACE

The Catholic League had a problem with the National Education Association (NEA), let them know about it, and got back a letter of apology. We are grateful that there was a happy ending. Here's what happened.

In the August edition of the NEA's newsletter ("NEA NOW!"), there was a cartoon that showed a church sitting atop the rubble of crumbled public schools. Above the door of the church was the inscription, "Public funding of religious schools." Moreover, there was a broken sign reading "Public Education" sitting amidst the rubble, with the following line printed below the cartoon: "Upon This Rock I Will Build My Church,..."

One of our courageous members, Mrs. Patricia Stebbins of East Sandwich, Massachusetts, complained to the NEA about the cartoon; she is a retired teacher and a 30 year member of the NEA. In response, she was told that the cartoon was not meant to single out any particular religion. In defense, the letter read, "The cartoonist, in an editorial type statement, uses a symbolic metaphor to make a point, that is, there are some people and organizations who want to appropriate and use public tax dollars to fund sectarian schools."

Our take, conveyed to the NEA, was different. William Donohue wrote saying that the cartoon "strokes the flames of bigotry by suggesting to the reader that it is the goal of religious-based schools, particularly Catholic ones (that is what the reference to Peter means), to crush public education." He then added, "Having spent 20 years as an educator, teaching 2nd grade through graduate school, I find it appalling that a serious debate over school choice is caricatured this way."

We are delighted to report that Robert Chase, president of the NEA, wrote a letter of apology to Dr. Donohue pledging never to publish the cartoon again. We thank him for his professional response.

LIBERAL CATHOLICS

Sociologists William D'Antonio and Dean Hoge recently published the results of their latest survey data on American Catholics. It was published in the *National Catholic Reporter*. Though the findings are interesting on many levels, there were a couple of conclusions that were most compelling.

Regarding "Typical Catholics," the biggest gap between conservative and liberal Catholics is reflected in the statistic that tapped the question, "Would you ever leave the Catholic Church?" Among conservatives, 73 percent said they never would, while only 2 percent of liberals answered that way. The tenuous commitment that liberals have to the Church is further underscored by their frequency of Mass attendance: the majority of conservatives (55 percent) attend Mass daily or weekly, while only 29 percent of their liberal brethren do.

Now we know who pays the bills.

ANTI-CATHOLIC ART IN NORTH CAROLINA

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill recently hosted an art exhibition, "Identity Revealed: Message and Meaning in Contemporary Art." Held at the Ackland Art Museum, the exhibition included the work of Duane Michals. One of his contributions was entitled, "Christ in New York, No. 2: Christ Sees a Woman who has Died During an Illegal Abortion, 1982."

"Christ in New York" is a photograph of a bearded men with a halo standing over a woman who is stretched out on a table, presumably following a self-induced abortion. His work is described as "a commentary on the inhumanity that persists as well as the violent consequences of religious hypocrisy." We also learn that "As a meditation of the political and social oppressions that characterize contemporary life, Michals' work reflects his own early Catholic upbringing and subsequent interest in Buddhism."

It would be interesting to know how many ex-Catholics have opted for Buddhism. At any rate, we do know that Michals now joins a long line of adult ex-Catholics who continue to live in the past, always gnawing at the bit over their horrendous experience of growing up Catholic. Maybe someday Michals will grow up, but we doubt it. He has too much riding on his adolescent rage to do so.

Our complaint was registered not with Michals (that wouldn't get us anywhere) but with Barbara Matilsky, Curator of Exhibitions at the Ackland Art Museum on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. We told her we know all about her First Amendment right to show this art, but we also informed her of her responsibilities as a curator. You can contact her at the museum on the campus. The zip is 27599.

JUDGE'S SLUR INVESTIGATED

A New York State employee recently contacted us regarding an Irish-Catholic slur she heard when in the company of an administrative judge.

Because the case is now under investigation, we will not disclose the names that are party to this incident.

The woman who wrote to us said that when she and several other employees were viewing a video of Irish stepdancing during their lunch hour, a judge commented, "Those Irish Catholics are stupid." According to the woman, when she challenged him he twice repeated the remark; he also contributed "other cruelties" that she was too upset to remember. She adds that since filing a complaint, she has been ostracized by fellow employees.

