

ANTI-RELIGIOUS FANATICISM

In late summer, a little girl from North Port, Florida learned at the age of eight what a gag order is. She had been practicing to sing the song *Kum Ba Yah* at the North Port Boys and Girls Club talent show. But because the song repeats the word “Lord,” she was barred from singing the tune the night of the event. Her outraged parents were told that others might complain if children went home and said they heard a religious song at the non-sectarian camp. Another camp official actually went so far as to warn, “You have to check your religion at the door.”

People often pray when they are in need, and what people in many western and southern states needed over the summer was rain. That’s why Louisiana Governor Mike Foster issued a proclamation in September asking citizens to pray: the state was in a drought and it seemed only right that people be encouraged to pray for rain. But this set off the alarms at the local ACLU. The local affiliate head, Joe Cook, went crazy, arguing “public officials who want to promote their personal beliefs from an elected perch and turn our country into a biblical theocracy not unlike that of a country called Iran.”

So kids can’t sing a song at camp that mentions the Lord and governors can’t recommend that people pray for rain. Now had the kid sung a rap song –replete with obscenities–that would have been dubbed free speech. And had the governor asked people to partake in a New Age ritual that beckoned the rain gods to produce, that would have been seen as a multicultural exercise.

The morale of the story is: the anti-religious fanatics lie when they say they’re neutral. What they want is to tear down what we have so they can establish their concept of nirvana.

NO ONE'S CALLED

A new fashion group, Imitation of Christ, is buying old clothes from the Salvation Army and then “crucifying” them by putting stains on them, cutting them up, etc. They actually sell these filthy wares to rich kids who think it’s cool.

When William Donohue was asked to comment on this, he told the New York *Daily News* “It’s a cheap way to make a fast buck off rather stupid people.” He also explained why he wasn’t going to get too crazy over this: “I’ve got to make distinctions between mainstream designers and third-rate phonies. And these days this kind of trendy stuff has become so routine as to really numb the senses.”

However, Donohue did see an opportunity for him to get into the action as well: “I have a pair of old jeans with puke on them from a bachelor party and I’m anxious to hear from them.” He is deeply saddened that no one’s called.

RIVERSIDE “CHURCH”

If there is one church in America that anti-religious zealots love to go to its Riverside Church. Located on the upper west side of Manhattan, the church’s environment is such that non-believers are made to feel right at home while traditional-minded believers are made to feel like pariahs. No wonder, then, that this was the forum extended to Fidel Castro at the close of the U.N. Millennium Summit.

Castro was greeted by 2,400 loyal followers screaming, "Hail Fidel—Jail Giuliani." He charged them up all night giving a marathon of a speech that extended beyond 1:00 a.m. To great applause, the thought-control dictator blasted the United States for maintaining economic sanctions against Cuba, labeling the policy "criminal" and "a violation of human rights."

Cheering Castro on were two United States congressmen, Maxine Waters of California and Jose Serrano of New York. Both of these Democrats were active in the fight to send Elian Gonzalez back to Cuba. Also in attendance was Rev. Joan Brown Campbell, former head of the National Council of Churches, another leader in the send-Elian-back crusade. At the time of the Elian controversy, all three pretended they were neutral on the moral credentials of Castro. On September 8, they proved they were not.

Those who defend slave masters have no moral authority to object to any form of tyranny. That's one story. But there's another story here: imagine what would happen if a Catholic church allowed a right-wing dictator to rant for hours on end? Is there anyone who doubts that the elite media would be demanding an IRS investigation of this crass violation of church and state lines?

There will be no investigation of Riverside Church. But our file on these duplicitous events is growing. We can't wait to use them in the event some IRS nut tries to get the Catholic Church.

AD CREATES STIR

A formidable group of Jewish scholars and rabbis—some 170 in all—have signed a document that says, “Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon.” While they acknowledge that Christian anti-Semitism paved the way for the Nazis, they clearly state, “Nazism itself was not an inevitable outcome of Christianity.”

The document, “A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity,” also argues that “If the Nazi extermination of the Jews had been fully successful, it would have turned its murderous rage more directly to Christians.” It was published on September 10 in the *New York Times* and the *Baltimore Sun*.

The four scholars who drafted the document are all from different Jewish denominations. Dr. Tikva Frymer-Kensky is a professor at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago; Dr. David Novak teaches at the University of Toronto; Dr. Peter W. Ochs is a professor at the University of Virginia; and Dr. Michael A. Singer teaches at the University of Notre Dame. The eight-point appreciation of Christianity that they wrote was the result of a project they began in the mid-1990s at the Institute for Christian and Jewish Studies in Baltimore.

