

IS SHARIA A FRIEND OR FOE OF LIBERTY?

Bill Donohue

Sharia is the law that is derived from Islamic texts and traditions. Whether it is more of a friend or foe of liberty is disputed, but both sides can't be right.

On March 20, the *New York Times* ran an editorial taking aim at President Trump's "Islamophobia." Without assessing its merits, what interests the Catholic League is whether its interpretation of Sharia is correct. It defines it as "a set of principles, based on the Quran, that guide life for Muslims, much as biblical precepts guide Christians and Jews." "Extreme versions" exist, it allows, "including Afghanistan and Iran."

Agreeing with the *Times* is the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the Muslim civil rights organization.

Sharia, it says, "plays the same role in Islam that canon law plays for Catholics and halacha plays for Jews, a voluntary moral compass, not an alternative legal code." It goes on to say that "Like other faith communities in the US and elsewhere, we see no inherent conflict between normative values of Islam and the US Constitution and Bill of Rights."

A week prior to the *Times* editorial, Rep. Mike Johnson, Speaker of the House, expressed his concern about those who "come to a country and not assimilate but to impose Sharia law." The problem there, he notes, is that "Sharia law is in conflict with the Constitution."

Agreeing with Johnson is the European Court of Human Rights.

In 2003, the Grand Chamber ruled that "It is difficult to

declare one's respect for democracy and human rights while at the same time supporting a regime based on sharia, which clearly diverges from Convention values..." Similarly, according to Islamic scholar Robert Spencer, Sharia law is "contrary to America's founding principles and may violate federal law and the Constitution."

Islamic texts may not settle the issue, but they do not seem to support the position taken by the *Times* and CAIR.

The Quran (5:44) declares that failing to "judge by what Allah has revealed" makes one a disbeliever. This would appear to render the U.S. Constitution subordinate to Sharia. Furthermore, *Reliance of the Traveller*, a classic Islamic manual of Islamic law, notes that "Jihad is a communal obligation." At best, this affirms the need for a militaristic struggle; at worst it is a call to arms.

Leaving aside the scholarly debate, what matters in the end is how Sharia is interpreted by those who implement it.

Freedom House annually reports on the state of freedom worldwide, rating every country as Free, Partly Free, or Not Free. Almost all the countries with a Christian majority are rated Free or Partly Free, and all but one with a Muslim majority (Senegal) are rated Not Free or Partly Free. That says it all.

The report that follows shows that the more fully Sharia is implemented, the greater the threat to civil liberties. In other words, in its purist form, Sharia is wholly incompatible with the tenets of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. But Christianity is not.

CIVIL LIBERTIES IN COUNTRIES WITH SHARIA

This report surveys ten countries across three categories, drawing on Freedom House Reports (which score Freedom out of 100).

Full Sharia Implementation

These countries enforce Sharia as the sole or primary source of all law, including Islamic text legal punishments (amputation, flogging, stoning) and capital penalties for apostasy, blasphemy, adultery, and theft.

Islamic Republic of Iran

Freedom House: 10/100 (Not Free)

- Iran's constitution requires all laws to conform to Twelver Shia Sharia. Islamic text legal punishments are authorized and regularly applied. Iran's constitution recognizes only Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians as protected minorities with limited rights. All others, plus converts, are treated as threats to the Islamic state. Apostasy and blasphemy are punishable by death.
- Iran holds regular elections, but they are not free or fair. The unelected Guardian Council vets and disqualifies candidates, and real power lies with the Supreme Leader and unelected institutions that control the security forces, judiciary, and economy. Media are heavily censored, journalists are arrested or killed, and are not independent. The judiciary is not independent and serves as a tool of repression: arbitrary arrests, torture, unfair trials, and executions are common.

Afghanistan

Freedom House: 8/100 (Not Free)

- Since overthrowing the elected republican government in August 2021, the Taliban has ruled Afghanistan as an Islamic Emirate with Sharia as the sole legal framework. The Taliban leader exercises unlimited authority by decree, with no constitution in place. Islamic text legal punishments are enforced nationwide. No non-

Islamic public worship is permitted, and apostasy carries a death sentence. Women are almost entirely excluded from public life, including education and employment.

