

FILM SELLS ATHEISM TO KIDS; MAJOR PROTEST LAUNCHED

The Catholic League is calling for a boycott of “The Golden Compass”; the movie opens December 7. It is based on the first book of a trilogy titled, *His Dark Materials*.

The author of this children’s fantasy is Philip Pullman, a noted English atheist. It is his objective to bash Catholicism and promote atheism. To kids. “The Golden Compass” is a film version of the book by that name, and it is being toned down so that Catholics, as well as Protestants, are not enraged.

The second book of the trilogy, *The Subtle Knife*, is more overt in its hatred of Catholicism than the first book, and the third entry, *The Amber Spyglass*, is even more blatant. Because “The Golden Compass” is based on the least offensive of the three books, and because it is being further watered down for the big screen, some might wonder why a boycott is warranted.

The Catholic League wants Christians to boycott this movie precisely because it knows that the film is bait for the books: unsuspecting parents who take their children to see the movie may be impelled to buy the three books as a Christmas present. And no parent who wants to bring their children up in the faith will want any part of these books.

We are launching a major educational campaign designed to alert the public to Pullman’s game plan. To that end, we have prepared a booklet, *“The Golden Compass: Agenda Unmasked.”* It contains snippets of what reviewers have said about the film and the books, as well as revealing comments made by Pullman himself; it also contains a synopsis of the trilogy. In short, the booklet is not what we are saying about Pullman’s work—it is what he and others have said about it.

Pullman represents the new face of atheism: it is aggressive, dogmatic and unrelenting. It is also fueled by hate—by a crusading hatred of all religions, but most especially of ours. His side is counting on our side to lie down and die. He may have experienced little resistance in England, but it's a different story here.

The reason we are starting our protest early is because it takes time to get the word out, and besides, the media love it when we give them something to chew on. The booklet is being mailed to thousands of influential persons, including film critics and Christian leaders.

While Roman Catholicism is the evil force in Pullman's writings, his real goal is to put a positive face on atheism, getting children to buy his message. Thus, we expect more than Catholics will join our protest.

“ARABIC” SCHOOL?

On September 4, Bill Donohue spoke at a press conference in New York City registering his misgivings over a new publicly funded “Arabic” school that opened in Brooklyn. The rally was held on the steps of City Hall and was attended by prominent Catholic and Jewish leaders.

The reason for using quotation marks to describe the school is because it is uncertain whether this isn't an Islamist school. Throughout the summer, the Catholic League tried in vain to obtain a copy of the curriculum and was stonewalled even on learning what textbooks would be used. We also raised serious questions regarding the imams who were slated to act as advisors to Khalil Gibran International Academy.

Our interest peaked when it was reported that the principal of the school refused to condemn pro-terrorist T-shirts that her friends were hawking. On the front of the shirts it said, "NYC Intifada;" the term Intifada was used to describe Palestinian terrorist attacks on Israeli Jews. Disingenuously, the principal first tried to say that the original meaning of the word refers to "throwing off oppression." When everyone knew that the T-shirt was conveying the conventional terrorist meaning, the principal was forced to distance herself from it. She then resigned.

New York City bars the display of nativity scenes but allows the Islamic crescent and star. It also opposes school vouchers. But it has money for an "Arabic" school that is at the very least suspect. Thus, the protest.

INCIVILITY REIGNS

William A. Donohue

Entertainment critic Harvey Levin recently tried to convince Bill O'Reilly that the current wave of coarseness in our culture wasn't entirely new; he made the point that there were plenty of examples of incivility in the 1920s, etc. O'Reilly wasn't buying it: he replied that back then they didn't celebrate such in-your-face assaults on our sensibilities. O'Reilly was right—things have changed, and not for the better.

There have always been young entertainers and actresses who have lived a tortured life, but the wholesale fixation on Lindsay Lohan, Paris Hilton and Britney Spears has no rival. What passes as comedy these days is equally troubling, the contribution of Kathy Griffin being the latest entry (see the

next page for the story). Sure, there have been actors and actresses who have used an awards ceremony to make political pitches, but the use of vulgarities—aimed at Jesus, no less—is not typical.