Dr. Novak explained that the document was written because “major Christian groups and thinkers have in the past 30 or 40 years come up with a major rethinking about Jews and Judaism and have issued statements about how they can respect the legitimacy of Judaism. It seems to us to behoove Jewish thinking to respond accordingly.”

Dr. Donohue sent a letter to each of the four scholars expressing his gratitude for the statement, letting them know that the Catholic League can be counted on to fight anti-Semitism.

JUST INSERT YOUR “APOLOGY”

Blue Q Corporation sells refrigerator magnets. Unlike the ones sold in most stores, these ones tend to be one-of-a-kind magnets that make a humorous statement. For the most part, they are done in good taste. But we do have a problem with one magnet collection that features the Virgin Mary.

There is a “Mix’ n Match” set that depicts a figure of Mary with her hands in a prayer-like pose surrounded by a magnet of Jesus in a stroller, a Catholic school girl outfit, etc. The catalog description reads as follows:

“Bless Your Customers with the most DELUXE DRESS-UP magnet set yet! MIX’ n MATCH VIRGIN MARY. Reverently rendered by acclaimed illustrator David Bowers, this great gift includes everything from a Catholic school girl uniform to Baby Jesus in a stroller.” In a box below this description, it says, “If you are not completely satisfied with the tone of this product please accept our humble apologies. Thank you.”

We wrote to Mr. Seth Nash and Mr. Mitchell Nash, Blue Q Corporation, 103 Hawthorne Avenue, Pittsfield, MA 01201 and asked them to consider the selling the following magnet set:

“Bless Your Customers with the most DELUXE DRESS-UP magnet set yet! The Reverend Jesse Jackson MIX’ n MATCH!!! Reverently rendered by acclaimed illustrator William Donohue, this great gift includes everything from a Nazi school boy uniform to Baby Sambo in a stroller.” We then added, “Of course you can place your typical ‘apology’ somewhere on the ad.”

We concluded by saying, “If you think that the above may be too offensive to people, then why do you continue offending Catholics and their beliefs with your magnet set?”

On September 13, Seth Nash called Donohue to say he wasn't going to make any changes. Donohue asked Nash if he would consider adopting the example offered about Jesse Jackson. Nash said, no, because that would be "crossing the line." Donohue replied that it seemed Nash doesn't mind offending Catholics, but it is wrong to offend blacks. Nash said that putting Jackson in a Nazi outfit was not comparable to what Blue Q was doing with the Virgin Mary. Donohue said that what they were doing "trivialized" Our Blessed Mother; Nash retorted that others will decide that.

At this point, Donohue said that among those who will decide whether their depiction of Mary is offensive are Catholic League members. He said he would put this in *Catalyst* and let everyone know about it. Nash said that would be fine with him as he could use the advertisement. Donohue then informed Nash that the last laugh would be on him.

So you know what to do. Write to Seth Nash and let him know what you think.

"BIG LAUGHS" FOR BIGOTRY

In the last issue of *Catalyst*, we mentioned a play about gays and the Church, "Avow," that William Donohue avowed not to see. As it turned out, one review of it said, "The anti-Catholic humor...drew big laughs." It would, of course, be surprising if it did not: anti-Catholicism is sport among many in the gay community. Moreover, theater critics are incredibly tolerant of this type of bigotry. What this suggests is that diversity means tolerance for anti-Catholicism and none for any other kind of bigotry.

CATHOLIC LEAGUE TO “POLITICALLY INCORRECT”: START BASHING GAYS OR QUIT BASHING CATHOLICS

The ABC network featured a segment of “Politically Incorrect” on September 9 that attacked Pope John Paul II. The offender was actor Jay Mohr.

The offensive segment began when host Bill Maher set Mohr up by mentioning that there was a recent Vatican document on the Church and salvation. Mohr then attacked the pope: “The Vatican is some 80-year-old guy who lives in a bullet proof bubble, wears a bib—they got to wipe his mouth. He’s in a diaper and he’s trying to tell me who to have sex with.”

William Donohue sent the following news release on this subject to the media:

“About a year ago, Jay Mohr was asked to respond to those who are concerned that TV is abandoning standards of good taste. He replied, ‘As far as pushing the envelope, the line is gonna move every year. It’s gonna get lower every year.’

“On August 16, Olivia Cohen-Cutler, vice president Broadcast Standards & Practices at ABC, wrote me about another episode of ‘Politically Incorrect.’ She said, ‘I can assure you that many ethnic and religious groups, including Jews, Asians, Africans, and Hispanics, as well as Catholics, find themselves the target of Mr. Maher’s pointed repartee and are all equally offended by those of his comments that are directed towards them.’