- All political parties and opposition groups are banned. There are no elections, no representative bodies, and no independent media.

Saudi Arabia

Freedom House: 9/100 (Not Free)

- Saudi Arabia's Basic Law says the country's constitution is the Quran and other Islamic texts, that the regime derives its authority from them, and that courts apply Islamic Sharia along with regulations issued in conformity with Islamic texts. Saudi Arabia has an absolute monarchy. No officials at the national level are elected. Conversion from Islam is a capital offense. Non-Muslims cannot practice their faith publicly, and proselytizing is banned.
- The regime relies on pervasive surveillance, the criminalization of dissent, and oil-funded spending to maintain power. Dissent is punished with long prison terms, including for social media posts.

Partial Sharia in Authoritarian States

In these Gulf monarchies, Sharia governs personal status and family law for Muslims. Criminal law is primarily secular, though apostasy and blasphemy remain criminal offenses in theory. Civil liberties are independently suppressed by authoritarian governance.

United Arab Emirates

Freedom House: 18/100 (Not Free)

- The UAE is a federation of seven emirates led by

hereditary rulers. Limited elections exist only for a federal advisory body, but political parties are banned, and all real power rests with the ruling families. Sharia governs personal-status matters (marriage, divorce, inheritance, child custody), which discriminate against women and non-Muslims. There is no independent media.

Qatar

Freedom House: 25/100 (Not Free)

- The hereditary ruler holds all executive, legislative, and judicial power. Sharia-based personal-status law requires male-guardian approval for many actions and enforces unequal inheritance and divorce rules. Over 85% of the population are non-citizens with almost no religious or civil rights.
- Registered Christian groups may worship in approved churches, whereas many other non-Muslim groups are generally limited to private worship and lack formally recognized places of worship. Proselytizing for religions other than Islam is criminalized, as is blasphemy.
- There are no political parties, no free elections, and no realistic path for the opposition to gain power.

Partial Sharia with Democratic Participation

These countries combine partial Sharia application with some degree of electoral democracy, press freedom, and civil society.

Malaysia

Freedom House: 53/100 (Partly Free)

- Malaysia operates a dual legal system: secular courts coexist with state-level Sharia courts that govern

personal status and moral offenses for Muslims. No nationwide Islamic text legal punishments are imposed. The country holds competitive elections in which opposition parties win seats, maintains some independent media and online expression, and permits freedom of assembly.

- Sharia-related restrictions remain significant. Apostasy is effectively impossible and can lead to detention or “rehabilitation.” Moral police conduct raids on unmarried couples.

Indonesia

Freedom House: 56/100 (Partly Free)

- Indonesia has made democratic gains since the fall of its authoritarian regime in 1998, with regular competitive elections, relatively free media, and multiple peaceful transfers of power. Indonesia’s national legal system is not based on Sharia, but it is not purely secular either; religion remains deeply embedded in the constitutional order.
- Nationally, blasphemy laws have led to arrests for social media posts. Indonesia’s new criminal code has introduced apostasy-related restrictions.

Nigeria

Freedom House: 44/100 (Partly Free)

- Nigeria’s federal constitution is religiously neutral, and since 1999, twelve northern states have operated Sharia-based criminal systems alongside secular courts. Those systems include Islamic text penalties in law, and courts have imposed punishments such as caning, amputation, and death by stoning for adultery, though stoning is uncommon in the modern era.
- National elections occur but are marred by irregularities, violence, and vote buying. Military and

law enforcement agencies often engage in extrajudicial killings, torture, and other abuses. Journalists covering sensitive topics face harassment and arrest.

