

BOOK ON CHURCH IS SERIOUSLY FLAWED

Philip Shenon, *Jesus Wept: Seven Popes and the Battle for the Soul of the Catholic Church* (Knopf)

Every now and then along comes a book on the Catholic Church that causes quite a stir. This is certainly true of *Jesus Wept: Seven Popes and the Battle for the Soul of the Catholic Church*. Written by former *New York Times* reporter Philip Shenon, it has been hailed by most left-wing critics of the Church as must-read. Shenon also covered the clergy sexual abuse scandal for the *Daily Beast*, a radical opinion website.

The book is strewn with inaccuracies, some of which are minor (he gets Vatican departments confused), others of which are very serious (e.g., his rendering of historical events). The fact that he lists over a dozen editors and colleagues at Knopf, which is a distinguished publishing house, makes his blunders all the more mindboggling. But the buck stops at the top. Shenon is ultimately to blame.

The first error begins after the dedication page, before the text begins. Shenon lists three quotes, one of which is from Pope Francis. "Who am I to judge?" That is not what he said. But it fits the narrative of Church critics who have misquoted the pope so that they can make the case that he was commenting on homosexuality. Not true. The accurate quote reads, "Who am I to judge him." The pronoun changes everything—he was referring to one particular priest who had accusations of abuse made against him.

Shenon can be fair. He credits Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI for speaking with compassion for homosexuals suffering from AIDS. But even there he flubs when he adds, "even as they rejected their sexual orientation." No, they

rejected the behaviors that they engage in, not their status as homosexuals.

“The Vatican had always portrayed the so-called doctrine of priestly celibacy as eternal and irreversible, but it was neither. It is not demanded in the Gospels, nor was it as a way of life followed by the twelve apostles.” The second sentence is accurate but the first is not.

Leaving aside the snide reference to “the so-called” doctrine, priestly celibacy is not a doctrine of the Catholic Church. It is a discipline, one that was not invoked in the early Church and can be reversed today. Not to know the difference between a doctrine and a discipline would be astounding for a college student studying theology, never mind an author who professes to be an expert.

A lot can be understood about anyone who writes a book about the Catholic Church by learning who he regards as a hero or who he sees as a villain. Shenon likes dissidents, not traditionalists. For example, he admires Sister Theresa Kane and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, precisely because they struggle (that’s putting it mildly) with a host of Church teachings.

Similarly, he likes Hans Küng, the embittered ex-Catholic theologian. He contrasts him favorably to Pope John Paul II, the brilliant philosopher whose contribution to the Catholic Church made him a saint. After the first year of John Paul’s pontificate, Küng took aim at him in the *New York Times*, faulting him for becoming “the darling of the masses and the superstar of the news media...already a sort of living cult figure for some Roman Catholics, well nigh unto something like a new messiah for our time.” This is more than condescending—it reeks of jealousy.

Shenon’s grasp of Church history is appalling. He speaks about “the imprisonment of Galileo in the seventeenth century

because he rejected the church's view that the sun rotated around the earth." The fact is Galileo was never imprisoned. He spent his time under "house arrest" in an apartment in a Vatican palace, with a servant. More important, his work was initially praised by the Catholic Church: Pope Urban VIII bestowed on him many gifts and medals.

Galileo did not get into trouble because of his ideas; after all, his ideas were taken from Copernicus, a priest who was never punished (on the contrary, Copernicus's theory found a receptive audience with Pope Clement VII). What got him into trouble was presenting his unverified claims as fact—that was the heresy.

Shenon writes that during the Inquisition, "people accused of heresy were regularly burned at the stake" on Vatican orders. Wrong again. It was the secular authorities—not the Church's authorities—that burned heretics. In fact, the Church saw heretics as lost sheep who needed to be brought back into the fold. Those suspected of heresy were subjected to an inquiry, hence the term *inquisition*. But the secular authorities saw heresy as treason; anyone who questioned royal authority, or who in any way challenged the idea that kingship was God-given, was guilty of a capital offense. Shenon has swallowed the moonshine of the "Black Legend."

