

The Olympics' disgraceful assault on Christianity

By Conrad Black

While I cannot claim to have conducted an exhaustive survey, my impression is that the Canadian media barely considered to be worthy of comment the element in the opening of the Paris Olympics last week in which the Last Supper of Jesus Christ prior to his arrest, unjust condemnation, tortured passage up the Via Dolorosa and crucifixion was contemptuously mocked in drag queen burlesque. There were the usual reflections of the contemporary media that it was an amusing and innocuous spoof but that it had attracted some criticism from Christian groups. It was implicit that objectors must be priggish and almost cultish antiquarians to take offence at such a spectacle. This is one of the clearest demonstrations in recent years of how our media and official authorities who react like wounded animals if there is the most trivial slight of any sectarian or ethnic minority, but anyone who objects to the mocking of one of the most famous moments in the history of the world and a central event in the premier religion of the world, the aggrieved party should be severely rebuked as hypersensitive, superstitious, and pompous.



CP-Web. Delegations arrive at the Trocadero as spectators watch French singer Philippe Katerine performing on a giant screen, in Paris, during the opening ceremony of the 2024 Summer Olympics, Friday, July 26, 2024 in Paris. (Ludovic Marin/Pool Photo via AP)

Since the earliest times of authentic history, in Mesopotamia, in India, and in China, man's thoughts have contemplated spiritual forces and divinations and indications, some subtle and some alleged to be outright revelations and apparitions of supernatural intelligence which it is prudent and worthwhile to attempt to propitiate. The monotheism of the Jews and then of the Christians and eventually of the Muslims has gained the apparent adherence of approximately four billion people, about 60 per cent of them Christians, and at least two billion of them people who attached some faith and credence to their religious heritage. It has always been one of the ultimate acts of mischief and sophomoric irreverence to mock religious belief and practice. No one could possibly imagine that the Last Supper would be singled out for such grotesque disparagement as it was in Paris last week by people who actually believed that the central figure in the Last Supper really was whipped almost to death and nailed upon a cross until he died. No one, no matter how depraved or degraded, could possibly find such a horrible event remotely amusing.

The agreeable aspect of it, the "fun" that our media detected in it, was the pitifully adolescent thrill of a send-up of a starkly mortifying event that more than a billion people unselfconsciously consider to have been one of the most notable encounters there has ever been between man and his Creator. The thrill and the fun are to be found in rendering repulsive and perverted an occasion that a vast number of worthy and in very many cases, exceptionally accomplished and intellectually sophisticated people regard as a sacred moment when the divinely inspired missionary of the deity was among us and about to make an overwhelming sacrifice for the moral betterment of mankind. It is intellectual vandalism, iconoclastic churl(")

Like children amused by some crude outburst, the BBC reported that some "felt (the drag queen reenactment of the Last Supper) parodied Leonardo da Vinci's painting." No one thought this was a criticism of Leonardo. Since many hundreds of millions of people believe that Christ was a divinely inspired person, many objected to the portrayal of the last dinner of his life on earth as a perverted farce. The Associated Press revelled in "an unprecedented display of inclusivity, showcasing the vibrant and influential role of the French LGBTQ+ community" though it "attracted criticism." The New York Times asked: "Did it really parody the Last Supper?" counselling against being too thin-skinned or over-hasty in imputing discreditable motives. The Guardian, one of the most unrelievedly leftist media outlets in what remains of the civilized world rejoiced in the "flamboyant" assault on Christianity. Approximately 50 years ago Pope Paul VI issued a statement about the Danish production of a film portraying Jesus Christ as a homosexual, calling it an "ignoble and blasphemous outrage." Violent protesters called Denmark "the pigsty of Europe." The fatigued spirit of resignation with which this vulgar infantilism in Paris has been received illustrates the cultural attrition that has occurred. Prior to what is generally known as the Enlightenment and is identified with the movement from the Middle Ages into the modern age, atheism was the opinion that dared not speak its name. Gradually, it has come out of the closet simultaneously with a

range of opinions, attitudes, behaviours, and characteristics that were formerly repressed or even punished. This, in itself, is a good thing. Everybody should work out their own sexuality without coercion, or affronts to public decency, and everybody is entitled in religious matters to believe or disbelieve what they want and to express their opinions. The problem we now have is that militant atheists and anti-theists cannot abide the imperishability of religious thought and practice. To them, any religious thought is an intellectual bumblebee that defies all laws of nature and logic. They never cease to gnaw at the roots of Judeo-Christian civilization, to rail at a sane humanistic spirituality as superstitious nonsense. They cannot abide the persistence of respect for the possibility of the legitimacy of religious thought, not because they think it really is stupid and fatuous and primitive, but because they are afraid that there may be at least a grain of truth to it.

They respectfully praise the practice of Islam, even though they think the spectacle of huge numbers of people pressing their foreheads against the floor is even more ludicrous than that of Christians piously kneeling, not because they have any regard for Islam—just the reverse: they think it is even more ludicrous and absurd than Christianity, but at least it isn't Christianity and in some ways competes with and, as they imagine, undermines Christianity. Practicing Christians, in general, are completely relaxed about freedom of expression for everyone to praise, ignore, or mock religion. It is much easier to make the case that spiritual forces exist and that miracles do sometimes occur than it is to make the opposite case that they do not ever occur and do not exist. For this reason, religious thought, belief, and to some extent practice will never cease. It is at the very basis of western, and other, thought and civilization. The claims of the secularists have been exposed as exaggerated and faith is, in fact, as the late Paul Émile Cardinal Léger of Montreal famously stated at the Second Vatican Council nearly sixty years ago, mutually reinforcing with human intelligence.

Forty-five years ago, Alexander Solzhenitsyn criticized the West, in *Commentary Magazine* and elsewhere, for materialism and lack of religiosity and courage, and added, somewhat gratuitously, that this applied “even in soporific Canada.” We

are probably in better condition than he thought, but he was right that an upsurge of sensible spirituality would not be a negative development. Eventually, the haters of Christianity are going to have to tolerate it as serenely and patiently as intelligent Christians tolerate these maladjusted, compulsive sniggerers; they do not mock God; they expose themselves as fools, albeit irritating fools.

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