

QUOTABLE

“Hannity and Colmes,” Fox News, 8/24/00

Pro-abortion advocate Virginia Saporita says ads that are opposed to partial birth abortion are “inflammatory.” William Donohue responds, “Let me tell you what! Inflammatory? You cannot discuss killing a baby who’s 80 percent born without it being inflammatory! It is the procedure that is inflammatory, not the rhetoric, lady!”

ABCNEWS.com REWRITES NEWS STORY AFTER PROTEST

Most of the reporting of Rome’s World Youth Day was fair and balanced. But there was one story that we objected to that rendered an unusual result: most of the offensive parts of the story were dropped from future web postings.

The story in question appeared August 17 on the ABC News website, ABCNEWS.com. Reporter Sue Masterman ridiculed Catholicism in her report, “Holy Disorder: Kids Are Dressed to Thrill at the Vatican Bash.” Her article was based on the throngs of youths who converged on Rome for Catholic event. Here are some of her observations, as original posted:

- “The Vatican’s strict dress code for visitors to St. Peter’s Church in Rome has collapsed...” Instead, there are “scantily clad pilgrims” wearing “hot pants, miniskirts, tube tops and other scanty clothing. Dogs, however, are another

question. However well covered in fur, they have to stay outside. They have no souls to redeem, the church decrees, thus access is denied. No holy water for them.”

- Priests are hearing confessions “from all youngsters who want absolution from sins they have hardly had time to commit.”
- “If God, Jesus, the Virgin Mary, the Holy Ghost are getting to see more than usual of the flesh which He created in places where the Roman Catholic clergy want it covered up, then it does not seem to be causing much divine offense.”

William Donohue called the office of ABCNEWS.com and then released a statement saying, “I do not believe for one second that Masterman would snicker at any other religion. For some reason, she has it out for Catholicism. We will press this issue with ABC officials to find out what her problem is.” What was particularly troubling about this story was that it was presented as “hard news,” and not as an editorial.

Within 24 hours of our protest, the first statement that we objected to was toned down and the other two were eliminated altogether. The league’s director of communications, Pat Scully, then called ABCNEWS.com to discuss this matter further. It was admitted, rather begrudgingly, that the story could be seen as offensive to Catholics and that is why it was changed.

A follow-up call was also placed to Donohue to see if he was pleased. He reported that he was and thanked him for his cooperation.

KUDOS TO ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Catholic League members know that we always protest those insipid anti-Catholic ads that are placed in major newspapers by a breakaway splinter group of the Seventh Day Adventists. Fortunately, most publishers act responsibly and pledge not to run them again. But few are as professional as the people associated with the *Arizona Republic*.

When the familiar "Earth's Final Warning" ad appeared in the August 19 edition of the newspaper, we complained via phone and letter. We are happy to report that so did Phoenix Bishop Thomas J. O'Brien. Indeed, he was so angry that he demanded an apology; the league supported him in this effort.

The result was that David Alley, the advertising vice president, wrote an apology to readers in the August 26 edition of the *Arizona Republic*. "While the strength of newspaper is its ability to give voice to a wide range of divergent views," he said, "we must ensure those views are expressed in a civil manner." Perhaps most heartening was the way he closed his editorial: "Unfortunately, this ad offended a lot of good people. For that we are sorry."

We wrote to Mr. Alley saying, "This piece should be recognized as an example of journalistic integrity." We also told him we would mention this in *Catalyst*. What we liked best about his comment was that he spared us the usual, "If you were offended..." He simply told it straight.

MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET

William A. Donohue

The Catholic League has moved to 450 Seventh Avenue, right across the street from Macy's and up the block from Madison Square Garden and Penn Station. We occupy the entire 34th floor on the corner of 34th Street and Seventh Avenue. Why the move?

We've moved because we've run out of room at the Catholic Center of the Archdiocese of New York. In the mid-1990s, Cardinal O'Connor was kind enough to give us a portion of his own suite, just to keep us in the building. But this time there's no such option. With no room left in the inn, we decided to move.

