

Editorials

A Columnist And a Saint

Columnist Richard Cohen's recent criticism of the Church in sanctifying Maximilian Kolbe, citing claims that he was antisemitic, rankled many people, and rightly so. However, it should be kept in perspective that Cohen's misguided opinion is understandable in light of the events that transpired in Europe during the 1930s and 1940s.

While some see Cohen's accusations as bigotry, it is probably closer to the truth that he is more guilty of slipshod homework than of bias. He should have wielded the spade as mightily as the typewriter. He would have found that Maximilian was in Auschwitz precisely because of helping the Jews he is supposed to have opposed.

And there are many other instances of his kinship for Jews that outweighed his early acceptance of the mistaken views of his contemporary society. At

first he was a product of his society but eventually he grew to recognize the error of its ways and openly and fearlessly disinherited himself from them. That involves sanctity.

But columnist Cohen made a more fundamental error than that. He should realize that saints are made, not born. Consider a few:

A man who lived publicly with a woman out of wedlock for many years. A man who lived libertine ways who frankly indulged his lusts. A man who endorsed heresy. A man who prayed, "Lord, grant me chastity, but not yet."

What would a columnist do with that man — St. Augustine?

Or take a rich youth, given to tomfoolery and expensive pursuits. A youth who fancies himself a soldier, outfits himself in sumptuous armor and rides off in pursuit of war and heredom.

Should we in light of these facts withhold sainthood from Francis of Assisi?

Consider the prostitute who led such a lowly life that it is written "seven demons" had to be driven from her soul. She would eventually become a personal

friend of Jesus Christ Himself and some day be called saint — Mary Magdalene.

Columnist Cohen merely made public the mistaken notions many of us have concerning saints and sinners. It is difficult to separate the seeds. What is important is which we choose to nurture.

Why Not?

Robert F. Kennedy once offered the advice that people should always seek their impossible dreams. And when someone asks you why, he said the answer should be, "Why not?"

In that light, the Courier-Journal makes its annual plea that Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Jan. 15, be proclaimed a national holiday.

Why?

Why not?

This year, 1983, it would be a particularly fitting thing to do, for it is the 15th anniversary of both the assassination of King and of his friend, Bobby Kennedy.

and Opinions

J & P Explains Misstatement

Editor:

On Nov. 24, the Courier Journal published our letter regarding the Nestle boycott. In it we stated, "Concerning the Nestle-appointed Infant Formula Audit Commission, it is to be noted that the WHO/UNICEF code asks for a monitoring commission to be set up but specifies that it should be an independent organization."

In the same issue of the Courier-Journal, on Page 4, under "Diocese Responds to Boycott Questions," we stated: "The International Nestle Boycott Committee (INBC) has repeatedly called for an independent audit commission." We wish to rectify this mistake and indicate that the second statement is the correct one. It is INBC and not WHO/UNICEF who has called for an independent audit commission. The WHO/UNICEF code in article 113 calls for "manufacturers and distributors of products within the scope of this code (to) regard themselves as responsible for monitoring their marketing practices according to the principles and aim of this code." Nestle's Infant Formula Audit Commission (NIFAC) apparently is the company's instrument to meet this requirement of the code for a company-sponsored, and thus not an independent, monitoring body.

Although the establishment of NIFAC is a positive step on Nestle's part, it is evident that the independent evaluation of how Nestle's management actually adheres to the WHO/UNICEF code in its marketing practices is necessary to verify the company's true performance and the effectiveness of NIFAC. The WHO/UNICEF code in its article 11.2 states, "Monitoring the application of this code lies with governments acting individually and collectively through the World Health Organization as provided in paragraphs 6 and 7 of this article. The manufacturers and distributors of products within the scope of this code, and appropriate non-governmental organizations, professional groups, and consumer organizations with governments to this end." (Emphasis ours.)

Fairness and honesty, if not the strict words of the WHO/UNICEF code, call for Nestles to be open to dialogue and collaboration with independent, responsible parties seeking implementation of the code.

We trust that a continued support for Nestle boycott will persuade the company to a prompt and full compliance with the WHO/UNICEF code.

M. Lourdes Perez-Albuerne
Program Coordinator
International Justice and
Peace Commission
750 E. Main St.
Rochester, N.Y. 14611

Editor's Note: It was later learned that Bishop Clark and the International Justice and Peace Commission had been in private correspondence with Nestle over the clarification of the issue. On publication of Mr. Ronald Pagan's letter last week, however, Ms. Perez-Albuerne appended the following statement:

"On Jan. 5, as this letter was ready to be mailed, the Courier-Journal published a letter by Mr. Pagan of Nestle's Coordination Center for Nutrition, Inc. We have already indicated the nature of our mistake attributing to WHO/UNICEF a statement from INBC. We appreciate the correction by Mr. Pagan but feel that the abrasive and harsh tone of his letter does not promote dialogue leading to early resolution of this issue. The International Justice and Peace Commission, with the bishop, do not participate in this issue for the exchange or debate, but because infants' lives have been and hopefully will be saved through the boycott and the resulting dialogue with the Nestle Corp.