The problem extends beyond the world of the Kathy Griffins. When foul-mouthed bigots like her are warmly received by Hollywood, it is a cultural marker of dramatic proportions. She could not get away with using an obscenity to bash Hillary Clinton, never mind Muhammad. But Jesus is fair game among our cultural elites.

And when we protest, the elites go mad. When we published the e-mail address of Tim Curtis, Griffin's agent at William Morris, he went bonkers. What upset him was the avalanche of e-mails he received from Catholic League members and friends. He begged us to take his name off our news release, which we promptly refused to do, and complained that he was "personally offended by the verbal attacks of the 'good christians' from your group [the Catholic League]."

I responded, "Your complaint about the verbal attacks from 'good Christians' is such a whine. You didn't even have the decency to criticize her [Griffin's] vulgar comment and yet you think we should be upset because some on our side are using foul language? As they say in the schoolyard, what goes around, comes around. You're lucky you're dealing with Catholics—we just protest with words."

Remember how earlier in the year we protested a movie that was shown at a film festival that featured 12-year-old Dakota Fanning being raped? Well, Fox News film critic Roger Friedman reports that at the Toronto Film Festival, held in September, a movie was shown, "Nothing is Private," that went beyond Fanning's "Hounddog." He slammed the movie for its "graphic depiction of sexual, mental and physical child abuse that verges quite literally on kiddie porn."

Never has Hollywood made films like these, and never have there been comedians like Sarah Silverman who repeatedly make jokes about abortion. She is hardly the first to do so—at a football game between Columbia and Fordham a few years back, the Columbia fans joked about partial-birth abortion during a half-time performance. Just as sick was the sight of religious leaders in Chicago who assembled on September 12 to pray *in support* of Planned Parenthood.

Brian K. Mahoney edits *Chronogram*, an edgy magazine for the bohemian types who populate some upstate New York communities. In a recent edition he favorably commented on a skit featuring actors dressed as Catholic schoolgirls. After the actors stripped down to their underwear, Mahoney discussed what happened next. “Communion wafers, cigarettes, and a chalice were all employed as props in a piece that ended with a profane reenactment of the crucifixion.” And how did the audience react? “The crowd hooted and roared.”

The late New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan warned against “defining deviance down,” by which he meant what happens when deviance becomes normalized. Not only does outrage dissipate, what passes as uncivil becomes more and more gross. In other words, our tolerance for indecency abets more vile expressions of it. The evidence abounds that Moynihan was right.

But it would be wrong to conclude that our cultural elites have no standards at all—they just have different ones. Here’s proof. When I was on TV discussing Kathy Griffin’s remark, I mentioned that Imus got fired for calling black girls “nappy-headed ho’s,” and Michael Richards was banished for calling blacks “niggers.” CNN bleeped me—the so-called “N-word” violated its standards. Curiously, Griffin’s obscene remark about Jesus did not.

Our side has no choice but to continue the fight. Were it not for the Catholic League, Griffin’s comment would have been

aired during the Emmy Awards and Dakota Fanning's "Hounddog" would have been picked up by a distributor and shown in local theaters. So we are having an effect.

Our next big battle—"The Golden Compass"—promises to be a real test. Not content to confine atheism to the academy, today's militant atheists want to get to the kids. Believe me, we will do everything in our power to stop them. This will be one fight you won't want to miss.

KATHY GRIFFIN OFFENDS CHRISTIANS; PROTEST PAYS OFF

After comedian Kathy Griffin used an incredibly obscene expression to slur Jesus [Warning to readers: we have reprinted it], she ran into a firestorm of controversy, thanks to the Catholic League. By the time it was over, her reputation had taken a quick nose dive.

The date was September 8, and the event was the 59th Annual Creative Arts Emmy Awards. Griffin won Outstanding Reality Program for her Bravo show, "My Life on the D-List," and in her acceptance speech, she complained about how some actors and actresses give credit to Jesus for their success. That was okay. But then Griffin crossed the line when she exclaimed, as she held up her Emmy trophy over her head, "Suck it, Jesus, this award is my God now!"