Pakistan

Freedom House: 32/100 (Partly Free)

- Pakistan holds regular elections under a competitive multiparty system, but the military exerts enormous influence over elections, government formation, and policy. Pakistan's personal and family law is based on Sharia, and its criminal code includes strict blasphemy provisions carrying the death penalty.
- Dozens have been sentenced to death for blasphemy; though actual executions by the state are rare, vigilante killings and mob attacks are common. Islamist militants conduct terrorist campaigns against the state and regularly attack religious minorities. Media freedom is curtailed, and the judiciary's independence has been eroded.

Republic of the Sudan

Freedom House: 1/100 (Not Free)

- Sudan has a hybrid system. Muslim personal and family law remains heavily shaped by Sharia, including through the Personal Status Law for Muslims of 1991. Some Islamic text legal punishments and other severe Sharia-derived penalties still remain in Sudan's criminal laws.
- No elected government exists. There is no electoral commission, no independent judiciary, and no credible path to elections.

The conclusion is obvious: Sharia is the enemy of liberty. We enjoy our freedoms precisely because of our Judeo-Christian heritage.

MAMDANI MILKS “ISLAMOPHOBIA”

There is nothing phobic about disliking someone, unless it is wholly irrational. For example, lots of people dislike New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, and with good reason: they find his policies to be downright inane, even dangerous. Yet he and his supporters never stop accusing his critics of “Islamophobia.”

A phobia is an “extreme or irrational fear or dislike of a specified thing or group.” The word should be used judiciously, and not trivialized. This certainly applies to Mamdani. Quite frankly, he and his backers are milking “Islamophobia” for political gain.

The latest iteration of Mamdani’s linguistic politics occurred after two Muslim men came to New York City from Pennsylvania armed with a cache of bombs looking for trouble. They wound up throwing them at anti-Mamdani protesters outside the mayor’s residence on March 7. Though the bombs did not detonate, the madmen told the cops they wanted the death count to be “even bigger” than the 2013 Boston marathon bombing.

Mamdani appeared more vexed by his non-violent foes than by his violent allies, accusing them of—you guessed it—“Islamophobia.” This is getting old. Consider the following.

Last year, a *New York Post* editorial noted that Mamdani “wrote and sang a rap song giving his ‘love’ to the Holy Land Five, American Hamas financiers convicted and sent to prison for up to 65 years.” It was correct to say this has nothing to do with “Islamophobia.” It is a statement of fact.

Similarly, Jonathan Tobin, writing for the Jewish News

Syndicate, warns us, "Don't Fall for Mamdani's Islamophobia Gaslighting." He offers as proof a 9/11 example. "Muslims have been speaking as if they, and not the nearly 3,000 persons murdered by Islamists on that awful day, were the real victims of Al Qaeda's assault on America."

When Andrew Cuomo ran against Mamdani for mayor last year, Mamdani's staffers claimed it was "Islamophobic" for the Cuomo team to shop a photo of their hero showing him with a "darker and thicker" beard. It apparently never occurred to them that it might have more to do with making him look grubby, and therefore unappealing.

We know that Mamdani lied when he said his aunt was afraid to wear her hijab after 9/11. His only aunt lived in Tanzania on 9/11 and photos of her show her without a hijab. The "aunt" he was referring to was actually his cousin. But the urge to deceive, to claim "Islamophobia," proved to be irresistible.

Jonathan Greenblatt, the head of the ADL, said Mamdani never visited a synagogue. He was wrong about that. Most people would conclude he made a mistake. Yet the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the anti-Israeli Muslim civil rights group, called it "Islamophobia."

Actor Michael Rapaport criticized Mamdani for eating at pricey restaurants while living in a rent-stabilized apartment. He was accusing him of hypocrisy, but that is not the way his fans saw it. They accused Rapaport of "Islamophobia."

The Center for the Study of Organized Hate published a report the day before the mayoral election titled, "Islamophobia And The New York City Mayoral Election." It was cited by many who are convinced this phobia is ubiquitous. On closer inspection, it fails miserably in making its case.

