



# Boston Catholic Journal



NIHIL NISI IESUM

Dedicated to Mary, Mother of God

Salus Animarum Suprema Lex Esto (Canon Law 175)

The Salvation of Souls is the Supreme Law in the Church

## **The BIBLE as HATE SPEECH?**

### **Sacred Scripture and Church Doctrine**

in the Academic  of the Storm

**The University of Illinois at Urbana**

**VS.**

**Champaign vs. Professor Ken Howell,**

# the Federalist Papers, Scholarship, and Hate Speech

*“Now, see here ... despite what James Madison stated in the *Federalist Papers* <sup>1</sup>, I wish to believe otherwise, and in fact hold it to be not only an effrontery to me were I a pacifist, but in and of itself an incitement to violence — and must, therefore, be deemed “hate speech” specifically directed against pacifists. I demand that we amend the *Federalist Papers* to reflect this by either omitting the text or revising it to accommodate pacifists. That failing, I demand any course on the Federalist Papers be removed from the curricula, or so taught as to omit or revise this statement, among others, which I, together with the pacifist community, construe as hate-speech offensive to pacifists.”*

The University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign appears to side with me against Madison, the Founding Fathers, and the Constitution itself. What is more, any professors of Law who, *“violate university standards of inclusivity”*, will be summarily terminated for any breach of this standard that supersedes every other standard including truth and scholarly objectivity — *even if* the university's Academic Staff Handbook states that faculty "are entitled to freedom in the classroom in developing and discussing according to their areas of competence the

subjects that they are assigned."

## **Any takers for a degree in Constitutional Law from the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign?**

There is a queer, if consistent resonance between the above two paragraphs — and the university's firing of Professor Ken Howell who was brought on board to teach *Introduction to Catholicism and Modern Catholic Thought* — only to be dismissed for doing so:

“My responsibility on teaching a class on Catholicism is to teach what the Catholic Church teaches,” Howell said in an interview with The News-Gazette in Champaign. “I have always made it very, very clear to my students they are never required to believe what I’m teaching and they'll never be judged on that.”<sup>2</sup>

The reason for his summary dismissal? He taught *authentic* Catholic doctrine concerning homosexual activity as intrinsically sinful and disordered — a 2000 year old doctrine — that offended the “sensitivities” of a homosexual student:

“An unidentified student sent an e-mail to religion department head Robert McKim on May 13, *calling Howell’s e-mail "hate speech."* The student claimed to be a friend of the offended student. The writer said in the e-mail that his friend wanted

to remain anonymous...“Teaching a student about the tenets of a religion is one thing,” the student wrote. “Declaring that homosexual acts violate the natural laws of man is another.” ... Ann Mester, an associate dean at the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, said Howell’s e-mail justified his firing.”<sup>3</sup>

This is both troubling and frightening. Not only does it violate the *free and critical examination* and exchange of ideas upon which the enterprise of higher education is presumably predicated — as distinct from indoctrination, or the promotion of “*acceptable* ideas” — but it makes *ideological coercion* a matter of policy. In other words, the coupling of *ideology* with *policy* supersedes the primacy of education, co-opts it, eventually supplants it, and then rigorously enforces it. Education, in a word, is the extension of ideology, and ceases to be the free and critical assessment of ideas. The distinction between *ideas* and *ideology* is more than morphological — it is stringently punitive. Associate Dean Ann Mester, for one, is clearly an advocate of this rigorous enforcement.

What is more, if the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign's principal focus — as an institution of higher learning — is enforcing “*standards of inclusivity*” to the *exclusion* of historical and objective truth and refuses to teach *what is in fact the case*, and not what *it would prefer the case to be*, then its academic credentials are worthless and the diplomas it grants (at least vis-à-vis the world of actual

scholarship) are so many pieces of toilet tissue on a single ply roll at about \$25,000 per sheet. We hope the analogy does not make you flush ...

This, at least, is the background for the *actual* state of affairs — rather than the state of affairs that we would *prefer* to be the case. We ourselves *would* that the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign turn out scholars rather than ideologues, that a genuine correspondence exist between “learning” and primary sources, and that facts superseded sensitivities. But what we *wish were the case* really doesn't matter, does it? After all, we are not employees of the university, and are exempt from fictions-by-policy.

## **Sacred Scripture and Church Doctrine as “Hate Speech”**

The most urgent question at hand is this: does, in fact, the *enunciation* of an historical or even a hypothetical doctrine (ecclesiastical or otherwise) which conflicts with my sensitivities and personal beliefs *eo ipso* constitute “hate-speech” because it does not accord with my own sensitivities or beliefs?

Of course I am free to believe that the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment <sup>3</sup> infringes on my sovereignty as a male. I may insist that it displeases me, and that its legislative *articulation* implicitly makes me a "male chauvinist" with all the negative connotations and social sanctions that attend it. Shall I then insist that the 19th

Amendment never be invoked in a scholarly inquiry into Constitutional Amendments? Do I have the right — by “standards of inclusivity” — to demand that the Amendment be amended to accommodate my sensitivities as a male? Or that failing, demand that the 19th Amendment be expunged from any study of Constitutional Law? Shall I deem the primary source “hate speech” because it implicitly disapproves of (and legally infringes upon) my presumed male chauvinism? Is the Constitution itself implicitly a body of “hate-speech”?

That the Catholic Church and Sacred Scripture teach that homosexual acts are intrinsically and gravely sinful in all circumstances and at all times is a teaching with an historical continuity of 2000 years is incontestable. If you dispute this, we suggest that you return to primary sources” (e.g. Sacred Scripture, and *authentic* Catholic teaching) that have apparently been concealed from you “by policy”. Of course you are free to *believe* that Holy Scripture and Catholic Doctrine do not teach this. You are also free to believe that the Moon is made of Green Cheese. Neither, however, are corroborated by primary sources. It may enrage you that astronomical research and empirical evidence reveal that the Moon is composed of basalt rock and other minerals rather than Green Cheese. It infringes upon your illusions and “damages” your childish imagination — so much so, that you go to the head of the Physics Department at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign and proclaim your indignation and your insistence that such things,

damaging to your sensitivity and that of others who choose to believe that the Moon is made of Green Cheese, be excluded from study, and that any faculty member who indulges in primary sources be dismissed for transgressing “standards of inclusivity”.

In the real world (that is to say, the world outside the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign — and other green-clad pretensions to disinterested learning), *you* would be dismissed as cognitively-impaired and quite possibly insane. But at the Illinois at Urbana–Champaign, your “sensitivities” — not your academic aptitude — would prevail, and any study of the Moon would systematically exclude any suggestion that its composition is anything other than Green Cheese. Of course *you can* believe what you wish, — but wishing it does not make it so.

Any volunteers for the next Space Shuttle with a graduate in Physics from the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign behind the Cheese Wheel?

---

<sup>1</sup> “Is the power of declaring war necessary? No man will answer this question in the negative. It would be superfluous, therefore, to enter into a proof of the affirmative.” James Madison, *Federalist Papers No. 41*

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2010/07/09/university-illinois-instructor-fired-catholic-beliefs/>

<sup>3</sup> “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.” (19th Amendment.)

Geoffrey K. Mondello  
Editor  
Boston Catholic Journal



Copyright © 2004 - 2023 Boston Catholic Journal. All rights reserved.