

CAN'T ARGUE WITH AD HOMINEM ATTACKS

The outpouring of support and commendation for Bill Donohue in the aftermath of his debunking of the Pennsylvania grand jury report was overwhelming. He is especially delighted with the reaction of priests and bishops. This is what led us to pay for a Spanish version of his analysis.

Not surprisingly, there was also a wave of hateful and often obscene phone calls, emails, and tweets. Our policy is straightforward: We don't reply to the crazies.

A few years ago when Donohue was talking to Alan Dershowitz about some issues—the famed lawyer has also been the target of much vitriol lately—Dershowitz said something to the effect that “Bill, I’m older than you. I’ve lived through McCarthyism, the civil rights movement, the Vietnam war, but never have I seen more hatred in America than today.”

Matters have only gotten worse. To cite one example, there was an article by Andrew Ferguson posted online by the Weekly Standard that reeked of hatred. Never once did he challenge anything Donohue said in his analysis of the grand jury report. All he did was rant.

“Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report Debunked.” That’s the fairly unremarkable title of Donohue’s article. But it sent Ferguson reeling—he accused Donohue of choosing a “grandiose and self-congratulatory title.”

Donohue’s first sentence also pushed Ferguson over the edge. “Unlike most commentators and reporters,” Donohue wrote, “I have read most of the Pennsylvania grand jury report.” Again, fairly pedestrian stuff. Here is what Ferguson said about that one sentence:

“This is what the philosophers call an ‘argument from authority,’ with a special twist: the authority Donahue [sic] cites is his own. While all you bedwetters were getting your panties in a twist, old Bill D was stayin’ up doin’ his homework.”

Ferguson’s piece continued to go downhill from there. Never once did he show that anything Donohue said was false. He couldn’t. Indeed, he marshaled not a single fact. His entire screed was an ad hominem attack on Donohue that was strewn with name calling, and void of any empirical evidence, data, logic, or reason.

It is impossible to argue with such folks. But the next time Ferguson flies off the handle he should at least learn to spell Donohue’s name right.