The Report boasts that "we focus on the overt Islamophobia that permeated and substantially increased from June 24 to October 31." The document says, "we identified 35,522 original

Islamophobic and xenophobic posts authored by 17,752 unique accounts on X.” The Report considers the following words used by Mamdani’s critics to be evidence of “Islamophobia.” “Extremist,” “Radical,” “Radical Muslim,” “Unamerican,” “Anti-American,” “Enemy,” and “New York Has Fallen.”

If using these words to describe Mamdani is phobic, what would we call it when he called Obama “evil”? Was he suffering from a phobia when he said, “Hasn’t Barack Obama shown that the lesser evil is still pretty damn evil?”

Mamdani may not like it when he is labeled an “extremist” or a “radical,” but those are the kinds of words that reasonable people use to describe someone who refuses to recognize the state of Israel; welcomes a pro-Hamas activist into his home; promotes a boycott of Israel; accuses Israel of “genocide”; and still refuses to condemn those who want to “globalize the intifada.”

The Communist Party USA is one of Mamdani’s leading cheerleaders. His frequent invocation of Marxist terms, calling for the “abolition of private property,” for instance, also gives just cause to those who see him as the “enemy.” His hatred of Columbus, and his refusal to march in the Veterans Day Parade, give rise to reasonable charges that he is “Anti-American.”

Mamdani’s primary campaign received lavish funding from CAIR: it funneled \$100,000 to the largest pro-Mamdani PAC. No wonder many regard Mamdani as a radical Muslim—CAIR was named as a co-conspirator in the Holy Land Foundation case; it provided over \$12 million to Hamas.

By routinely hurling charges of “Islamophobia” at his critics, Mamdani and his supporters are trying to silence them, branding them as fear-mongers. But like the proverbial “boy who cried wolf,” they are overplaying their hand.

“EWTN Bookmark”

Bill Donohue discusses his book *Christianity in the Crosshairs* on “EWTN Bookmark.” To watch, click [here](#).

HYPING PENTAGON-VATICAN FEUD

Fact checking is a non-stop business at the Catholic League, and we are proud of our record. Michael McDonald, our director of communications, uncovered some aspects of an alleged war between the Pentagon and the Vatican that sets the record straight.

It was recently reported that the Department of War threatened the Vatican with military action. It was a bogus story, but it made the rounds on the Internet.

There are two culpable sources: the Free Press and Christopher Hale. The Free Press has done some fine reporting, so this is more of an anomaly. Hale is a left-wing Catholic whose ethics is on a par with his fidelity to Church teachings. Once the story was debunked, Hale was still sticking to his guns; the Free Press backed off.

On April 8, the Free Press reported on an allegedly tense and confrontational meeting between representatives from the Vatican and Trump administration officials. The meeting quickly became hostile, so said the anonymous sources cited for the article. Allegedly, the Papal Nuncio to the United States was given “a bitter lecture warning that the United

States has the military power to do whatever it wants—and that the Church had better take its side.”

The Free Press noted that “As tensions escalated, one U.S. official went so far as to invoke the Avignon Papacy, the period in the 1300s when the French Crown leveraged its military power to dominate the papal authority.” The reporter was good enough to admit that this came from anonymous sources. But it is also true that he has drafted numerous articles that pit the Vatican and the Department of War against each other.

Hale claims on his blog that unnamed Vatican officials told him they “saw the reference to an Avignon Papacy as a threat to use military force against the Holy See.” He is so radical that even the far-left and anti-Catholic *National Catholic Reporter* notes that Hale’s activities on his blog are “partisan wish-casting” in a crude effort “to co-opt the papacy to fit into a progressive political agenda.”

On April 9, the Department of War issued a statement claiming that the portrayal of the meeting with the Papal Nuncio is “inaccurate.” The spokesman said the reporting has been “highly exaggerated and distorted,” insisting that “the meeting between the Pentagon and Vatican officials was a respectful and reasonable discussion.”