In a letter written to the judge to whom the offending judge reports to, we wondered what would happen if instead of saying "Those Irish Catholics are stupid," the judge had said, "Those blacks are lazy," or "Those Jews are cheap." Our position was that "Such comments would be most unbecoming a member of the judiciary, and, if made, would certainly result in disciplinary action. So too should expressions of anti-Irish Catholic bigotry."

We are pleased to note that when the judge to whom we complained to received our letter, he immediately called us pledging to investigate this matter. The investigation is now underway. If guilty, justice requires a reprimand.

BIGOTRY IN MOTION: GEOFFREY FIEGER

Geoffrey Fieger, counsel to Dr. Death, Dr. Jack Kevorkian, wants to be governor of Michigan. This is curious, to say the least, given his affection for Catholics and Jews. Here's a sample of his sentiments.

"Jesus is just some goofball that got nailed to the cross," is one of Fieger's more memorable lines. He has also branded Cardinal Maida a "nut" and has called Orthodox Jews who oppose assisted suicide as being "closer to Nazis than they think they are."

The media have done a good job exposing Fieger for the bigot that he is, so if he wins, it won't be because no one knows where he stands. What follows is, in part, what William Donohue had to say in the pages of the *Detroit News* about the candidate:

"Fieger's remark that his comments have been taken out of context is lame: every bigoted statement he has ever made was purposely done, the object of which was to insult and offend. If Michigan voters do to their David Duke what the voters in Louisiana did to their homegrown embarrassment, the rest of the nation will sleep easier knowing that hate-mongers can carry their message only so far."

It will be interesting to see if, in this climate of "anything goes politics," whether Fieger will be elected. It will surely say more about the voters of Michigan than about Fieger himself. After all, we all know where he stands.

IT'S THOSE CATHOLICS AGAIN

Secular and Catholic hospitals are merging throughout the nation and no one is more perturbed about this than Frances Kissling of Catholics for a Free Choice. What bothers her is the fact that Catholic hospitals don't kill the kids.

On National Public Radio, she recently offered this gem: "I think that we should not be surprised that Catholic hospitals attempt to enforce their moral vision on entities that they absorb. What I think, however, we should be surprised at is the acquiescence of the non-Catholic partner hospital and the government, in many instances, to give up these services."

Notice the bit about Catholic hospitals attempting "to enforce their moral vision." There they go again, it's those Catholics trying to impose their morality on us. Perhaps Kissling knows of Jewish hospitals that attempt to enforce a moral vision other than the Judaic one, but if so, we haven't heard of any. Notice, too, her use of the word "services" as a euphemism for abortion. She is a master of double-speak.

The good news is that fewer and fewer take Kissling seriously. But don't tell that to her financial backers at the Ford Foundation—they still think the former abortion operator is at the cutting edge.

VILLAGE VOICE ADDS TO ITS LEGACY

On page 14 of the September 8 edition of the *Village Voice*, there was a huge photo of a man wearing a T-shirt with the inscription "JESUS IS A C_ _ _" (obscene term for female genitalia). There was no accompanying story: only two sentences commenting on "street people" appeared on the page (there were four other smaller photos).

Catholic League president William Donohue issued the following news release on this subject:

"I called Lynn Yeager, the person who wrote the two sentences, and photo editor Meg Handler. On their voice mail, I left just one question: if instead of Jesus, Martin Luther King's name had been printed on the T-shirt, would they have run it? They have yet to get back to me. Presuming they were honest, is there anyone who doubts what they would say?

"The gratuitous nature of this 'article' (is it a news story?) speaks volumes about the *Village Voice*. It also explains why they have to give their paper away free: who would buy it?

"Some might say that I would be judgmental if I used the word 'evil' to describe this. They are right, and that's exactly how I feel. Perhaps someone at the *Voice* can explain to me why they don't share my sentiment."

The *Voice's* legacy remains intact.

MEMBER NAILS “RED FLAG” STORY

When Loretta L. Day of West Orange, New Jersey, read an article in the *Newark Star Ledger* about Melissa Drexler’s admission that she killed her newborn son, she noticed something strange: Drexler was identified as someone who was “raised in a close Catholic family.” Day quickly wrote the newspaper asking why readers never learned of the religious affiliation of two other baby killers, namely Amy Grossberg and Brian Peterson.

The good news is that Day’s letter was printed. The bad news is that she had to write the letter in the first place. In any event, we are happy to note that one of our members acted in typical Catholic League style.