"Rather than being dragged into a fruitless exchange with Mr. Pagan, we simply wish to state that Nestle's actual behavior in marketing its breast-milk substitute products is being monitored by the hundreds of participants in the worldwide boycott. We are only one participant and we trust the genuine efforts of many other organizations. The information is coordinated and gathered by groups such as the Infant Formula Action Coalition (INFAC), the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR), and the International Nestle Boycott Committee (INBC).

"We have been apprised by these organizations that in the last quarter of 1982, 30 reports of violations of the WHO/UNICEF code have been presented to NIFAC by INFAC and 60 by ICCR. It is through participation with these organizations that we will continue to monitor Nestle's activities, and wish to keep the diocese posted of any progress. Perhaps to Mr. Pagan's surprise, we do wish to see an end to the boycott, but it will take honesty and good will on Nestle's part, not acrimonious debates seeking to distract attention from the real issue — babies' lives."

Must Not Choose War

Editor:

Father Albert Shamon's continued frustrations with perceived attacks on the military and military might calls for a reply.

In his column for Gaudate Sunday (12-18-82), he proclaims the Good News according to Luke 3:10-18. Soldiers, of the Roman occupation army no doubt, had asked, "What about us?" John tells them and us, "Don't bully anyone. Denounce no one falsely. Be content with your pay." To which Father Shamon linked the joyful strains of Advent liturgies, a word about the faith of Peter walking on the waters, caution about a "euphoria which changes nothing" and about prophets of gloom and doom, a call to ponder change and repentance in private lives — for all of which readers of his weekly column, "A Word for Sunday," are surely grateful.

However, I do not find in John's loving welcome to the soldiers (many of whom today are among Father Shamon's parishioners) quite that outright a blessing of the U.S. Department of Defense. For it was armed forces which slew the Holy Innocents: armed forces which treated Jesus with contempt, striped Him, embedded the crown of thorns into His Precious Head, spat upon Him, led Him with heavy blows on the Way of the Cross, drove spikes into His Sacred Hands and Feet, then crucified Him. We do not know which soldiers refused to participate in the atrocities nor which ones performed heroic acts of mercy but there was one centurion on Calvary reported by Luke as glorifying God, saying, "Truly, this was a just man."

Under orders, soldiers plundered and expatriated Indians forever from their beautiful fertile vales of the Finger Lakes, manned the gas chambers at Dachau, led the death marches in the Philippines, destroyed Hiroshima and Catholic Nagasaki with A-bombs, slaughtered innocent women and children at My Lai, murdered Sister Rita Ford and companions in El Salvador and spread U.S.-made cluster bombs in the Beirut massacre.



"I'LL BET IN THE WHOLE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH NO ONE EVER SLEEPWALKED DURING A SERMON."

To those who fear the Kremlin or the Pentagon or both, Father Shamon pointed out, and rightly so, that neither John nor Jesus attacked the Roman military might — for the kingdom is not of this world. Instead, Jesus says, "Love your enemies. Love those who hate you... Put away your sword. Those who live by the sword will die by the sword... The Son of Man did not come to destroy lives but to save... Blessed are the peacemakers."

Some of us will seek the security of nuclear safeguards but, again, the Lord speaks: "His soul abhors the wicked and anyone who loves violence... For I will not put my trust in my bow; nor shall my sword deliver me... Therefore we do not fear though the earth is displaced, though the mountains reel into the midst of the sea." (Psalms 11, 44, 46)

And the prophet: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Not with any army, nor by might, but by my spirit says the Lord of Hosts." (Zachariah 4:6)

To which Thomas Merton adds a 20th Century voice: "It is absurd and immoral to pretend that Christendom can be defended by the H-bomb." Followed by John Paul II: "To remember Hiroshima is to abhor war... to remember Hiroshima is to commit oneself to peace... Let us replace violence and hate with confidence and caring." This

is the theme echoing from the pages of the Second Vatican Council soon to be reaffirmed and amplified by the U.S. bishops.

J. Francis Carver
PO Box 21
Trumansburg, N.Y. 14886

Affiliation Unimportant

Editor:

I have been disturbed by two writeups which you recently printed in the "World, Nation, People" column. Both referred to the number of Catholics currently in federal government positions. The tone seemed to indicate that this is good news. Considering the decisions being made at the federal level, I cannot help but conclude that many of these Catholics are no less hawkish and anti-life than so many of the other nominal Christians in federal office.

No candidate gets my vote because of his or her affiliation (or lack of affiliation) with any particular religious group.

Peggy Lester
236 Pennels Drive
Rochester, N.Y. 14626

Guidelines

The Courier-Journal welcomes your opinions. Letters must bear the writer's signature, full address and telephone number. They should be sent to Opinion, Courier-Journal, 114 S. Union S., Rochester, N.Y. 14607.

Opinions should be brief, typed, double-spaced, no longer than 1 1/2 pages.

We routinely condense letters, edit offensive words and libelous statements, and reserve the right to reject letters. Generally speaking, however, only limited grammatical corrections will be made and the letters will reflect the writer's own style.

Because submitted opinions exceed the space for letters, we publish only original letters addressed to us. We will not use poetry, open letters, or copies of letters sent elsewhere. To ensure diversity, we limit each writer to one letter per month.