Further, United States Ambassador to the Holy See Brian Burch spoke with the Papal Nuncio who also “confirmed the recent media characterizations of his meeting...are fabrications and were just invented.” The ambassador also quoted him saying the meeting “was frank and cordial,” and that there was no mention of the Avignon Papacy.

These new revelations generated more interest, and several outlets ran stories featuring statements that corrected the fabricated narrative put forward by Hale. These outlets included the *Washington Post*, the *Hill* and *Forbes*.

Even the hardcore ideologues at the New Republic and the Daily Beast ran a news story on the meeting referencing the Department of War and Vatican statements, distancing themselves from Hale.

Hale discredited himself—again.

NEW ANGLICAN LEADER FACES TURMOIL

Sarah Mullally has her hands full. The newly installed Archbishop of Canterbury is facing turmoil in her church, much like that of other mainline Protestant denominations in North America.

Mullally, who was a nurse before she was ordained an Anglican priest, took over as archbishop after her predecessor, Justin Welby, resigned following his handling of a sexual abuse case. She inherits a church that is torn over sexual issues.

She is also faced with a sharply declining Anglican population, especially among young people. Catholics in England now outnumber Anglicans among the Gen Z population (those born between 1997 and 2012) by a margin of more than 2-1. The problem is not limited to youth. Overall, attendance at Anglican services are declining; they are increasing among Catholics.

In the United States, none of the mainline Protestant denominations are in good shape. The Episcopal Church had made sharp cuts in its headquarters staff. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has also laid off many senior officials from its national staff. The United Methodist Church has undergone a

major schism, cutting its number of bishops. All have seen sharp reductions in attendance at weekly services, though that appears to be stabilizing.

The Catholic population in the United States has grown by 40 percent in the past 40 years, mostly because of increases in the South and West. Of the top ten gainers, six are in Texas or California.

There are many reasons why Catholics are doing better than mainline Protestants in the U.S. and the U.K. The latter suffer from mixed messages on sexual issues, and from a misguided attempt to be “relevant.” The data clearly show that the more “relevant” a religious community tries to be—in terms of accepting the norms and values of the dominant culture—the more irrelevant it becomes for its adherents.

This may seem counter-intuitive. But it isn't: the desire for continuity among the faithful is strong and seriously unappreciated. If Christianity is about truth—which is what it is supposed to be—then constant challenges to settled teachings is not only unappealing, it is subversive.

We should have known by now that attempts to secularize Christianity are an utter failure.

CATHOLIC NY GOV. PUNISHES NUNS

New York Governor Kathy Hochul is being sued by nuns because they will not call their trans patients “they,” and they will not put those of the opposite sex in the same room in their care facilities. Hochul identifies as Catholic.

The Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne operate a Westchester facility that serves the sick and dying. Their specialty is treating cancer patients who cannot afford care, providing housing, meals, nursing, and palliative treatment. Their home serves low-income men and women, who, without their help, would lack hospice services.

The nuns take in patients with no financial resources. They rely entirely on charitable donations and their own labor. Many of these patients are uninsured, homeless or abandoned. The nuns provide medical treatment, daily companionship, meals and a stable living environment. And people of all faiths, or none at all, are welcome.

But none of this matters to Gov. Hochul. She is determined to shove the radical LGBTQ agenda down their throats. She would rather close their facility, throwing their patients to the curb, before she would allow the sisters to honor their religious tenets. To be specific, unless these nuns allow men who falsely claim to be a woman the right to access a women's bathroom, and refer to them as "she" and "her," they will have to go out of business.

Hochul's punishment does not apply to the Church of Christ, Scientist. They are entitled to a religious exemption. If the nuns do not ratify Hochul's discriminatory policy, they will be fined \$2,000 for the first violation, \$5,000 for repeat offenses and \$10,000 or one year in prison for "willful violations." The sisters can be punished even if "no element of evil motive" is extant.

The nuns are being represented by the Catholic Benefits Association. What Hochul is doing is malicious and anti-Catholic. Indeed, she is one who is exhibiting evil intent, not the nuns. She is the professed enemy of the sick and dying.

