Madalyn Murray Reaction Sets In

By ROBERT WATSON
Thresher Reporter

The morning after Madalyn Murray O’Hair spoke at Will Rice and Billy Graham launched his crusade, the Chronicle ran an article on the two crusaders, interspersing paragraphs on their histories and ideologies, the emphasis on Mrs. O’Hair.

Thus it was that the World learned of the godless, atheistic hanky-panky infesting our somnolent acres.

After this article, there appeared a letter in the Chronicle from a woman protesting that the Chronicle chose to “combine and compare her with our revered and beloved Billy Graham,” and that “a publicized reprobate such as the O’Hair woman is, could possibly have gotten on a program in one of the finest old colleges in our South.”

Letters Received

According to the Chronicle editorial editor, the paper received half a dozen other letters, about equally divided pro and con.

The Post received only two letters, which they published. One, from a Houston woman, protested that such a woman should be allowed to air her views before students. The other, from a La Porte minister, expressed regret that Mrs. O’Hair did not have time to attend the Graham Crusade.

In the days following the Chronicle article the University received a number of calls and letters. The President’s office received about ten calls, all of them denunciatory. Among those calling, mostly women, were a local minister and an alumna.

Call Dean

Dean Pfeiffer’s office received a letter and a call from a woman who was “a bit perturbed.” The Development Office also received calls and a couple of letters. The writer of one letter said that she did not mind Mrs. O’Hair’s being an atheist, but she objected to her being a “tramp.”

The University offices usually explained to the callers that Mrs. O’Hair was a college speaker, not one invited by the University. Replies were also sent to some of the letters.

After Hours

Some objectors would call after hours, and, not really caring to whom they expressed their dissatisfaction, would complain to students at the switchboards. According to one student, most of those calling were “little old Baptist ladies,” with various other sorts mixed in. Callers would not always confide themselves to the subject of Mrs. O’Hair’s atheism, but would also touch on other topics of current discussion.

A typical call might be like one which came to Arthur Rogers, vice-president of Will Rice, approximately as follows:

“I’m a Lutheran Protestant Christian, and I want, to tell you about this atheist woman. Rice is letting an atheist speak, aren’t they?”

Has Chapel Talks

Rogers affirmed, but mentioned that Rice also has many chapel speakers.

“But this woman wasn’t a chapel speaker, was she?”

No, she wasn’t.

“And I want to tell you about these student demonstrations . . .” Then, “I have a son who’s going to be going to college someday, and I want to tell you that he’s not going to Rice.”

“Thank you, ma’am.”

The Chancellor’s Office received two letters, which they sent on to Will Rice. They were both from a Mrs. Jane Sauter of Baltimore, who apparently makes it her vocation to warn the world of Mrs. O’Hair.

Paste-Up

One letter was addressed to “The 500 Rice University Students On the Will Rice College Speaker Program To Which Madalyn Murray Spoke, c/o Rice College University.” Pasted on the letter were passages from the Bible and from church literature, including the verses about burning the tares, about “how he that believeth not shall be damned,” and about ‘reaping whatsover one sows.” On the other letter she had written the passage about what the fool says in his heart.

A representative of the Will Rice newsletter, the Profile, telephoned Mrs. Sauter to see if she had anything further to add. She contended that “Madalyn Murray made the Supreme Court Justices look like a bunch of playboys,” that she is financed by the communists, and that “she really believes in God,” but is just “looking for publicity.”