Our first reaction was disgust and outrage. What immediately came to mind were the following names: Mel Gibson. Michael Richards. Isaiah Washington. Don Imus. Jerry Lewis. All of these famous people have offended one segment of the population or another in recent times, and all have paid a big

price for their infractions. And unlike Griffin—who planned her insult—their remarks were wholly spontaneous. So what was going to happen to Griffin? That was up to us, at least in part.

On September 10, we called on Dick Askin, chairman and chief executive officer of the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, to denounce Griffin's obscene and blasphemous comment. In actual fact, we did a lot more than that: we posted his e-mail address on our website, knowing that our rabid followers would write to him and weigh in. After all, it was Askin's organization that was responsible for the Creative Arts Emmy event.

What pushed us over the top was the receptive audience Griffin received in Hollywood. According to a story in the *Hollywood Reporter*, her vulgar in-your-face hate speech "drew laughs" from the audience. We told the media, "It is a sure bet that if Griffin had said, 'Suck it, Muhammad,' there would have been a very different reaction from the crowd and from the media who covered the event. To say nothing of the Muslim reaction."

Those who read about our protest online were just as angry, and they let Askin know it. The result? Within 24 hours, the Academy branded Griffin's comments "offensive" and announced that it would censor them from the taped telecast of the awards ceremony on E! on September 15. It was axiomatic that Fox would not air her offensive remark on its Primetime Emmy Awards on September 16.

We commended the Academy for acting swiftly and responsibly. The ball was then in Griffin's court: We called on her to issue an immediate and unequivocal apology to Christians. "If she does, she will get this issue behind her," we told the media on September 11. "If she does not, she will be remembered as a foul-mouthed bigot for the rest of her life."

By the way, Griffin is not just another ex-Catholic—she hates Catholicism with a passion. In a June interview with *OutSmart*, Houston's gay magazine, Griffin described herself as a "complete militant atheist" and said that the Catholic Church is "stupid." No wonder she told the *Los Angeles Times* she hoped people were offended by her obscene verbal assault; this was right after she said it.

It wasn't just the Hollywood crowd who approved of Griffin's bigotry—other elites gave her a thumbs-up as well. For example, *New York* magazine gave Griffin "kudos" for her "joyfully blasphemous rant," going so far as to gush, "thank God we can always count on Kathy Griffin to inject a little energy into a boring awards show." But the same tabloid found nothing joyful at all about the remark that got the highly apologetic Imus fired in April, and even went so far as to label it one of the "Great Moments in Bigoted Slurs." Different strokes for different folks?

Others also shared *New York's* brand of humor. The website of the *Arizona Daily Star* called Griffin's words "interesting" and "refreshing," and a reporter for the Miami/Ft. Lauderdale Fox affiliate said her "raunchy" quip was "kind of funny." Even more revealing was a new website, SuckItJesus.com, that was created by Griffin's fans: they wanted her "mild, and comedic" speech to be aired on E!

Perhaps the most defining response of all came from Ellen Johnson, president of American Atheists. In a September 12 news release, Johnson called for a boycott of the Emmy awards. Distraught that the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, a private organization, chose not to broadcast Griffin's anti-Christian rant, Johnson wailed, "this is something I'd expect in a nation like Saudi Arabia or Taliban-controlled Afghanistan." As we told the media, "Someone needs to give her a copy of the First Amendment—it protects our right to protest objectionable speech."

Finally, while we were pleased to learn that Griffin's celebrity stock plummeted as a result of her scripted speech, we also know that there are some very sick people out there who love it every time some bigot takes a shot at Christianity. To wit: the numerous nasty phone calls and messages we received are proof positive of how visceral the hatred is, much of it aimed directly at the Catholic League. No matter, at the end of the day, Griffin lost and we won.