SECULARISTS ARE GAMING THE COURTS

There is nothing new about die-hard secularists trying to game the courts. They typically like to say that their newly found group qualifies as a religion and is therefore entitled to the same First Amendment protections afforded Christians and members of other recognized religions.

However, there is something novel about Hoosier Jews for Choice arguing that their religious beliefs demand that their adherents have a religious right to abort their baby. This invocation is occasioned by a restrictive abortion law in Indiana.

Hoosier Jews for Choice says that its Jewish members champion abortion rights and bodily autonomy, and, most important, they argue that their religious beliefs require access to abortion. They say that “under Jewish law and religious doctrine, life does not begin at conception and a fetus is considered a physical part of a woman’s body, not having a life of its own or independent rights.”

Leaving aside the overriding biological issue, the most salient legal matter before the court is whether this entity is truly a religious organization. Of secondary importance is whether this belief is an accurate reflection of Jewish convictions.

Is abortion access a Jewish value? Yes, according to the Women’s Rabbinic Network it is. But don’t tell that to Agudath Israel of America and other Orthodox Jewish groups. They opposed *Roe v. Wade* and are staunchly pro-life. Even those religious Jews who allow that abortion is acceptable under

certain circumstances maintain that abortion is never something to celebrate. Indeed, they say that saving lives is what guides Jews, not ending it.

If Hoosier Jews for Choice qualifies as a religion, and its women must have access to abortion, what if it claimed that the parents of newborns should have the right to kill their kids until their offspring are 28 days old? That's what Princeton professor Peter Singer believes. While he is a Jewish atheist, there is no reason why Hoosier Jews for Choice couldn't reach the same conclusion, invoking religious reasons for infanticide.

This begs the question: What is the legal definition of religion? It has already been decided by the Supreme Court that Secular Humanism is not a religion. Moreover, declarations of a religion can be made by anyone, but are they legally valid?

According to the District Court of Colorado, for a belief system to qualify as a religion, it must possess five characteristics: (a) it must address ultimate ideas (b) it must contain metaphysical beliefs (c) it must prescribe a particular moral or ethical system (d) it must involve comprehensive beliefs and (e) it must be accompanied by accoutrements of religion. Fortunately, this is not a legal bar that is easy to clear.

Regarding the latter, this would require such factors as having (a) a founder (b) seminal writings (c) designated gathering places (d) keepers of knowledge (e) ceremonies and rituals (f) an organized structure (g) holidays (h) dietary rules (i) prescribed religious clothing and (j) opportunities for propagation. These strictures alone would screen out many fraudsters. Hopefully, they nix Hoosier Jews for Choice.

What makes this case so rich is that the ACLU brought it to the Indiana courts. It has typically sought to restrict

religious rights, not expand them. It was founded in 1920 by an atheist, Roger Baldwin, and it never listed religious liberty as one of its original ten goals, though it did list freedom of speech, assembly and the press.

In short, the ACLU is a dishonest broker trying to game the courts, while seeking to deny the right of unborn babies to live. That they are wrapping their case in religious garb makes it all the more depraved.

MIRANDA DEVINE BEATS AI

We deal with issues all the time that require multiple rounds of fact checking. That's because there are so many bogus comments, stories, reports and studies that have surfaced that it makes us skeptical. There is no substitute for doing your own homework.

The latest "arbiter" of truth is AI. From our perspective, AI is a useful tool, but it is no more dispositive than any other resource. This is particularly true when it is generating interpretative responses, or making normative judgments about persons or events.

Here is one example where AI did not fare well. We sought to evaluate a comment recently made by Miranda Devine, a columnist for the *New York Post*.

In her April 2 column, Devine wrote the following:

"When a black cop, Michael Byrd, shot dead an unarmed white woman, Iraq war veteran Ashli Babbitt, on January 6, 2021 during the Capitol riot, Democrats conspired to hide his identity, pay him secret bonuses, and ensure he suffered no

consequences.”