The move was necessitated because of the increasing volume of work, the need to hire more staff and the extremely tight quarters we've been living in for some time. We need room for a library, audio-video equipment, mail, storage, computers, personnel etc. In other words, it's a matter of supply and demand: demands on the Catholic League are growing and we need a new supply of space to keep pace.

More and more, the media are turning to the Catholic League to comment on contemporary moral issues, many of which are laced with anti-Catholic overtones. We have been in a culture war for some time and it shows no signs of abating. Our goal is to meet this war head-on, making sure the voice the Catholic Church is heard above the roar.

The historian Gertrude Himmelfarb, in her book *One Nation, Two Cultures*, talks about the importance of a "dissident culture" in our society. The "dissident culture" embraces traditional values. As such, it directly confronts the values associated with the dominant culture, e.g., radical individualism. Many of the examples that Himmelfarb lists as emanating from the

“dissident culture” (e.g., the protest over the play “Corpus Christi”) are actually the work of the Catholic League.

Most Catholic League members probably don’t think of themselves as being part of the “dissident culture.” But they are. Indeed, those of us who believe that our society needs a moral nucleus, grounded in the precepts of the Judeo-Christian ethos, are very much outsiders in our society today. We are dissidents rebelling against a cultural strain that sees religion as the enemy of liberty.

The Catholic League, of course, is not alone in pushing for a restoration of civility and community, but we are playing an increasingly larger role. We are doing this not as a direct result of our work, but rather as an ancillary effect of our effort. To put it differently, our job is the defense of the Church—to make sure her voice is heard—and by doing so we necessarily promote the voice of restraint. Any sober person must agree that this is a voice that needs to be ascendant once again.

There are many encouraging signs that things are turning around in our culture. Anyone who reads *Catalyst* can see the number of victories we’ve scored and the number of media outlets that we reach. To be sure, we have a long way to go, but it is undeniably true that we are having an effect. Indeed, I literally couldn’t get out of bed in the morning if I didn’t believe this to be true.

Catholic League members also know that the league is composed of gladiators, not spectators. We never wait to see which way the wind is blowing before we act. That’s what losers do—they poll “focus groups” to find out what they should be doing. Then they watch from the sidelines to see how the gladiators are doing before committing themselves. By that time it’s too late.

Being gladiators, we are impatient with our allies who say we

need to get together so we can “brainstorm.” The problem here is that too often it’s a prescription for paralysis; nothing ever seems to come of the “brainstorming.” It is important not to let the means become an end.

We know our members are gladiators, too. For example, when we put the names and addresses of offending advertisers, actors, producers, college presidents, et al. in *Catalyst*, we know you’ll join the fight. As a matter of fact, you respond so well that I often promise an apologetic offender that I won’t print his name and address in *Catalyst* for fear that the poor devil will be pulverized.

And so the fight goes on. Instead of operating out of 55th Street and First Avenue on the east side of Manhattan, we’ve moved west to 34th and Seventh. Now that we have more room to work out in, I expect we’ll be in better shape than ever before.

We’ll need to be. The culture war is boiling over and the Catholic League is being called upon with greater frequency to send its gladiators into battle. If we win, not only does the Church prosper, the “dissident culture” stands a chance of recapturing the dominant culture. And if we do win, they’ll all say that we really are the Miracle on 34th Street.

POPE PIUS IX

By Robert P. Lockwood

Pope Pius IX served as pope from 1846 to 1878, the longest and one of the most difficult pontificates in history. The modern caricature of his papacy surrounds his resistance to modern thinking as seen in the *Syllabus of Errors* that appeared to

set the Church squarely against democratic ideals; and the “kidnapping” of Edgardo Mortara, a Jewish child taken from his family by authorities after his Christian baptism was discovered.