“If Mohr really wants to push the envelope, he should try bashing gays. After all, since it’s politically incorrect to do so these days on TV, that would really push the envelope. As for Cohen-Cutler, I noticed that gays were not on the list of groups who have been offended by ‘Politically Incorrect.’ Since she is so concerned about equal opportunity, it would behoove the producers of the show to start gay bashing right away.

“Now the civil way to deal with this problem would simply be to stop bashing everyone. That’s the kind of equality that most Americans want.”

Once again, we are asking members to write to ABC. Write to Olivia Cohen-Cutler, vice president broadcast standards & practices, ABC, Inc., 2040 Avenue of the Stars, 5th floor, Century City, CA 90067. Since she’s new, we asked her, “Don’t you think this has gone far enough?” You might want to ask her as well.

KNOW-NOTHING OATH UNCOVERED

A New Jersey man who dabbles in acquiring historical documents found by happenstance the oath taken by members of the Know-Nothing Party, the 19th century anti-Catholic nativist group. He turned the document over to professors at Boston College.

“To defend our Republic Institutions against the encroachment of the Church of Rome...and its ignorant and deluded followers,” the oath says, “we are associated on a secret Military Order.” Prospective members were then asked to “raise your right hand up before the floating flag of your country [and] place your right foot on the emblem of the Church of Rome.”

The greatest legacy of the infamous Know-Nothing Party is found in those provisions of state constitutions that bar public monies for private schools. Such provisions were anti-Catholic in origin and remain so today. It is one of the principal obstacles standing in the way of school vouchers.

“TRIAL” OF PIUS XII DROPPED

We learned from one of our members that an Adult Education course at a Long Island public school was planning to put Pope Pius XII on “trial.” The course, “The Jews of Italy: A Miracle of Survival,” will be taught this fall by the Herrick School District in New Hyde Park. The course catalog ends with the following: “A fascinating video will be shown on Italian Jewish Music and Dance. The class will include the ‘trial’ of Pope Pius XII.”

When we learned of this, Catholic League researcher Louis Giovino contacted the superintendent of schools to express his concerns. Then William Donohue spoke to the superintendent. Donohue wanted to know whether FDR would also be put on trial. He then inquired whether Protestants and Jews who cooperated with Hitler would be subjected to a trial.

There will be no trial. The superintendent apologized saying it was a mistake to say there would be a trial. So did the teacher—she contacted Giovino and said there would be a discussion, but no trial. Still, the member who contacted us is now taking the course, just to make sure.

NO FREE SPEECH FOR CATHOLICS AT DENVER AIRPORT

Denver International Airport (DIA) has a chapel that is used by Christians, Jews and Muslims; an interfaith organization that represents the three religions, DIA Interfaith Chapel Inc., leases the space from DIA. Mass is available for Catholics on Sunday and holy days of obligation. Catholic passengers are alerted to the Mass schedule via the public address system (it goes something like, "Catholic Mass begins in 15 minutes in the chapel").

However, because one individual registered a complaint saying this was a violation of separation of church and state, no more such announcements are permitted until airport attorneys decide what to do. The local chapter of the ACLU is defending the ban arguing that only Catholic services are announced on the public address system. What the ACLU did not say was that Jews and Muslims have opted not to use the system and are defending the right of Catholics to do so.

The *Denver Post* got it right when it said, "The decision by Denver International Airport to stop announcing Catholic Masses over its public address system is a deplorable example of how durable religious bigotry is in America, especially anti-Catholic bigotry." We had our own statement that was released to the press:

"This is a straight First Amendment case that will be won in court, if that is necessary. The issue is not the establishment clause, but freedom of speech. What is amazing about this is that the champions of free speech, the ACLU, are defending the gag order. Had activists from the North American Man/Boy Love Association used the public address system to alert pedophiles which room they had rented to conduct their S&M exercises on eight-year-olds, the ACLU would

be defending them on the grounds of free speech.

"This event is striking. Those of us who are upset with Hollywood rot are routinely told to 'turn the channel' or 'don't go to see the movie if you object to it.' But this bit of wisdom seems to apply only to those who defend traditional values: if it applied across the board, then those who object to religious services being announced on a public address system would simply ignore the message. The reason they won't is because they, like the ACLU, are at bottom the real censors."

We suggest that everyone write to Steven Snyder, Denver International Airport, Dept. of Public Relations, 8500 Pena Blvd. Room 9840, Denver, CO 80249-6340. We have spoken to Mr. Snyder and we realize that he is not the problem. The problem is that the ACLU has given the attorneys for the airport some pause; they are currently studying what to do about it.

Now's the time for us to get involved. And this is especially true of our members in the greater Denver metropolitan area.