



Prez Release

Squeaky Wheels and Big Mouths March 2005

I try really hard not to get caught up in the polarizing elements of what some call the “culture wars.” But there are times I just can’t help myself. One person whose comedic skill is highly overrated, but has learned well the media effect of outrageous statements is Bill Maher, the former host of “Politically Incorrect.”

Maher’s recent appearance on MSNBC’s “Scarborough Country” included the statements:

“Christians and others who are religious suffer from neurological disorders that stop people from thinking.”

“We are a nation that is unenlightened because of religion.”

“I do believe that I think that religion stops people from thinking. I think it justifies crazies.”

Let’s get beyond the obvious differences of opinion I might have with Maher and look at what this kind of statement really represents.

Because we live in virtual reality created by the “multi-media” we are exposed to, the shrill and novel is what gets noticed. Maher has created an art form out of outrageous statements, which he doesn’t even need to reasonably justify. Because he is a celebrity and because he is highly skilled in the art form of cynicism, he has realized an exalted platform where his statements are actually news.

Now Maher’s statements are not unique to him. He has lots of company, a majority of whom, express their own opinion to each other at Starbucks, local cafes and in the privacy of their own homes as they make outrageous comments to whomever will listen. The fact is a lot of these people are funnier than Maher and even more articulate in their cynicism, but because shrill and novel gets airtime these days, Maher is making big bucks. He has found his niche—all the while blissfully believing he is “not religious.”

Nothing could be further from the truth—He actually believes because he disses Christians and any one serious about religious faith, he stands apart from them.

Bill—sorry to disappoint you. Get a clue—your passionate secularism is simply a current form of persuasion to see the world through human eyes sans reference to God. It's not new—it's not novel—but because you are an average comedian you're making some bucks at it. Call it what you will, but you are a “religious” zealot!

When Maher says the future does not belong to evangelicals or religious—he's in good company—Voltaire and Freud predicted the same! History is not on your side—Bill!

But another comment by Maher is more telling and with it he neutralizes my human tendency to offer him snide remarks for snide remarks. He recalls, “I remember vividly once when I was preparing for my first communion. I remember I was sitting my arms were on the pew in front of me. I was slumped over. And I remember the nun said to me, “The boy who was slumped over is going to hell... for slouching.”

That statement gives us huge insight into Maher's quest to pay back religious types for their zeal. I could say—Bill chill out—it's only one tough nun overstepping her boundaries a wee bit. Bill, what about all the good Mother Theresa did? Come on Bill!

Obviously he doesn't think that the equation has been balanced. That one event, which remains so poignant in Maher's life, simply takes my breath away.

When we represent Jesus Christ we had better not cast shadows on who He is. The consequences of not representing Jesus fairly are significant and payback can come in many forms.

The vitriolic verbage of Bill Maher is only the tip of the iceberg in our nation. Countless people loudly and silently mirror Maher's experience of living in the “shadows” that deny the reality of Jesus Christ.

This column will not cure the problem—only real followers of Jesus who connect with the likes of Maher will provide a way to correct the shadow-casting.

Maher will be proven wrong—but a lot of us will face the stern evaluation of Jesus Christ one day—the results of that meeting are going to shock many.

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