

CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIANS, 'BEAUTY AND THE BEAST' AND PROGRESS

By Norm R. Allen Jr.

Disney's film *Beauty and the Beast* will star their first gay character. Not surprisingly, conservative Christians are not happy about it. Famous evangelist Billy Graham's son, Franklin Graham, has called on Christians to boycott the film. The conservative Christian Website LifeSitenews.com started an online petition calling for a boycott of the film that has garnered 110,000 signatures.

It is worth noting that, according to those in the know, the film that does not promote the so-called "Gay lifestyle." It says nothing about same-sex marriage or LGBT rights. It merely implies that Gays exist and that they have the right to exist.

The gay character is LeFou. He is not involved in a romantic relationship with a man. He is not a stereotypical flamboyant gay man. He simply seems confused about his attraction to the male character Gaston.

This is all it takes to get conservative Christians riled. They vote for the most blatantly immoral U.S. president ever, but get a collective attitude when a Hollywood film simply acknowledges that Gays exist.

In this respect, conservative Christians are a lot like their Muslim counterparts. Conservative Muslims protest and lose their minds when there is real or perceived offense given to their Prophet. However, as the Nobel laureate and secular humanist Wole Soyinka has noted, they never riot when a man throws acid in the face of a woman, carries out an "honor killing," murders an alleged apostate, and so on. Religious conservatives certainly have their priorities in order!

On the other hand, whenever progressives have sought to improve the world, conservative religionists have opposed them. Progressive secularists and religionists fought against slavery, but conservative Christians opposed them. Southern Baptists, Southern Methodists and Southern Presbyterians broke away from their northern counterparts to defend slavery.

Later, during Reconstruction, conservative Christians in the South worked against Black progress. The Ku Klux Klan and other White terrorists worked to keep Black people down.

The biggest opponents of the civil rights movement were religious conservatives in the South. They bombed buildings, issued death threats, yelled racial slurs, beat innocent Blacks, and so forth.

Conservative Christians such as Jerry Falwell supported apartheid in South Africa. Falwell debated Jesse Jackson and, like President Ronald Reagan, insisted upon “constructive engagement” with the White supremacist government.

When women began struggling for their rights, conservative religionists opposed them every step of the way. They opposed women’s right to vote, the use of contraception, women in the workplace, and so on.

In the world of science, religious conservatives could always be counted on to oppose scientific findings that contradicted their so-called holy books. As David Mills writes in his excellent book, *Atheist Universe: The Thinking Person’s **Answer** to Christian Fundamentalism*:

Galileo, remember, was nearly put to death by the Church for constructing his telescope and discovering the moons of Jupiter. For centuries, moreover, the Church forbade the dissection of a human cadaver, calling it a “desecration of the temple of the Holy Ghost.” Medical research was thereby stalled for almost a thousand years....Fifteen-hundred years of progress were...stifled by the Christian Church. Were it not for religious persecution and oppression of science, mankind might have landed on the moon in the year A.D. 650. (pp. 48-49)

Mills goes on to note that religious conservatives railed against surgery, medicines, transplants, anesthesia, pain relievers and other crucial medical breakthroughs that were allegedly interfering with God’s will. Today, they oppose stem-cell research and other “controversial” pursuits. However, Mills correctly adds:

But when cloning laboratories provide an unlimited supply of transplant tissue for dying children, and when genetic engineering cures all forms of cancer, Church leaders will once again forget their initial opposition and hail these achievements as evidence of God's love for mankind. (p. 50)

(Mills could have also added that, rest assured, as soon as medical science meets these goals, the religious conservatives that now oppose this research will be the first in line for the new treatments.)

Conservative Christians have long opposed the teaching of evolution. They have put forth pseudo-scientific ideas such as so-called Creation "science" and Intelligent Design (ID.)

Conservative Christians were humiliated in 1925 at the so-called Scopes Monkey trial in Dayton, Tennessee. The brilliant lawyer Clarence Darrow made an absolute mockery of creationist William Jennings Bryan during the trial. (Bryan actually died in Dayton within one week after the trial ended.) Yet the pseudo-scientific foolishness continues to the present day.

The conservative Christian mindset that set back human progress in the Dark Ages is alive and well today. Whether it is ID or opposition to *Beauty and the Beast*, religious conservatives will continue to be a thorn in everybody's side. Progressives will continue to have their work cut out for them.