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Theocracy Alert

The words of Karl Marx and the Christian Right

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August 9, 2005—In 1844 Karl Marx wrote “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.” Those words have much in common with America’s “religious” leaders and their politics of oppression.

“Religion,” as represented by the leaders of the Christian Right and their supporters, is not the “sigh of the oppressed.” It is the Schadenfreude sneer of the oppressor. Every day brings new tirades and efforts by the leaders of the Christian Right to denigrate, demonize and negate gay and lesbian Americans in any way possible. Just type “homosexuality” into the search engines of the Traditional Values Coalition (TVC), Focus on the Family, American Family Association, Family Research Council, or any of the other “Christian” sites and you can see and read, smell and taste the drug-induced oppression and raw hatred.

There’s the usual cast of drug dealers. Homophobe extraordinaire Rev. Louis P. Sheldon is busy these days pleading with the faithful to buy his book. The tome’s promo proudly proclaims that Sheldon is still hate-mongering using the same old fear tactics and discredited stereotypes and myths: “The Agenda’ describes how homosexual activists plan on recruiting your children into the lifestyle; how they’re undermining traditional marriage; and how they will eventually criminalize any public criticism of homosexual conduct.” Sheldon and TVC’s executive director, Andrea Lafferty, love to depict homosexuals as crazed, inveterate child molesters, but a study by the American Psychological Association reports that “recognized researchers in the field on child abuse . . . almost unanimously concur that homosexual people are actually less likely to approach children sexually.”

No doubt [James Dobson](#) is preparing a megadose of religious opiates to inject into his veinal video appearance at Tony Perkins’ [Justice Sunday II](#), which has as its [featured](#) speaker [Tom DeLay](#). And the Christian Right has the nerve to talk about faith-based morality and ethics?

Over at the American Family Association, chairman [Don Wildmon](#) is buzzing and [boycotting](#) any company that treats (or [threatens](#) to treat) its gay and lesbian employees equally: “The chairman of the American Family Association says consumers need to know which companies are actively promoting homosexuality.” Some of his more recent targets include Eastman Kodak, Kraft Foods, Ford Motor Company, Citigroup, Pepsico, Merck and Company, Allstate Insurance, and the Coca-Cola Company D&T USA (Deloitte and Touche), Kaiser Permanente, and Visteon Corporation. What these companies are promoting, Rev. Wildmon, is “equality” and “social justice.” What are you promoting?

There are some old newcomers helping to further clarify Marx’s words. Discredited psychologist Paul Cameron is back with a new “think tank,” the [Family Research Institute](#), dedicated to the oppression of gays and lesbians, especially those who are parents or wish to become parents. In 1983, the American Psychological Association dropped Cameron from its membership because of his bogus studies. In 1984, the Nebraska Psychological Association issued a statement “formally dissociat[ing] itself from the representations and interpretations of scientific literature offered by Dr. Paul Cameron.” The American Sociological Association issued a resolution stating, “Cameron has consistently misinterpreted and misrepresented sociological research on sexuality, homosexuality, and lesbianism.”

Cameron likes to refer to gays and lesbians—including those already providing loving homes for 8 to 10 *million* children—as “death marketers.” In a recent interview with the [Boston Globe](#), he had this to say: “I am not sure how long they [gays and lesbians] will take to destroy the US from within, but sufficiently weakened, the US will probably fall to another state before that occurs.” Apparently Dr. Cameron is perpetually in an opiate fog.

Cameron’s “studies” about gays and adoption appear in a fringe journal called Psychological Reports. Although it claims to be “peer-reviewed,” its procedures differ from every legitimate peer-reviewed academic, scientific and medical journal. According to Psychological Reports’ editor Doug Ammons, “No reviewer has a veto right.” So what’s the point of peer-review if reviewers can’t reject garbage? Moreover, Psychological Reports reportedly charges the author \$27.50 per page to print an article. No reputable peer-reviewed academic, scientific or medical journal charges its contributing authors. That’s the anathema called “vanity publishing,” which means “what you’ve written is crap, but we’ll publish it for a hefty fee.”

Dr. Ellen C. Perrin, the Boston pediatrician who wrote the report about adoption by same-sex couples for the American Academy of Pediatrics, duly noted “that a considerable body of professional literature provides evidence that children with parents who are homosexual can have the same advantages and the same expectations for health, adjustment, and development as can children whose parents are heterosexual.”

As Cameron’s bogus “research” makes clear, it’s not just adult homosexuals the Christian Right wants to oppress and hurt as much as possible. An early 2005 [report](#) issued by Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) documented that 95 percent of counseling services in the nation’s public schools have little or no gay, lesbian or bisexual resources. James Dobson’s Focus on the Family began its [story](#) about the PFLAG report with this: “A major support group for the relatives of homosexuals has released its analysis of the nation’s schools, and while many family advocates will find the results encouraging . . .”

It’s “encouraging” that gay, lesbian and bisexual students are unsupported and, therefore, made even more vulnerable to the effects of the bullying, harassment and violence spawned by the antigay rhetoric coming from many of today’s “Christian” leaders? That doesn’t make them “the heart of a heartless world.” It makes them the heartless center of their own *soulless* theocracy.

But perhaps Sheldon, Dobson, Wildmon, Perkins and Cameron could all get together and pose for a group photo. Such an image would make a splendid billboard, the copy for which has already been written by Randall Terry: “I want you to just let a wave of intolerance wash over you. I want you to let a wave of hatred wash over you. Yes, hate is good . . . Our goal is a Christian nation. We have a Biblical duty, we are called by God, to conquer this country. We don’t want equal time. We don’t want pluralism.” If all that won’t fit on the billboard, shorter copy is also readily available: “Bigots of the world, Unite!”

The first of these “public service” billboards should appear in the 38 Georgia counties where one of the nation’s largest outdoor advertising firms, Lamar Outdoor Advertising, recently refused ads because the proposed billboards’ copy didn’t meet what they called “community standards.” And what did this unacceptable copy say?

According to the [Savannah Morning News](#), “The billboards proposed by Georgia Equality feature images of professionals, such as a male firefighter and a female doctor, and include tag lines that read, ‘I protect you. And . . . I am gay. We Are Your Neighbors.’” Another of the Georgia Equality [ads](#) featured average, multiracial men and women—standing together, smiling—over the words “We are your neighbors. And . . . We Are Gay.”

When Lamar manager James Locke was “asked twice to point out which words in the Georgia Equality billboard were objectionable, Locke would not identify any specific words.”

“Religion” has indeed become the opium of the people. It dulls the [immorality](#) of discrimination and bigotry, and the [responsibility](#) for the realities they inflict on fellow citizens and their families. It dulls the reality of the guilt for treating fellow citizens and their families as inhumanely as possible. It dulls reality. It dulls the mind and justifies the unthinkable. History is clear on that. Those who most abused the drug—the Vatican, for example—were responsible for encouraging and condoning the suffering, torture and murder of millions of human beings, in the name of “religion.”

Opiates are painkillers; they relieve suffering. The opium of religion causes pain and suffering. The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs recently [documented](#) that the number of hate incidents against gays and lesbians reported to NCAVP member groups rose by 8 percent in 2003 and another 4 percent in 2004. The increase is accelerating in 2005, as was recently seen in Lakeland, Florida, where a gay couple’s home was [torched](#). “Die Fag” was spray painted on the front steps.

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