

IS GOD TALK OKAY OR NOT?

As previously noted, Democratic Senator Charles Schumer said those who oppose killing embryos are “theocrats.” The next day, Democratic Senator Tom Harkin accused President Bush of being a “moral ayatollah” for vetoing a bill expanding embryonic stem cell research. On the same day, Democratic Representative Diana DeGette tried to convince her colleagues to override the president’s veto by screaming, “we are not a theocracy in this country.” But when Democratic Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi invoked God’s name on July 19 to support her position on embryonic stem cell research, no one objected. She declared, “I believe God guided our researchers to discover the stem cell’s power to heal.” No one opposed her reading of a letter supporting her position that was submitted by the Episcopal Church.

The Catholic League wondered what accounted for the silence of those who are normally jittery over God-talk. If someone read a letter from the Catholic bishops opposing embryonic stem cell research, and then had the audacity to imply that God is on his side, wouldn’t there be a media explosion?

Maybe the silence is due to the fact that some Democrats really think that God is on Nancy Pelosi’s side. On February 25, 1999, President Bill Clinton praised Pelosi in a speech he gave in San Francisco, saying, “You just—she doesn’t have to do like those really conservative Republicans who invoke God all the time, she just looks at you and you know God is on her side.”

So God is on Rep. Pelosi’s side, even though the Roman Catholic advocates abortion-on-demand. All that can be forgiven, her supporters say, because she likes to cite Isaiah, as she did last year, when promoting an expansion of the Endangered Species Act (humans have yet to make the cut).

Democrats need to get on the same page when it comes to God talk.

COMEDY CENTRAL RE-AIRS “BLOODY MARY”

Comedy Central re-ran the “South Park” episode “Bloody Mary” on August 2. Comedy Central officials had previously said the episode would not air again.

On December 29, 2005, we received a phone call from Tony Fox, the executive vice president for corporate communications at Comedy Central, informing us that there were no plans to rerun “Bloody Mary.” Fox’s call followed a sustained protest by the Catholic League that resulted in getting Joe Califano, a member of Viacom’s board of directors (Viacom owns MTV, and Comedy Central is a subsidiary of MTV), to intervene in this matter; unfortunately, Califano is no longer on Viacom’s board. But Comedy Central decided to renege on its promise.

Those who work at Comedy Central are cowards: to this day, they refuse to air a mere picture of the prophet Muhammad. That’s because they know that if they do, some Muslims may kill them. Nice lesson they’re sending the rest of us.

The “Bloody Mary” episode was written, produced and distributed by men and women who were sober and have a long track record of attacking Christians. It’s interesting that the episode aired the same week that some were calling for people in Hollywood to refuse to work with Mel Gibson. It’s revealing that Gibson’s drunken, anti-Semitic remarks had many in Hollywood up in arms, yet a well thought out, anti-Catholic episode of “South Park” failed to raise an eyebrow. While

anti-Semitic remarks should not be tolerated, neither should an anti-Catholic television show.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO TOLERANCE?

Over the summer, a Bloomberg/*Los Angeles Times* survey disclosed that 37 percent of Americans said they would not vote for a Mormon as president (Mitt Romney, the Massachusetts governor, is a Mormon and possible presidential contender). Some pundits, without looking at the disaggregated data, immediately assumed that conservative Christians were driving the numbers upwards. They were wrong.

The survey showed it was liberal Democrats who were the least likely to vote for a Mormon as president; the figure was 50 percent. Isn't it funny that those who generally consider themselves to be the most tolerant are the least tolerant?

WACKY IDEAS ABOUT FAMILIES

A coalition of hundreds of public notables released a statement on July 26 titled "Beyond Same-Sex Marriage: A New Strategic Vision for All Our Families & Relationships" that takes issue with gay activists who are limiting their efforts to legalizing same-sex marriage. The coalition's goal is total societal recognition of "families and relationships" that "know no borders." One of the 260 signatories was Rabbi

Michael Lerner.

Rabbi Lerner has been described by the *Jewish Forward* as Hillary Clinton's "erstwhile guru" and is unquestionably one of the most prominent—if not *the* most prominent—religious advisors to the Democratic National Committee (DNC). His book *The Left Hand of God: Taking Back Our Country From the Religious Right* has been described as providing "intellectual, political, and spiritual inspiration" for Democrats. It would be instructive to know, then, whether or not the DNC agreed with Lerner that religious institutions should be gutted of their moral and legal authority and be forced to recognize polyamorous relationships.