The future Pope Pius IX was born Giovanni Maria Mastai-Ferretti in Senigallia in the Papal States in 1792. Before he was ordained a priest in 1819, two popes had been imprisoned and the Church in Europe nearly destroyed by the movements, war and nationalist fervor that swept out of revolutionary France and under Napoleon.

A new world was emerging in the 19th century. National identity – rather than identity with ancient royal houses – would become a driving force in both politics and how people thought of themselves. It was an era when racial identity, and racism, became a growing and dangerous part of “modern” thinking. This new “racialism” would underlie many of the tragedies that would be faced by Pius IX.

Pope Pius IX was elected in 1846. Two years later, revolutions swept Europe. Mob violence exploded in Rome. When a revolutionary government was forced on the Pope, he decided to flee Rome. Though the new government attempted to restrain the mobs, priests were killed and churches desecrated. Five bishops were arrested and the government took over Church property. The French deemed it wise to invade Rome and restore order, rather than see the Austrians occupy the city. Nine months later, on April 12, 1850, the Pope returned. But when war broke out in the peninsula in 1859, Piedmont annexed a large section of the Papal States. This was simple aggrandizement. The Papal States virtually ceased to exist, leaving only Rome and a small strip of western Italy under papal control. In 1870 at the onset of the Franco-Prussian War, the French troops were withdrawn from Rome and Victor Emmanuel sent his soldiers to secure the city.

We tend to forget that the “liberalism” of the growing nation

states of Europe was not how we define liberalism today. The nation states developing in Europe – fiercely anti-Catholic and highly nationalistic – were the forerunners of the totalitarian states of the 20th century. Otto Von Bismarck's Prussia and the new Italian State would become Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The seeds of this horrific development were planted in racialism, nationalism and communism that grew directly from the philosophy of liberalism of 19th century Europe. From that perspective, the political policies of Pius IX make much greater sense than merely a reactionary bigotry most often portrayed. It also helps to frame at least an understanding of the vehemence of his *Syllabus of Errors* and the concerns that were behind it.

The *Syllabus of Errors* was issued as an attachment to an 1864 encyclical of Pius IX, *Quanta Cura*. Within the Church, particularly from the Italian perspective, the so-called “free states” of Europe meant confiscated Church property, nuns and priests driven from their Religious Orders, bishops arrested and executed, the Church drummed out of any role in education or the public arena, heated anti-Catholic rhetoric in newspapers and legislatures, and the confiscation of the Papal States by armed force. To their minds, modern civilization meant slums, crime, political chaos, hatred, racism, war, agnosticism and atheism.

The encyclical with the *Syllabus* was released in 1864 and was in many ways a fair statement against a host of 19th century thought that remain worthy of condemnation today – indifferentism, atheism, rationalism. The *Syllabus* contained 80 condemned propositions, such as denying the existence of God and the truth of Scripture, the equation of human reason with Divine Revelation, the all-inclusive authority of the State.

Other areas provided more difficulty, particularly if read in the context of today's understanding of the ideas involved. The condemnation of separation of Church and State seems

archaic. What must not be forgotten is how such separation was defined at the time. It certainly meant in many countries, such as Bismarck's Prussia, that the Church was absolutely subservient to the State and must be divorced entirely from civil life. Also, when the encyclical condemned freedom of the press, it was being drafted at the time of a viciously anti-Catholic press and a journalism that had no norms of objectivity or balance.

Eamon Duffy, writing in his book, *Saints and Sinners*, notes: "The *Syllabus* was in fact a far less devastating document than it appeared at first sight. Its 80 propositions were extracted from earlier papal documents, and Pio Nono repeatedly said that the true meaning of the *Syllabus* could be discovered only by referring to the original context. So, the offensive proposition 80 came from the brief *Iamdudum Cernimus* of 1861. Its apparently wholesale condemnation of 'progress, liberalism and modern civilization' in fact referred quite specifically to the Piedmontese government's closure of the monasteries and Church schools." This gives vital historical context to the *Syllabus* as well as a clear frame of reference. It roots the *Syllabus* in its specific point in time, and gives it a greater understanding than when read with contemporary eyes.