The Church's response to the Holocaust is also badly misrepresented by Shenon. The old canard about Pope Pius XII being "silent"—it has been thoroughly debunked—surfaces again. Not only did the *New York Times* commend Pius in two editorials for *not being silent* at that time, the Vatican archives underscore his heroics.

What Shenon says about Mother Teresa is despicable. He says that "Her private correspondence, made public after her death in 1997, showed she was tormented by uncertainty about the existence of heaven—and even of God. She felt no presence of God whatsoever in her life."

To be sure, Mother Teresa confessed to having “dark nights,” times when she no longer felt the presence of Jesus in her life. When this story broke in 2007, I wrote to Father Brian Kolodiejchuk, her advocate for sainthood, about this issue.

He agreed with my comment, made on TV to Mother Teresa critic Christopher Hitchens, that “there is a profound difference between ‘feeling’ and ‘believing.’” He added, “Though Mother Teresa did not *feel* Jesus’ presence in the Eucharist, her firm belief in the Real Presence cannot be questioned....” He offered many examples, taken from her letters and behavior, to buttress this point.

On the issue of sexuality, Shenon is just as delinquent. He accuses Pope Paul VI and Pope Benedict XVI of being opposed to “sexual freedom.” What Paul was railing against was the sexual exploitation of women by men—that would make him a feminist in some circles—and what Benedict was complaining about was libertinism, or sexual license. The real giveaway here is Shenon’s bewilderment with Benedict for opposing sex-reassignment surgery. If this has to be explained, the man is clueless.

Similarly, Shenon cites the criticism that Benedict received from gay activists for his comments on homosexuality. Of course they would deny what Benedict said, which is that homosexuals have a “strong tendency toward an intrinsic moral evil.” This may sound harsh to some, but telling the truth is more important than appeasing people, especially when doing so would be dishonest.

Shenon finds fault with the Vatican for sounding the alarms over a book, *Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought*. He says the book “gently questioned church teachings on birth control, homosexuality, and masturbation.” Not quite.

The author, Father Anthony Kosnik, was a member of the

Catholic Coalition for Gay Civil Rights and an avid dissenter from Church teachings on sexuality. He said it was important *not to accept* what the Church teaches about homosexuality, maintaining that we need to see homosexual acts in morally neutral terms. He even went so far as to question the validity of condemning bestiality.

There was nothing “gentle” about this—he offered a perverse understanding of sexuality. Worse, his book was required reading in some seminaries in the 1970s and 1980s.

Shenon’s interpretation of events involving miscreant priests is easily refuted.

Throughout the book, Shenon writes about pedophilia when discussing clergy sexual abuse. In fact, pedophile priests accounted for less than four percent of the molestation of minors—eight-in-ten cases of abuse were committed by homosexuals. To contend otherwise is simply a cover up of gay crimes.

It does not matter that many homosexual priests who abused postpubescent males did not identify as homosexuals. Self-identification is not dispositive. To wit: when adult men have sexual relationships with adolescent males, they are engaging in homosexuality. It is intellectually dishonest to claim otherwise.

Shenon even labels Father Marcial Maciel Degollado a pedophile. This is astonishing. There is no wiggle room for him on this. Maciel was a drug-addicted predator who fathered several children, raped at least sixty postpubescent boys, and had sex with at least twenty seminarians. Shenon has no idea what he is talking about.

He mentions the case of Peter Hullermann in 1980 who was transferred by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger’s staff (later Pope Benedict XVI) from the German city of Essen to Munich for psychiatric care after he admitted to molesting a

postpubescent boy. He was then allowed to continue his duties as a priest. He went on to molest more boys.

Here is what Shenon left out. At the time, counseling sexual offenders was considered the right thing to do—not to punish them—and this was the considered judgment of those who identified as liberals. Everyone could be saved by therapy, they said. They were wrong, but this was the conventional wisdom. In any event, it was Ratzinger's deputy who arranged Hullermann's transfer to a new parish. There is no evidence that the future pope approved it.

Cardinal Ratzinger, in his Vatican capacity under Pope John Paul II, is also accused of mishandling the case of Stephen Kiesle.

In 1978, Kiesle was convicted of sexually abusing two boys in California and was suspended by his local church. Cardinal Ratzinger said he could not defrock Kiesle because no one under 40 could be laicized, and the priest was in his thirties. However, the day before his 40th birthday, he was defrocked.