Asking Google AI to evaluate the veracity of Devine’s statement generated this response: “The claim is largely false or misleading, mixing verified facts with unsupported conspiracy allegations.” The response also notes “there is no evidence of a partisan conspiracy to hide his identity or provide secret bonuses.”

The AI response offers these points as evidence for its claims:

“Shooting Fact: U.S. Capitol Police Lt. Michael Byrd shot and killed Air Force veteran Ashli Babbitt on January 6, 2021, as she attempted to climb through a broken window near the Speaker’s Lobby while lawmakers were being evacuated.

“No Consequences/Clearance: The U.S. Department of Justice (April 2021) and the Capitol Police Office of Professional Responsibility (August 2021) concluded the shooting was lawful, within department policy, and did not violate criminal law. Byrd was not disciplined and was later promoted to captain.

“Hidden Identity & Threats: Byrd’s identity was not ‘hidden’ by Democrats, but rather withheld for months by Capitol Police due to ‘numerous credible and specific threats’ against him and his family after his name was leaked on right-wing websites.

“Secret Bonuses: While Byrd has been praised by his department, claims of ‘secret bonuses’ to reward the shooting are largely unsupported or misinterpret standard department retention or security actions.

“Pardon Claim: Claims that Joe Biden granted a ‘secret pardon’ to Byrd are false; Reuters reports that Byrd’s name does not appear on any official pardon lists.”

We investigated Google's AI statement and found it wanting.

"Shooting Fact:"

This is an accurate summary.

"No Consequences/Clearance:"

As AI notes, Byrd was investigated by Capitol Police and the Justice Department for the shooting. Both investigations cleared him of wrongdoing. But as Judicial Watch president Tom Fitton points out, in most officer involved shootings the cop is usually investigated by a grand jury. In this instance, Byrd faced no such scrutiny. Rather, he was investigated by his own agency and the Justice Department. This may be defensible, but it is in stark contrast to how Black Lives Matter offenses are handled. Grand juries are typically demanded to ensure there is no cover-up. Apparently, AI cannot make this connection.

"Hidden Identity & Threats:"

AI tries to make a technical distinction between the Capitol Police and Congress. Yes, technically the Capitol Police withheld Byrd's identity. However, as the attorney for the Babbitt family, Terrell Roberts, claimed, "The U.S. Congress wants to protect this man. He's got friends in high places, and they want to protect him." AI did not seem to believe this information was worthy of consideration.

"Secret Bonuses:"

It was later disclosed that Byrd received a \$37,000 retention bonus, and that he received help accessing funds for officers wounded in the line of duty. But this was not well reported, and indeed it was kept under wraps for some time. The chairman of the Capitol Police Union complained that the bonuses were above what other officers received. This prompted the union boss to call on Capitol Police to either give everyone else

the same bonus that Byrd received or force him to repay the excess amount.

“Pardon Claim:”

This is a red herring. Devine never said he received a pardon. Thus, no correction was needed. AI could just as well have told us that Byrd was suspended for leaving his loaded firearm in a public restroom in the Capitol, or that he was disciplined for shooting at a moving car while he was off-duty. In other words, AI not only makes a false comment, it makes no mention of relevant facts.

In the showdown between Miranda Devine and AI, she wins going away.

MARIAN MIRACLES MARK MEMORIAL DAY

[Bill Donohue](#)

It defies rational explanation, but then again not everything worth believing passes the rational smell test. We’re not talking about magic; we’re talking about miracles. Magic involves tricks. Miracles do not—they involve divine inspiration, which is beyond ordinary comprehension.

Memorial Day is defined by one AI platform as “a time for remembrances and reflection, often marked by stories of miraculous events and divine interventions.” Not bad for a robot.

It is worth nothing this Memorial Day two recent news stories which are believable to Catholics, if not to those whose only

God is science (yet some inexplicably insist there are 59 different genders). The stories speak to death and destruction.