In recent years, no event more surprised Catholics than the story of a young Jewish boy taken from the home of his parents during the papacy of Pius IX to be raised as a Catholic. Though it caused an international furor in its time, the story had been generally forgotten until resurrected in David Kertzer's, "The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara" published in 1997.

Kertzer makes the argument that the Mortara affair was a sign of the roots of racial anti-Semitism that would emerge in Italian Fascism, and as such the Church played a role in establishing the framework for the Italian racial laws of 1938. This misunderstands the motivations involved in the Mortara affair at the time, and forgets that it was the Church

that protested vehemently the 1938 laws and was the single greatest protector of Italian Jews during the war years.

In June 1858, Bologna was still part of the Papal States and the Mortara family had settled there. Edgardo, age six, was one of eight children of Marianna and Momolo Mortara. The Mortaras had employed a Christian servant to help in raising the children. It had come to the light of Church authorities in Bologna, specifically the Dominican head of the local Inquisition, that the servant girl had baptized young Edgardo as an infant when she thought he was in danger of dying. (This was one of the very clear reasons why Christians were not supposed to be employed in Jewish households. It was against the law for Jews to be baptized without consent and fear of just such cases was at the heart of the legislation.)

The law in the matter was clear: a baptized Christian could not be raised in a Jewish home. To do so at that time would be seen as being a party to apostasy, a denial of the validity of Baptism, and endanger the soul of the baptized. Edgardo was taken from his parent's home and transported to Rome, where he would be raised a Catholic.

The difficulty for the Church, and Pius as he became aware of the affair, was that it was left with little choice at the time. It was simply considered impossible for a baptized child to remain in a home where he would not be raised Christian. Such experiences were commonplace even decades later in America. As late as the early 20th century, it was common for Irish Catholic children to be plucked off the streets of New York and transported to the West to be raised by solid Protestant families.

Edgardo would eventually study for the priesthood and be ordained. He remained a monk and died in 1940 at the age of 88 at a Belgian abbey where he lived and studied for many years.

The Mortara affair supplied the enemies of Pius IX with a

strong propaganda weapon at a point when the Papal States were about to collapse. The extent of the vitriol aimed at Pius was enormous and worldwide. Adopting the anti-Catholic rhetoric of the Know Nothings, Jewish groups in the United States saw it as a Jesuit-inspired conspiracy of “soul-less lackeys,” compared Pius to the “Prince of Darkness” and reminded their Protestant audience of the “history of these incarnate fiends, written in the blood of millions of victims.”

Was Pius XI’s refusal to return Edgardo Mortara an act of pure anti-Semitism? In the context of the times, it clearly was not. This did not involve racial prejudice. The Church in Rome had a long history of defending Jewish converts to the faith and accepting them completely after such a conversion, as was done in the case of Edgardo Mortara. In his actions, Pius reflected both the generally accepted norms of the time concerning families of mixed religion.

During the long pontificate of Pius IX, the Church was transformed in every aspect of its life. Religious orders experienced a growth unimaginable a generation earlier. In 1815, the Church as an institution in continental Europe had nearly been destroyed. When Pius IX died on February 7, 1878, after a 32-year reign, the Church had been reborn.

LIEBERMAN’S DECLARATIONS OF FAITH OFFER GRIST FOR POLITICAL MILL

Al Gore’s selection of Senator Joseph Lieberman was received well by most Americans. But when the Connecticut senator started invoking the name of God in his speeches, the Anti-

Defamation League (ADL) and American Atheists got nervous.

The ADL said the remarks given by Senator Lieberman at a Protestant church on August 27 were inappropriate: "Language such as this risks alienating the American people." Similarly, American Atheists said that Senator Lieberman's "'assurances' about the role of religion and politics ring hollow considering his hostility toward rational thinking Americans."