In the very first sentence of the "Family Without Borders" statement, it explicitly says that our society needs "a new vision for securing governmental and private institutional recognition of diverse kinds of partnerships, households, kinship relationships and families." By citing private institutions, the document makes clear its interest in forcing religious institutions to accept its agenda. Never lacking in specificity, it says that marital benefits must extend to "Queer couples who decide to jointly create and raise a child with another queer person or couple, in two households."

These insane ideas are those of Rabbi Lerner, the religious guru of the Democratic Party. It looks like DNC Chairman Howard Dean is in a jam.

IT'S OBAMA'S RECORD THAT

COUNTS

Senator Barack Obama spoke before a Call to Renewal conference on June 28 imploring Democrats to reach out to people of faith. "Secularists are wrong when they ask believers to leave their religion at the door before entering the public square," he said.

There is much in Senator Obama's address that the Catholic League welcomed. For too long, many Democrats have viewed religion as a purely personal matter, having no legitimate public role to play. But like all public officials, Obama must be judged not on what he says but on what he does. It is on this score that he fails.

Obama is opposed to school vouchers (though he sent his children to private schools) and he is opposed to posting the Ten Commandments in government buildings. There are also moral issues which, while not religious per se, are nonetheless of grave interest to people of faith. On this score, Obama fails as well.

Obama is a big supporter of abortion-on-demand; he thinks it is all right to intentionally let a child die who survived an abortion (that's the way he voted when he was a state lawmaker); he is a co-sponsor of legislation that allows for the intentional killing of embryos; he is opposed to a constitutional amendment that would define marriage as the union of one man and one woman; and he is against the Defense of Marriage Act (President Clinton signed it into law—it guarantees states the right to make their own choices regarding marriage).

Until Senator Obama bridges the gap between his rhetoric and his record, many will remain skeptical of his professed beliefs.

GAY MARRIAGE LOSES IN FIVE STATES

The New York State Court of Appeals ruled on July 6 that denying homosexuals the right to marry does not violate the state's constitution.

That same day, Georgia's Supreme Court upheld a 2004 voter-approved ban on same-sex marriage.

On July 13, a Superior Court judge in Connecticut ruled against eight same-sex couples who were seeking the right to marry. In her ruling, the judge said the state's law that allows civil unions already grants same-sex couples the same rights as married couples.

On July 14, the Eighth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reinstated Nebraska's voter-approved ban on same-sex marriage. Seventy percent of Nebraska voters approved the ban in 2000.

On July 26, Washington state's Supreme Court ruled that lawmakers have the power to restrict marriage to the union of one man and one woman, and upheld the state's 1998 Defense of Marriage Act.

Those who believe in judicial restraint welcomed the rulings. In these cases, the judges properly decided not to impose their ideological predilections on the public. But someone had to lose, and it is only just that it was the sexual engineers.

RELIGIOUS LEFT CROSSES THE LINE

A coalition of religious leaders in Massachusetts who are in favor of gay marriage recently accused Boston Archbishop Sean Cardinal O'Malley and other Catholic leaders of religious discrimination for opposing same-sex unions. The coalition requested that the Catholic leaders stop campaigning for laws that protect the institution of marriage.

United Methodist minister Tiffany Steinwert, who works with homosexuals, said, "We respect the Roman Catholic Church's desire to speak in a public forum about this, but it has come to a point where the advocacy about same-sex marriage has come to impinge on our own religious practices, because not everyone believes same-sex marriage is wrong or sinful or against religious beliefs." She added, "What happens when the Roman Catholic Church seeks to create public policy based on their religious beliefs is that they negate other religious beliefs that might be contrary to that."

The Catholic League responded in kind. We said, "It is important that the religious coalition stop practicing religious discrimination against Roman Catholics and stop campaigning for laws that weaken the institution of marriage.

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CENSORS GET ACTIVE IN MISSOURI

Maurice S. Owens, a Washington lawyer, filed a complaint with the IRS against the Missouri Catholic Conference alleging “illegal political interference.” The Catholic group was urging candidates for state office to return contributions received from an organization, Supporters of Health Research and Treatment, that promotes embryonic stem cell research and human cloning.

The ruthlessness of this IRS complaint, which is bogus on the face of it, should mobilize all principled civil libertarians to protest its implications for free speech. Regardless of whether one supports or objects to the intentional killing of human embryos, the immediate issue is a First Amendment matter: All non-profit organizations that speak to public policy issues have a stake in this debate.

The IRS issued a fact sheet in February regarding “Election Year Activities and the Prohibition on Political Campaign Intervention for Section 501(c)(3) Organizations.” There is nothing in that document that suggests that it is a violation of the IRS tax-exempt code for a religious group to urge candidates for public office to return contributions from any individual or organization. Indeed, it would be impossible to mandate such a stricture without trespassing on the First Amendment guarantees of free speech and religious liberty.