MOTHER TERESA'S FAITH: HITCHENS STILL DOESN'T GET IT

In September, Doubleday released a book by Father Brian Kolodiejchuk called *Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light*. Father Kolodiejchuk, the postulator for Mother Teresa's sainthood cause, has collected her writings into a volume that shows the intensity of her holiness. Particularly revealing are the sections that highlight the "dark night of the soul" that haunted Mother Teresa for years.

An interesting article in *Time* on August 23 quoted noted atheist author Christopher Hitchens, who said of Mother Teresa, "She was no more exempt from the realization that religion is a human fabrication than any other person, and that her attempted cure was more and more professions of faith could only have deepened the pit that she had dug for herself."

Hitchens still doesn't get it. While others are awed by Mother Teresa's life of good works and love for the Lord—even during the years she felt distant from Him—the famed atheist sees even more to loathe. But this is no surprise coming from

Hitchens, whose book ranting against the saintly nun, *The Missionary Position*, contained not one footnote to support his charges.

Hitchens can rage all he likes. Most people will not be swayed. As Father Kolodiejchuk told *Time*, "The tendency in our spiritual life but also in our more general attitude toward love is that our feelings are all that is going on...And so to us the totality of love is what we feel. But to really love someone requires commitment, fidelity and vulnerability. Mother Teresa wasn't 'feeling' Christ's love, and she could have shut down. But she was up at 4:30 every morning for Jesus, and still writing to him, 'Your happiness is all I want.' That's a powerful example even if you are not talking in exclusively religious terms."

After all, as Mother Teresa herself wrote, "I accept not in my feelings—but with my will, the Will of God—I accept His will."

On August 28, in a debate with Bill Donohue, Hitchens said on MSNBC's "Hardball" that "Mother Teresa did not believe that Jesus was present in the Eucharist..." Donohue denied this was true.

Hitchens was relying on the *Time* article, which said that "for the last nearly half-century of her life she [Mother Teresa] *felt no presence of God whatsoever*." (Our emphasis.) Mother Teresa's nonbelief in Jesus' Real Presence in the Eucharist, Hitchens asserted, was supported by Father Kolodiejchuk.

We called Father Kolodiejchuk in San Diego; a nun to whom we spoke (Father Kolodiejchuk was traveling) confirmed what we thought was the case: there is a profound difference between "feeling" and "believing." Did Mother Teresa not always feel the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist? Yes. Did she therefore not believe in the Real Presence? Nonsense.

On p. 213 of the book, it talks about Mother Teresa's "early

love of the Eucharist.” She shared her thoughts about this matter with Father Joseph Neuner, who wrote, “Though she no longer felt Jesus’ presence, she ‘would not miss Holy Com. [Communion] for anything.’”

On the same page are the reflections of a senior sister in her order, the Missionaries of Charity. Here is what she said:

“Mother received Holy Communion with tremendous devotion. If there happened to be a second Mass celebrated in Mother House on a given day, she would always try to assist at it, even if she were very busy. I would hear her say on such occasions, ‘How beautiful to have received Jesus twice today.’ Mother’s deep, deep reverence for the Blessed Sacrament was a sign of her profound faith in the Real Presence of Jesus under the appearances of bread and wine. Her adoring attitude, gestures such as genuflections—even on both knees in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament exposed, and that well into old age—her postures such as kneeling and joining hands, her preference for receiving Holy Communion on the tongue all bespoke her faith in the Eucharist.”

Looks like Hitchens got it wrong again. Mother Teresa loved the Eucharist and passionately believed in the Real Presence.

RABBI KULA EMBRACES MOTHER TERESA

Rabbi Irwin Kula, a good friend of the Catholic League, is the President of CLAL—The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership. He is the author of the book Yearnings: Embracing the Sacred Messiness of Life.

“Mother Teresa’s passionate expression of doubt in her recently released ‘dark letters’ is a reflection of the profundity of her faith and firmly places her in the tradition of the great spiritual figures shaped by the exquisite anguish of finite human beings genuinely yearning for the infinite. Her honesty about her spiritual emptiness is uncomfortable because we tend to see genuine faith and love as free of doubt. But nothing could be further from the truth. A mature faith, a rich love, a genuine relationship with God or with another person, is born of the grit and insecurity of life. We yearn for that place with God or with another person that can banish anxiety, anguish, and insecurity. But any faith that is certain is no faith at all just as any love never doubted is very shallow love.”