The Catholic League got into the action by defending Senator Lieberman's freedom of speech while questioning the propriety of his venue:

"Senator Lieberman is to be commended, not criticized, for discussing the public role of religion. For too long, public office holders have succumbed to elite pressure by silencing themselves on this issue. Senator Lieberman not only has a First Amendment right to exercise his freedom of speech, he has a moral obligation to share with Americans his religiously-informed vision of the polity.

"The problem the Catholic League has with the speech that Senator Lieberman gave last Sunday at the Fellowship Chapel in Detroit is not with its content, but with its venue: elected officials and candidates for public office should not be stumping in houses of worship. Take, for example, what happened last Sunday. Just before Lieberman took to the pulpit, the pastor of the church (who is also the president of the local NAACP chapter), Rev. Wendell Anthony, gave Lieberman a tacit endorsement and then criticized George W. Bush and Dick Cheney.

"Republicans and Democrats alike are guilty of campaigning in Protestant churches and synagogues. It is time this abuse was ended and it is time for ministers and rabbis to follow the lead of Catholic priests by not extending invitations to speak from the pulpit in the first place."

The ADL's negative reaction was not uniformly mirrored in the Jewish community. For example, the Jewish fraternal organization that founded the ADL, B'nai B'rith, sided with Lieberman. Nonetheless, it was the ADL's reaction that created the most stir.

Jews for Morality was critical of Lieberman as well, though their criticism was not based on secular considerations. "In Joe Lieberman's Bible, **HOMOSEXUALITY** is a legitimate 'sexual preference,' and **MURDER** is O.K., if the victim is a newborn baby ('Partial-Birth' Abortion)." The Brooklyn, New York-based group also told ADL "not to worry" about Lieberman's religious convictions as he "doesn't really mean it." Lieberman was accused of 'sanctimonious fraud and hypocrisy."

Lieberman, an orthodox Jew, told Larry King that abortion is "a matter of personal judgment." "And like everything else in Judaism," Lieberman contended, "ultimately, it's up to each of us to decide what we think is right."

Orthodox Jews like Michael Medved took immediate offense charging that this was flatly wrong. Worse, "Viewers of the senator's comments to Mr. King might well take away the impression that Orthodox Judaism is strict and unbending when it comes to kosher catering or avoiding automobiles on the Sabbath, but infinitely flexible concerning respect for human life and other tormenting moral issues."

From the perspective of the Catholic League, what troubled us most was the prevalence of the ever-existing double standard. David Harris of the National Jewish Democratic Council explained, "Bush's declarations [of faith] have an air of exclusivity. But Gore and Lieberman appear all-inclusive on faith, that all must be made to feel welcome."

Eliot Minberg, vice president of People for the American Way, showed that he, too, was blessed with this uncanny ability: "When Republicans talk about their faith, most know what that

talk means...That's not as true for Democrats."

William Raspberry of the *Washington Post* also noted the inclusive-exclusive distinction that evaded most other observers. "Hardly anyone is put off by a politician's public invocation of 'the Almighty' or the 'Creator,' terms general enough to embrace adherents of virtually any religion—or no religion. References to 'the Blessed Virgin,' on the other hand—or even, in mixed gatherings, to 'Our Lord and Savior'—can make some people feel like outsiders."

What absolutely no one objected to was the following comment by Lieberman: "My religion decides what's right. And what's right for me as vice president will be what's right for America." Now if a Catholic running for office had said this, some would call for his arrest. But with Lieberman, it's different.

We're not sure what to make of this. If what Lieberman told Larry King I right, namely that under Judaism "it's up to each of us to decide what's right," then he must have been thinking of some other religion when he said, "My religion decides what's right." Logically, he can't have it both ways. But in reality he can—the media will never ask him to explain his contradictory positions.