Shenon hammers Ratzinger again for his handling of a Milwaukee priest, Lawrence Murphy. No one doubts he was wicked: he abused as many as 200 deaf boys extending back to the 1950s. What can be contested—indeed refuted—is the charge that Ratzinger bore some of the blame.

Though Murphy's crimes took place in the 1950s, none of the families contacted the civil authorities until the mid-1970s. After a police investigation, the case was dropped. Fast forward to 1996—that was the first time the Vatican learned of the case. Ratzinger could have simply dropped the case given that the statute of limitations had expired. But he didn't: he ordered an investigation. While the inquiry was proceeding, Murphy died.

In the beginning of his book, Shenon correctly notes that the

enemies of Pope Benedict XVI called him, “God’s Rottweiler.” In 2012, the *New York Times* called me “The Rottweiler’s Rottweiler.” I wear that nickname as a badge of honor. I will always defend him from those who seek to malign him.

The Catholic Church has a long history of accomplishments. It also has its dirty laundry. When assessing any institution, it is important to get the facts straight. What Philip Shenon has done is a disgrace. He seeks to discredit the Church, but his sloppy—even horrendous—scholarship renders him an unserious critic.

POPE LEO XIV IN HIS OWN WORDS

This is the article that appeared in the June 2025 edition of Catalyst, our monthly journal. The date that prints out reflects the day that it was uploaded to our website. For a more accurate date of when the article was first published, check out the news release, [here](#).

There is so much to say about a pope besides his position on contemporary public policy issues, but since the media are focused on this subject, it is important to know exactly what our new pope has said.

Abortion

- As a student at Villanova in the 1970s, he helped found a pro-life group on campus. (The College Fix)
- “Western mass media is extraordinarily effective in fostering within the general public enormous sympathy for beliefs and practices that are at odds with the gospel, for example abortion, homosexual lifestyle, euthanasia.” (2012 address to the Synod of Bishops, Newsweek)
- “Let’s defend human life at all times!” (2015 tweet in

support of the March for Life in Chiclayo, Peru, Newsweek)

- “We cannot build a just society if we discard the weakest—whether the child in the womb or the elderly in their frailty—for they are both gifts from God.” (2019 homily, Newsweek)
- “The Church must walk with all people, especially the most vulnerable, ensuring their dignity is upheld from the womb to the end of life, as this is the heart of Christ’s mission.” (2023 address to clergy in Peru, Newsweek)

AI

- “[T]he Church offers to everyone the treasury of her social teaching in response to another industrial revolution and to developments in the field of artificial intelligence that pose new challenges for the defense of human dignity, justice and labor.” (May 10, 2025, address to the College of Cardinals, Vatican)
- “I am thinking in particular of artificial intelligence, with its immense potential, which nevertheless requires responsibility and discernment in order to ensure that it can be used for the good of all, so that it can benefit all of humanity.” (May 12, 2025, address to the media, Vatican)

Assisted Suicide

- On Twitter, he shared an article by Catholic News Agency condemning Canada for implementing assisted suicide. (2016 Twitter, Newsweek)

Euthanasia

- “We cannot build a just society if we discard the weakest—whether the child in the womb or the elderly in their frailty—for they are both gifts from God.” (2019 homily, Newsweek)

Gender Ideology

- “The promotion of gender ideology is confusing, because it seeks to create genders that don’t exist.” (2016 to local media in Peru, *National Catholic Register*)

Immigration

- On X, he shared an article from *National Catholic Reporter* critical of Vice President Vance’s stance on immigration. (February 3, 2025 X post, @drprevost)
- On X, he shared an article from *America Magazine* critical of Vice President Vance’s stance on immigration. (February 13, 2025 X post, @drprevost)
- In an interview with the media, his older brother John Prevost has indicated that he is “not happy with what’s going on with immigration” policy in the United States. (May 9, 2025, *The Guardian*)