WORKPLACE RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION THREATENED

According to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the House is slated to vote on the Employment Non-Discrimination Act sometime this fall (hearings on the bill were held beginning September 5). The bill would prohibit workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Included in the latest version is a narrowing of the exemption typically afforded religious institutions.

The Catholic League strongly opposes tampering with the wording of the religious exemption section of this bill. Previous versions have simply said that “This Act shall not apply to a religious organization;” in the current version of the bill, the wording is conditional.

For example, the current version holds that this exemption would only apply to religious organizations which “have as its primary purpose religious ritual or worship or the teaching or spreading of religious doctrine or belief.” Would Catholic schools in the inner city that service a mostly black Protestant population not be exempt any longer? It is unclear what would happen, though it is a sure bet that such questions would wind up in the courts, costing a fortune.

Then there is the section which says that religious institutions must identify “which of its religious tenets are significant” enough to warrant an exemption. So now judges will be asked to decide what constitutes a “significant” religious tenet. Isn’t this why we have First Amendment religious-liberty rights? To stop this kind of encroachment?

There is another problem with this bill. It states that when it comes to enforcement, the 1964 Civil Rights Act should be operative (even though sexual orientation was never mentioned in that bill). Worse, if the workplace bill passes, it could mean that religious organizations would have to develop an affirmative action plan for hiring gays. Why? Because even though the 1964 Civil Rights Act expressly prohibits preferential treatment on the basis of race, the courts have nonetheless cited this law as justification for exactly that.

Bill Donohue wrote to every member of the House asking that the original language regarding religious exemption be maintained.

NEWSPAPERS SELF-CENSOR MUSLIM

CARTOONS

At least two dozen newspapers refused to run a cartoon on August 26 (the first of a two-part series) because it might have offended Muslims; more newspapers censored the September 2 installment. The cartoon strip that was slated to run on August 26, Berkeley Breathed's "Opus," contained a sexually suggestive panel and poked fun at radical Islam. "Opus" is syndicated by the Washington Post Writers Group, which is led by Alan Shearer.

Shearer explained that "When-ever something lands close to the edge, we give editors enough notice" in case they choose to run something else. He checked with Islamic experts to see if the "Opus" strips might be a problem, and even though the Islamic experts said they weren't, they were nixed anyway. Muslim staffers at the newspaper were also asked for their input.

The *Washington Post*, and all the other newspapers which refused to print these cartoons, simultaneously sported their cowardice and bigotry. In 2006, the *Post* portrayed the Sacred Heart of Jesus with the symbol of the Democratic Party, and it depicted the disgraced Congressman Mark Foley as a candidate for the priesthood at "Saint Paedophilia's." In 2004, it displayed a bishop monitoring Catholics in a voting booth, and it showed a habit-wearing nun brandishing a ruler while "little Mel Gibson gets beaten to a bloody pulp by Sister Dolores Excruciata of the Little Sisters of the Holy Agony." In 2002, it depicted a bishop and two priests as the "Axis of Evil," and in 2001 it twice mocked the Eucharist.

Did the Washington Post Writers Group ever give editors notice about the inflammatory nature of these cartoons so that they might run a substitute? Did they access Catholic experts to advise them about the propriety of running such cartoons? Did they ask Catholics on staff what they thought? No, and that's

because angry Catholics—like Jews—never decide to man the planes. This is what the cultural elites mean by diversity.

LOUISIANA DEMS GET IN THE GUTTER: ATTEMPT TO SMEAR CATHOLIC POL

A television ad put out in August by the Louisiana Democratic Party accused Republican gubernatorial hopeful Bobby Jindal of smearing Protestants; Jindal is Catholic. The ad said Jindal “insulted thousands of Louisiana Protestants. He has referred to Protestant religions as scandalous, depraved, selfish and heretical.”

