

Profound Christian moment mocked by Olympics

By Conrad Black

The opening ceremony to the Paris Olympics contained an element that was ghastly and profoundly offensive in itself, and echoes more loudly as it ricochets around media and official reactions. There is no excuse except unusual impiety, or what even today is uncommonly brazen sacrilege, for the portrayal of one of the most profound moments in the history of the world's premier religion at the opening of an Olympiad.

Sport and religion have little traditional relationship; it is like presenting a complex ballet immediately prior to the launch of a vehicle to outer space, except this was not a respectful invocation of religious tradition. At the corresponding occasion prior to the London Olympics of 2012, there was a British historical presentation that paid great attention to the founding of the British National Health Service.

Obviously, a grotesque re-enactment of the Last Supper prior to the arrest, condemnation, and crucifixion of Jesus Christ was in these circumstances as far from a respectful act as it is possible to perform, and was a comprehensive mockery of that diminished but unshakable majority of people, even in France, wracked and scourged by atheism though it has been, and in most, if not all of the participating Olympic countries, whatever their own religious practices, that believe in the existence of spiritual forces, a divine intelligence, that a person can aspire to propitiate or at least that such opinions should be treated with respect.



Last Supper, then arrest, condemnation, the torture of crucifixion: the Olympics laughed (Mondadori Portfolio)

There is no conceivable motivation for such a spectacle, other than the belligerent ambition of those entrusted with putting on the opening ceremony, to show their hatred and contempt for any notion of religiosity, spirituality, or the concept that there is or has ever been anything to the world beyond the immediate perceptions of men.

Therefore, according to that school, it lies within man's ability to perfect man, and the void so long and frequently occupied by notions of supernatural and creative powers will instead be filled by men. Festivals of thanksgiving for the arguably sacred gift of life, and for the miraculous world, will be replaced by pagan festivals, exalting men's ability to transcend and perfect the human.

Before recourse to updated versions of Hitler's Nuremberg rallies or Stalin's May Day parades with its colossal floats and symbols, or even Robespierre's Festival of the Supreme Being in the Champs de Mars, where the Eiffel Tower now stands, we must first have ceremonies mocking and debunking the detritus of that under-represented majority of the

tenaciously persisting faith in the existence of the divine.

The reception given to the drag queen re-enactment of the Last Supper at the opening of the Paris Olympics illustrates the pusillanimity, as well as the specious perversity of its authors and its apologists. The BBC inimitably published, belatedly, a tiny and reductionist, printed comment that some “felt it parodied Leonardo da Vinci’s painting the Last Supper.”

No, all clearly recognized that it parodied the Last Supper itself: Leonardo was not held up to contempt, it was the concept of any divine aspect to life or the origins of life and the suggestion that the murder of Christ was an especially noteworthy act with any unusual implications that were ridiculed. No one disputes that it is a good painting.

Associated Press referred to “an unprecedented display of inclusivity, showcasing the vibrant and influential role of the French LGBTQ+ community,” though it “attracted” criticism over a tableau reminiscent of the Last Supper. This was the standard waffling of the sceptical, leftist media, attempting a pre-emptive damping down of objections by implying that no offense was intended.

The New York Times took this line, by asking “did it really parody the Last Supper?” It thus counselled Christians, and other religious believers who would be opposed to such an anti-religious farce, not to be too thin-skinned, or too quick to impute discreditable motives.

More courageous and forthright, but only because of its more explicit contempt for religiosity in any form, the Guardian did not employ the BBC’s tactic of making complainers sound like cranky members of fringe occult groups and acknowledged that what it described as a “flamboyant” performance was indeed a send-up of Christianity. If this celebrated the fact that hostility to anything other than a completely materialist

view of life, albeit with a doffing of the cap to socialistic ethical considerations, was finally receiving a public and official renunciation, and “good-natured” jocular disparagement, that is just what such superstitious nonsense deserves.

Approximately two billion Christians would have found this display at least moderately annoying and probably half of that number intensely annoying; and probably 2 billion people who identify with non-Christian religions would generally consider such immensely publicised and explicit mockery of religious practice inappropriate and at least half of those would think it seriously distasteful. So would a large number of the athletes competing in the Olympic Games.

This episode illustrates the boldness of anti-theism, but there are billions of people who, if they noticed it, found it offensive, and they can take a slight degree of comfort in the fact that those responsible for this affront vigorously protest that they meant no offense, and were not really thinking of the Last Supper at all.

Of course, atheists are entitled to have and express their views, and atheism requires more faith than is needed for religious belief, as it is more improbable – at some point, something incomprehensible created something and what are the limits of the infinite?

The Olympic committee does not have the right to sponsor a severe insult to the Judeo-Christian traditions of the Western world and the religious sensibilities of all mankind. The world is gradually approaching a point where those who have religious opinions, or at least respect the possibility that such opinions may not be unfounded, will present a more systematic resistance to the unceasing and ant-like movements of the atheists and anti-theists, nibbling at and desecrating the philosophical and spiritual foundations of civilisation.

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