LGBT

- He criticized the media for portraying “alternative families composed of same-sex partners and their adopted children” in a positive light. (2012 address to the Synod of Bishops, *Newsweek*)
- “Pope Francis has made it very clear that he doesn’t want people to be excluded simply on the basis of choices that they make, whether it be lifestyle, work, way to dress, or whatever. Doctrine hasn’t changed, and people haven’t said yet, you know, we’re looking for that kind of change. But we are looking to be more welcoming and more open, and to say all people are welcome in the church.” (2023 interview with Catholic News Service, *National Catholic Register*)
- He has been ambiguous on *Fiducia Supplicans*. However, after the African bishops raised concerns about providing blessings to samesex couples, he suggested a compromise to allow the bishops to opt out. (2024,

Ordaining Women

- When asked about the possibility of ordaining women, he noted that “the apostolic tradition is something that has been spelled out very clearly.” (2023, Synod on Synodality, *National Catholic Register*)
 - “Something that needs to be said also is that ordaining women—and there’s been some women that have said this interestingly enough— ‘clericalizing women’ doesn’t necessarily solve a problem, it might make a new problem,” (2023, Synod on Synodality, *National Catholic Register*)
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SMEAR MERCHANTS ATTACK POPE LEO XIV

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Bill Donohue

Few things excite the media more than a juicy sex story about Catholic priests, no matter how half-baked the story is. The latest iteration of this phenomenon came on the day Cardinal Robert Prevost became Pope Leo XIV. Wasting no time claiming he is guilty of covering up priestly sexual abuse was SNAP (Survivors Network for those Abused by Priests).

On May 8, it slammed the new pope for the way he addressed accusations of priestly sexual abuse in the United States and

Peru. Indeed, six weeks before he was elected, this totally discredited association of anti-Catholic activists filed a complaint with the Vatican saying that Cardinal Prevost “harmed the vulnerable.” The facts prove otherwise.

In 2000, when Father Prevost was the provincial supervisor in Chicago for the Augustinians, he allowed a suspended homosexual priest who had been accused of sexually abusing minors to reside at a rectory not far from a Catholic school. Father James Ray lived there with other priests and restrictions were placed on him.

Two years later, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued the Dallas reforms, new guidelines dealing with clergy sexual abuse. It was then that Ray was removed from the Augustinian residence, as well as from public ministry. He was tossed from the priesthood in 2012.

Now it is legitimate to question the decision to place Ray near a school, but to jump to the conclusion that this was an egregious dereliction of duty is absurd. Had Ray been put up in a hotel in a deserted part of town, Prevost’s critics would say he was left unsupervised.

The more intricate case is the one dealing with three sisters from Peru. SNAP says, “When Prevost was Bishop of Chiclayo, three victims reported to civil authorities in 2022 after there was no movement on their canonical case filed through the diocese.” They claim he “failed to open an investigation, sent inadequate information to Rome, and that the diocese allowed the priest to continue saying mass.”

None of this is true. Here’s what happened.

In April 2022, three sisters made accusations about two priests to church authorities about sexual abuse (inappropriate touching) dating back to 2007 when they were minors. The bishop of Chiclayo was Msgr. Robert Prevost.

Contrary to what SNAP reports, the priest was removed from the parish where he worked and prohibited from exercising his ministerial duties.

Also contrary to what SNAP reports, Prevost met with the women in April 2022 and *encouraged them to take their case to civil authorities. Meanwhile he opened a canonical probe.* He also offered them psychological help.

In July 2022, Prevost contacted the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith after the investigation was completed. A Vatican probe found that the allegations lacked sufficient evidence to warrant further action. Moreover, the statute of limitations had long expired. In addition, the civil investigation was also dismissed for lack of evidence and because the statute of limitations had expired.

The women weren't satisfied and registered another complaint. The diocese responded by sending further documentation to the Vatican. (In April 2023, Msgr. Prevost was named Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops in Rome.)

In November 2023, Ana Maria Quispe, the oldest of the sisters, contended that both the civil and ecclesiastical courts were wrong. She started a social media campaign to keep her account alive.

The case was then reopened by the Apostolic Administrator in Chiclayo, addressing her complaint. Victims were summoned to meet but Quispe never showed up.

Meanwhile, there was another development happening, one which SNAP is deadly silent on.