If the Missouri Catholic Conference were advocating that candidates for public office return monies donated by the Klan, no IRS complaint would have been filed. But because the Catholic group is fighting the fat cats—millions have been

raised in Missouri by political action committees promoting all kinds of genetic research—the censors are out in force. Not only do they seek to advance a utilitarian agenda, they seek to promote a gag rule on those who disagree with them.

Missouri is blessed to have such courageous bishops and an equally courageous Catholic Conference.

MEDIA HYPE WOMEN “PRIESTS” STORY

On July 31, eight women proclaimed themselves priests and four other women anointed themselves deacons in a “ceremony” in Pittsburgh.

Contrary to some news reports (like the ABC television report on the Pittsburgh “ceremony” that we told you about in the July-August *Catalyst*), this was not the first time that this make-believe game had been played. In 2003, the Associated Press reported that Judith Heffernan had “performed baptisms, heard confessions, said Mass and participated in last rites as a Catholic priest” for the past 23 years. Even before Heffernan’s “ordination” in 1980, a woman was proclaimed “pope” on the steps of St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York; an anti-Catholic group, Catholics for a Free Choice, performed the “ceremony” in 1974. Similar things are done every day in the asylum, though the media show little interest in these stories.

There is only one plausible reason why the media covered this insane event: they have a vested ideological interest in promoting female ordination in the Catholic Church. In this instance, it was not the reporting, per se, that evinced a

bias—it was the decision to cover the event that gave away their hand. #it was the decision to cover the event that gave away their hand.

TROUBLE IN PROVINCETOWN

Provincetown, Massachusetts, a small resort town on the tip of Cape Cod, was once a sleepy Portuguese fishing village. In recent years, it has become popular with homosexuals, both for year-round dwelling and as a summer vacation spot. Gays say they feel comfortable in Provincetown, which was honored by the Anti-Defamation League as worthy of the title “No Place for Hate.”

Though Provincetown’s police chief says they haven’t seen an incident of a hate crime in over 10 years, all is not well in this supposed bastion of tolerance. While Provincetown’s gays may enjoy freedom from harassment, some of the town’s Catholics have recently come under attack for their stance on upholding traditional marriage.

Massachusetts petition #05-02 is called the Constitutional Amendment to Define Marriage. The petition states: “When recognizing marriages entered into after the adoption of this amendment by the people, the Commonwealth and its political subdivisions shall define marriage only as the union of one man and one woman.”

A website found at the address KnowThyNeighbor.org has published the names and addresses of the petition’s signers. (The site also lists the names and addresses of those who signed a similar petition in Florida.) Most of the Provincetown residents who signed the petition are also members of Saint Peter’s, the local Catholic church. Some of

those who supported the petition say they have since been subjected to insults and accusations from fellow townspeople.

One woman who signed stated that a copy of the list posted on KnowThyNeighbor was left on her windshield. Another parishioner reported that the publisher of *Provincetown Magazine* saw her shopping and shouted that she was a bigot. The publisher, Rick Hines, admitted he confronted her, saying "you run into someone you know sees you as a second-class citizen and it's human to respond." Heterosexual visitors to Provincetown cited instances of being sneeringly labeled "breeders" by local gays. In addition, seasonal workers from Jamaica and Eastern Europe have complained of hearing racist and bigoted comments from both tourists and residents.

After the media began reporting on these accusations, many of those who live in Provincetown said that the supposed tension is little more than media hype. However, the situation was certainly troublesome enough for the police chief to hold a town meeting to address the need for civility and respect. Furthermore, it is apparent that for some homosexuals in Provincetown, supporting traditional marriage is synonymous with bigotry: the president of the Provincetown Business Guild, Steve Tait, described the circulation of the petition by St. Peter's Church as "the first act of hate."

The Catholic League believes that the situation in Provincetown is certainly worthy of attention. Indeed, after a league member who attended the police chief's meeting contacted us, we were even more certain. The member reported that at the meeting, he brought up a popular local T-shirt store called Don't Panic! He questioned why the store, located in a town that is supposedly "No Place for Hate," sells shirts reading "Catholic School Survivor," "Catholic Boy Gone Bad," and "Jesus is Coming. Hide the Porn." No one could answer him.

Bill Donohue wrote to the store's owner, Skylar Hynes, and asked him to do his part to end the current problems by

removing the offending shirts from his Provincetown location. If Provincetown is truly a village without bigotry, locals will be making the same request of him.