

THE HYPOCRITES AT "SOUTH PARK"

In a recent episode of the Comedy Central program, "South Park," Christians were linked to Nazis as oppressors of homosexuals. The show, which aired on March 25, and which was repeated on March 28, had a segment that described homosexuals throughout history. In the midst of this discussion, "Big Gay Al" interrupted his commentary to say, "Uh, oh, look out, it's the oppressors—Christians and Republicans and Nazis." The scene showed a Catholic priest on the right, Hitler in the middle and a Republican on the left (the priest was waving a cross and the Republican was waving a flag).

The league responded with the following comment to the media:

"Sodomy has long been regarded as taboo, which is why it is condemned in the Old Testament, as well as in the New Testament. Christianity, along with Judaism, finds homosexuality to be just as sinful as adultery, yet neither religion rejects homosexuals anymore than they reject heterosexuals. This being so, it is curious why the creators of 'South Park' found it necessary to single out Christians and then link them to Nazis. Such calumnies have unfortunately become the stock in trade at 'South Park's' studios.

"Appeals to decency work well with those who have unintentionally engaged in unethical behavior, but they have little force with those who proudly proclaim their immorality. This explains why the Catholic League does not expect much in the way of response from the gang at 'South Park.'"

TV Guide On-Line picked up the story by contrasting the league's position with that of a gay legal group, which liked the show. More interesting was the response from the station, Comedy Central, to a letter we wrote.

We were told that "South Park" is a "limits-pushing, not-for-children program, certainly not suited for youngsters." The letter cited its "Mature Audiences only rating" as a satisfactory response to our concerns, saying that if we "don't like" the show, "don't watch it. Change the channel." Moreover, it said that we were wrong to think that Catholics are singled out on the show, "when in fact the show makes fun of just about everyone and everything."

Comedy Central seems to believe that abiding by the ratings system absolves them of all responsibility. Not quite. This thinking is on the order of a reckless driver who blasts his horn while speeding through an intersection. At root is not whether an offender flags his recklessness but whether he has a right to be reckless. In the case of the driver, the offense is criminal. In the case of Comedy Central, the offense is moral. And that's just what's at stake: when we get to the point (some would say we're already beyond it) that we equate the legal with the moral, then all hope is lost. Most butchers in history were entirely law abiding.

To test the statement that "South Park" offends everyone equally, William Donohue called the station to find out. He asked if the spokesman could identify for him which episodes of "South Park" have bashed Jews and gays. The guy replied that the show doesn't bash anyone, it simply makes fun of people. All right, Donohue said, could he identify which shows make fun of Jews and gays. He was told that a recent show made fun of gays in a "Big Gay Al" episode. Donohue remain unconvinced, citing that particular show as one that lumped Catholics with Nazis. He said he looked in vain for attack on gays but didn't see any.

Donohue was told that he shouldn't get too upset when "South Park" does things like this. He then asked if the show was planning to do a program on depicting Jews as slave traders. The spokesman, who didn't care for this line of questioning, said he didn't know, but he did admit that Jesus is often made

the butt of jokes. Donohue pressed him to learn when Moses was going to be made the subject of their brand of humor. Again, the spokesman said he didn't know.

Finally, Donohue said that the letter he received from Comedy Central was signed Audience Services. He asked whether Audience was the person's first name and Services was his surname. He closed by telling the spokesman to let his boss know that he called.