

Student Paper Publishes Blasphemous Cartoons

by Susan Brinkmann, OCDS
Staff Writer

(March 18, 2008) The same student run newspaper at the University of Virginia that will not publish cartoons mocking Mohammed, homosexuals or blacks, chose the week before Holy Week to run two offensive cartoons mocking Christianity

The Cavalier Daily published a cartoon portraying the crucified Jesus telling jokes on stage. The following day, they published a cartoon depicting Mary standing beside a man in a bed and asking, 'Come on God, be honest - did you really get a vasectomy? I can't let Joseph find out about this,' to which the man responded with an obscenity.

A firestorm of protest erupted. The American Family Association (AFA) sent out an e-mail alert urging its members to send an e-mail protesting the cartoons to Virginia Governor Tim Kaine with a copy to Daniel LaVista, executive director of the state Council for Higher Education in Virginia.

"It is sad to see students at the University of Virginia's newspaper, *The Cavalier Daily*, use such a low level of intelligence to express their anti-Christian bigotry," the suggested e-mail said. "It leaves one wondering what the taxpayers of Virginia get in return for the millions of dollars the state uses to educate the students."

The Cavalier Daily quickly removed the cartoons from their website and published an unsigned statement expressing regret for "any offense readers may have taken to two recent comics in the strip TCB published March 13 and 14."

While saying "the content of the Comics page reflects neither the views of the Managing Board nor of *The Cavalier Daily* as an institution," they do admit that when the comics were considered for publication, they were deemed to have met *The Cavalier Daily's* censorship criteria."

The censorship criteria, which they claim to use very infrequently out of respect for the First Amendment, consists of three questions: "First, does the author truthfully depict a verifiable historical or contemporary situation? If not, and the context of the work is creative, we ask two more questions. Does the author make a serious, intentional point, the censoring of which would constitute viewpoint discrimination? Also, does the author criticize or make light of a group of people for any reason other than their own opinions or actions?"

Obviously, editor-in-chief Elizabeth Mills and her staff thought that the blasphemous cartoons produced by UVA students Eric Kilanski and Kellen Eilerts were making a valid point, at least in their own opinion.

Both Kilanski and Eilerts have declined to make any comment on the cartoons at this time.

While not apologizing for the offensive cartoons, the editors concluded their statement by saying

“It is never the intention of *The Cavalier Daily* to offend, and we regret having done so.”

However, they have agreed that in light of recent and previous concerns, “*The Cavalier Daily* will be reviewing its comics policy.”

“The hate-mongers typically come out of the woods in the days leading up to Holy Week,” said Bill Donohue, president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, in a press release. “Easter can’t come and go without someone taking aim at Christianity. This has been a relatively tame Lent thus far. Until, that is, *The Cavalier Daily* decided to once again dip into the well of bigotry.”

Donahue recounts a similar episode in the Fall of 2006 when the same newspaper ran cartoons that mocked the crucifixion and indicated that the Virgin Mary had an ‘Immaculately Transmitted’ venereal disease.

“Even more telling of the attitude of those at the University of Virginia’s paper is the hypocrisy at play. Today’s issue also shows a cartoon that acknowledges that any and all depictions of the Muslim prophet Muhammed are banned,” Donahue says.

“Last year the paper’s editorial board forced a cartoonist to resign after the campus chapter of the NAACP objected to a cartoon mocking Ethiopians. And in 2005, the paper was quick to apologize to homosexuals for remarking that the crane is the ‘gayest-looking of all birds.’

“It’s clear that there’s a double-standard at play in the offices of *The Cavalier Daily*. Tell the paper’s editor to afford Christians the same consideration shown to blacks, Muslims and homosexuals.”

© All Rights Reserved, Living His Life Abundantly/Women of Grace.

<http://www.womenofgrace.com>