[In March](#), John Petrovich was doing his Saturday morning run in a Pittsburgh neighborhood when he passed a house where there was an ambulance in the driveway. As was his wont, he made the Sign of the Cross and said a "Hail Mary."

Several days later he ran by the same house and a woman at the edge of the driveway waved to him and asked him to stop. She thanked him for saving her life. He was puzzled and asked how this happened.

She said that when he first ran by her house, she felt she was dying, but before she landed in a hospital bed "she got a vision of Jesus who came to her, and said, 'It's okay. Everything is going to be fine. You're going to be fine because this person prayed for you.'" She continued, saying, "On the palm of his hand was your face—on Jesus' hand. And I thought, 'I have to thank you for saving my life.'" He was speechless.

[On May 10](#), there was a big fire at Mother of Christ Specialist Hospital in the Diocese of Enugu; it is named after the Nigerian town. Just about everything was lost for good. The reception area, administrative offices, the doctor's lounge, etc. were leveled. Computers, printers, scanners and documents were all destroyed, as were televisions, refrigerators and furniture of all sorts. But not everything was decimated.

A prized statue of Our Blessed Mother, one that was passed from one department to another for devotional practices every three months, survived intact amid the flames.

One of the nuns, Maria, was struck by what happened. Her own office was also spared. "No smell of smoke, no flame, nothing. I started shouting, crying, and singing because I realized this was a great miracle." She said this incident had a great

effect on Protestants, not just Catholics in the area. She concluded, "Those who did not believe in the intercession of Mary should know that she is still interceding for us."

Memorial Day honors those who gave their lives to protect our freedom. For Catholics, we also have some miraculous events to ponder.

TRUMP IS RIGHT ABOUT RELIGION AND CRIME

[Bill Donohue](#)

President Trump ignited his critics again, such as Huff Post, when he opined on May 19, "When you have religion, you have less crime. It's like, 'Gee, I want to go to heaven, so I'm not going to do this or that.' Who knows?"

His observation about religion and crime is accurate: there is a mountain of evidence that shows an inverse relationship between religious ideas and practices (religiosity) and crime, meaning the more religious the person is the less likely he is to engage in crime. Trump's attempt to explain why falls short, but he is on the right track.

My own sociological research on this issue, as evidenced in [*The Catholic Advantage: How Health, Happiness and Heaven Await the Faithful*](#), found that the Three "B's," beliefs, bonds and boundaries, are positively related to the Three "H's," health, happiness and heaven.

With regard to crime, those who hold to religious beliefs, have strong bonds and recognize behavioral boundaries, are

much less likely to participate in criminal behavior than those who are non-believers, have tenuous bonds with others and fail to observe boundaries.

Duke University psychiatrist Harold G. Koenig is coauthor of the most respected work in the field, *Handbook of Religion and Health*. His team looked at the research and found that in 91 percent of the studies, there was an inverse relationship between religiosity and delinquency or crime. In a research study released after this project, 100 percent of the studies found a significant difference between religious students and those who were not religious.

We have known of the connection between religion and crime since at least the late nineteenth century when French sociologist Emile Durkheim noted that the strong bonds that religious-minded people form act as a social control mechanism, leading to fewer criminal acts. Moreover, the norms and values associated with religiosity ensure greater compliance with standards of civility.

Durkheim's thesis has been put to empirical tests by sociologists such as Travis Hirshi and Michael Gottfredson. They found that social control, which religion abets, accounts for less crime. To put it differently, those who have weak ties to social groups are left isolated and are therefore more likely to disregard the rights of others. Lacking moral rules, they allow their base appetites to rule.

Beliefs matter but if they are not accompanied by practice—by attending religious services—their influence is significantly lower. That is because, as University of Texas at San Antonio sociologist John Bartkowski found, those who attend religious services exhibit better social control and social skills.

Critics of Trump's observation on the relationship between religion and crime know nothing of the sociological research in this field. If they were not reflexively anti-Trump, they

would not make comments that make them look patently stupid.