CATHOLIC LEAGUE TO HILLARY: RETURN DONATION FROM HATE MONGER

On September 13, William Donohue told the media why he was asking Hillary Clinton to return a donation given to her

campaign by a hate monger:

"I was disturbed to read an article in today's *New York Post* by Robert Hardt Jr. and Gregg Birnbaum that cited a donation of \$8,200 by Dale Djerassi to the 'New York Senate 2000' committee of Hillary Clinton's campaign. They reported that Djerassi had participated in a 'St. Batman Crucifixion' in 1994. As they said, 'The performance art piece was a re-enactment of the crucifixion of Jesus, featuring a naked man wearing a Batman medallion and mask being tied to a giant cross by Djerassi and another man.' (Pictures can be accessed on the web at popov.com.) Their description is actually an understatement: the pictures show full-frontal male nudity complete with a graph of the Christ-figure falling to the ground carrying the cross.

"It should also be known that the 'St. Batman Crucifixion' was performed at the Djerassi Foundation in Woodside, California. The secretary of the foundation is Dale Djerassi. The foundation, now known as the Djerassi Resident Artists Program, is a current and past recipient of NEA money.

"Not surprisingly, Djerassi runs in the same circles as Mrs. Clinton: in June 1999, he was one of 30 people at a private fund-raising event that was organized by Mrs. Clinton's friend, Susie Tompkins Buell (Hillary was traveling at the time and couldn't make it).

"The Catholic League wants Mrs. Clinton to return the money. She set the precedent: in April of this year, she returned a \$22,000 donation from a Miami businesswoman tied to international drug trafficking. The woman, Vivian Mannerud, made the contribution in the form of 'soft money,' exactly the kind of transfer made by Djerassi in June.

"There is no room to equivocate on this: Djerassi's work is Christian bashing at its worst and that is why Mrs. Clinton must return the money."

Though pressed by the Catholic League, Hillary Clinton's campaign refused to comment on this matter and the media showed no interest in questioning her about it. Since Mrs. Clinton's offices are in the same building as the Catholic League's new headquarters (we have the 34th floor and she is on the 8th), we suggest you write to her at Hillary Clinton 2000 Headquarters, 450 7th Avenue, New York, New York 10123. Tell her Bill (Donohue, that is) said she could drop by any time she likes.

BUCHANAN STANDS ALONE AT BOB JONES

Once Patrick Buchanan secured the presidential nomination of the Reform Party, he received \$12.6 million in federal campaign funds. He wasted no time announcing that the first stop on his new campaign would be an appearance at Bob Jones University. "I thought it would send the right message that first, I stand by my friends," Buchanan said.

The Catholic League didn't see it that way and explained to the press why:

"When George W. Bush went to Bob Jones University, he did so as part of a typical stop made by political hopefuls who campaign in South Carolina. He later regretted the way he handled this visit and thus put the issue behind him. But the situation with Pat Buchanan is different: of all the places in the United States to restart his campaign, Buchanan has deliberately chosen to go to Bob Jones University so he can 'stand by his friends.' Then let him stand alone, without any support from Catholics.

“Since the school was the subject of controversy last winter, it has relaxed its policy on interracial dating, but has done nothing to change its anti-Catholic image. But this is of no consequence to Buchanan who, in fact, says he is ‘offended’ by the negative media the school has received. That his fellow Catholics have every right to be offended by the rank anti-Catholicism that marks Bob Jones University seems not to matter. Moreover, one wonders why Buchanan isn’t offended by those who call his religion the ‘Mother of Harlots.’

“Buchanan is not alone among Catholics who have no problem recognizing anti-Catholicism when it stems from the academy or Hollywood, but are utterly unable to do so when it comes from their Protestant ‘friends.’ The Catholic League does not suffer from this disability and that is why we will continue to denounce anti-Catholic bigotry independent of its origins.”