To drive the point home, the ad flashed the following words across the screen: “scandalous,” “utterly depraved,” “selfish desires” and “leads to heresy.” On the screen, the ad cited the December 1996 edition of the *New Oxford Review* as the source of Jindal’s remarks.

The Democrats’ ad didn’t just take Jindal’s remarks out of context; it engaged in a smear job against him—one of the most scurrilous the Catholic League has ever seen. We set the record straight in an August 21 news release: when Jindal dropped the term “scandalous” in his article, we said, he was referring to the sad historical chapter that witnessed a division within the Christian house. To be exact, he made reference to the “scandalous series of divisions and new denominations” that marked the post-Reformation period.

Regarding the terms “utterly depraved,” “selfish desires” and “heresy,” Jindal was citing Calvin. It was Calvin who warned

against random interpretations of the Bible. As individuals, Calvin instructed, Christians were burdened with “utterly depraved” minds and “selfish desires.” According to Jindal, what concerned Calvin was a “subjective interpretation which leads to anarchy and heresy.”

This was a fairly unremarkable exegesis. But to the twisted folks who lead the Louisiana Democratic Party, this was proof of bigotry.

In our August 21 statement, we called on the Louisiana Democrats to remove the ad immediately; it is no longer available for viewing on the state party’s web site. Jindal perhaps could have used the Democrats’ TV spot in his own ads to educate the public about the truly depraved conduct of his competitors. Maybe if the Democrats had a credible gubernatorial candidate (they still don’t have one), they wouldn’t have had to get into the gutter.

Despite any intentions held for the commercial by the Democrats, Louisiana Protestants weren’t susceptible to the smear job against Jindal. When asked by the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* to name Protestant leaders who would agree that Jindal’s 1996 article was offensive, a spokeswoman for the Democratic Party failed to produce a single one. Indeed, the Rev. David E. Crosby, senior pastor of New Orleans’ First Baptist Church, told the paper that “Anybody who reads [Jindal’s] whole article and ends up angry just needs to grow up.”

Further, the Interfaith Alliance, described by the *Times-Picayune* as “a Washington D.C., grass-roots group that was formed as a liberal counterweight to more conservative Christian groups,” also condemned the ad. The organization’s president, Baptist pastor Rev. C. Welton Gaddy, wrote to the state party’s chairman and requested the ad be pulled.

CATHOLIC JUDGE BASHED BY DUI LAWYER

In August, Florida attorney Loring Spolter formally petitioned the U.S. District Court seeking the recusal of U.S. District Judge William Zloch on the grounds that the judge exercises religious bias.

If anyone wants to see anti-Catholicism in action, keep an eye on Loring Spolter—the man is still at large. Ironically, Spolter's affidavit not only failed to detail a single instance of religious bias on the part of Judge Zloch, it offered concrete proof of his own bigotry.

Spolter was angry that Zloch has a close association with Ave Maria Law School, a Catholic law school in Michigan (it will move to Florida in 2009). Specifically, he was upset that two of the judge's three clerks are Ave Maria graduates and that Zloch has contributed to the law school.

Spolter thought he had a slam dunk case by citing the following—to him indictable—information: Ave Maria adheres to Pope John Paul II's encyclical letter "Fides et Ratio" (Faith and Reason), and it promises a "distinctive legal education" that is "characterized by the harmony of faith and reason." Worse, Spolter argued, Ave Maria addresses "moral truths" and even has the audacity to emphasize "the inherent dignity of every human being stemming from our creation in the image and likeness of God and raised to a new level of our redemption in Jesus Christ."

When Joe McCarthy played his infamous guilt-by-association card, he at least got it right when he identified communist cells as evil. By contrast, Spolter's attempt to demonize Ave

Maria—and by extension Judge Zloch—is laughable. In any event, it would be instructive to know if Spolter, who unlike McCarthy is Jewish, thinks it's kosher for Jewish judges to hire clerks from Yeshiva University and to make contributions to the school.

Spolter needs to take a more sober approach to his work and go back to doing what he does best—defending drunken drivers from their accusers.