MOMENTUM BUILDING FOR SCHOOL CHOICE

The 2000-2001 academic year is now underway and never before has the case for school choice been stronger. Survey after survey concludes that vouchers work and no group benefits from school choice more than poor non-whites. The numbers don’t lie and that is one reason why prominent educators who previously resisted the idea of school vouchers are now coming on board.

Researchers at Harvard recently completed a two-year study on privately funded school choice programs in Washington, D.C., New York City and Dayton, Ohio. The big winners were black youngsters: they registered “moderately large” improvement in

their math and reading scores.

With results like this, it is no wonder that non-whites are lining up in support of vouchers. A Gallup poll recently showed that nationwide seven in ten non-whites support vouchers. In New York City, the figures are even higher: a Hunter College survey disclosed that 87% of Hispanics, 86% of Asians and 83% of African Americans favor school choice.

So who's opposed to vouchers? White people, the teachers' unions and the Democratic Party. Whites send their kids to mostly satisfactory public schools and resist tampering with the system. The teachers' unions are concerned with maintaining their near-monopoly on the system. And the Democrats receive so much from the teachers' unions that they dare not cross them.

The hypocrisy runs deeper on this issue than perhaps any other. For example, champions of the poor like Bill Clinton, Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, Ted Kennedy and Al Gore all send, or sent, their kids to private schools. Yet they vigorously oppose school choice. Indeed, in a survey conducted by the Heritage Foundation, no one congressman in the United States sends his kids to public school in the District of Columbia.

But times are changing. A new group has formed, the Black Alliance for Educational Options, which is tackling this issue head-on. And Clinton's former secretary of labor, Robert B. Reich, has come over to the pro-school choice side. Reich, now a professor at Brandeis, has looked at the data and concluded, "The evidence is in: Vouchers work."

Reich is advocating a novel program based on "progressive vouchers," one that would give money on a sliding scale, depending on income: those who earn the least would get the most generous voucher support while those who earn the most would benefit the least.

None of this is to say that vouchers are a sure thing. But it

is getting harder to make the case for maintaining the status quo.

THE SOUL OF THE SCHOOLS

The on-going battle over the soul of the schools got off to a quick start this fall. In Virginia, the issue is whether a minute of silence is constitutional; in schools down south, the question is whether students have the right to say a prayer in the huddle before a football game; in New Jersey, there is a protracted dispute over whether a first-grader can read a passage from the Bible to his classmates; and in Chicago, a fight has ensued over religious book covers being distributed to students.

Since July 1, the ACLU has been lying in lurch in Virginia waiting to sue a school over the “minute of silence” law that was passed on that day. No sooner were the kids back in school when the ACLU went into federal court arguing that the schools were endorsing prayer by listing it as an option for students. Whatever the initial outcome, both sides have said they would appeal if they lost.

Ever since the Supreme Court announced last spring that schools may not facilitate formal prayer sessions before football games—even if led by students—a number of southern communities have indicated displeasure with the high court ruling. So in places like Hattiesburg, Mississippi and Batesburgh-Leesville, South Carolina, football players decided to initiate prayers themselves. The ACLU has already entered the fray and the courts will be next.

In 1996, Zachary Hood was asked to read a story to his first-grade classmates. He decided to read from *The Beginner's*

Bible and in doing so set off a firestorm. Zachary's parents sued claiming free speech rights but lost in court. They appealed. Just before the start of the new school year, they lost again, this time in federal appeals court. Now the case is headed for the Supreme Court.

Over the summer, a religious group called Total Living Network decided to distribute more than 100,000 religious book covers to students in Chicago when they returned to class. Immediately, People for the American Way warned school officials not to endorse this practice. What upset the Norman Lear founded activist organization was the inscription on the book covers: it listed the Ten Commandments.

None of this has anything to do with what the framers meant when they adopted the First Amendment. To understand what's going on, keep in mind that there is a significant portion of elite opinion thinks it necessary to obliterate from the schools every last vestige of our religious heritage. That's okay, we're prepared to fight them tooth and nail.