In April 2024, after Archbishop José Eguren, a member of an ultraconservative movement, the Peruvian Sodalitium of Christian Life, was ousted—he was accused of abuse and financial wrongdoing—accusations of a Cardinal Prevost coverup percolated.

To understand why Prevost was being accused, consider the role that Fr. Ricardo Coronado played. In May 2024, Coronado, a canon lawyer, took up the women's cases. He was associated with this extremist movement and was widely believed to have engaged in corruption, violence and sexual abuse.

In August 2024, the Peruvian Bishops' Conference issued a public statement saying Coronado could no longer practice canon law. He was accused of having a sexual relationship with a consenting adult.

Off-the-record comments against Coronado continued to surface from Augustinian priests. They maintained that he "despised" Prevost and that he was guilty of "a pattern of sexually inappropriate and aggressive behavior."

In January 2025, Pope Francis and Cardinal Prevost met with one of the group's abuse victims. Weeks before he died, the pope dissolved the movement.

Pedro Salinas, a noted Peruvian journalist who knows this issue well, said Prevost played "an extremely important role" in ending it. In fact, he said, "The campaign of disinformation and discrediting Robert Prevost's career has always come from the source of Robert Prevost, Archbishop Eguen."

Having written a book on this subject, *The Truth about Clergy Sexual Abuse: Clarifying the Facts and the Causes*, I can say with confidence that the accusations of a coverup by Cardinal Prevost are false. If anything, Pope Leo XIV acted fairly and with dispatch.

MIRACULOUS RECOVERY

Michael P. McDonald

Anthony Foti is the web designer that keeps our website firing on full cylinders. He is a man of deep faith. He and his family attend the Latin Mass, and together with his wife, he has instilled the Catholic faith deep in the hearts of his children. But last year, Anthony and his family's faith would get them through tragedy and triumph.

Their ordeal started around Easter last year. The Foti household came down with some illness. It seemed pretty standard, and about a week later, it seemed like it had run its course. However, it lingered in his young daughter Maria.

They took Maria to the pediatrician several times due to ongoing fever and unusual pain in her back. Maria underwent strep and blood count tests and all the normal stuff you would do for a child with a virus. During that week, Maria complained of back pains, which progressively got worse, but they were not constant leading her pediatrician to believe it was body aches that you get from being sick.

But by Sunday, April 7, this back pain appeared to be more than just a body ache. Maria woke up complaining of severe back pain and a stiff neck. They quickly took Maria to the hospital where she had a few exams and was sent home.

By the next morning, her condition had deteriorated. Maria could not stand up. They took her back to the hospital. This time the tests revealed Maria had an extremely high bacteria count in her system, and an MRI uncovered a massive abscess along six of her spinal disks, which was causing compression on her spinal cord. Maria was transferred to Cohen's Children's Hospital where a pediatric neurosurgeon awaited to perform emergency spinal surgery.

While Anthony waited during those agonizing hours, he prayed with all his might. As family and friends reached out to help, he asked them to pray for Maria. A home cooked dinner is appreciated, but what Maria really needed now was their prayers he told them.

After several grueling hours, the head neurosurgeon came out to speak with Anthony and his wife. The surgeon informed them that he was able to remove the abscess from Maria's spine, but she would be completely paralyzed from the waist down. The surgeon said he was not particularly religious, but if they were praying people, they should start praying.

Anthony threw his whole heart and soul into those prayers. He constantly prayed the Rosary, beseeching the Blessed Mother for aid. He asked every saint he could think of to intercede on behalf of his daughter. A cousin reached out to let Anthony know that she had access to a first class relic of St. Gemma Galgani, the patron saint of back surgery, and she would bring it to him so that Maria could pray with it. Interestingly, the feast of St. Gemma coincided with Maria's stay in the hospital, and what happened next, Anthony attributes to the intercession of St. Gemma.

Approximately 24 hours after the surgery, Maria started to wiggle her toes. According to all the doctors and the experts, she should not have been able to do that. But she was, and later that night she was able to lift her knee up. A few days later, Maria was able to walk with assistance. Her medical team was astounded by her speedy recovery.

On April 12, Maria had a follow-up MRI. Anthony remembers waiting beside his little girl and praying the Rosary with all his strength. He felt this awe come over him as though the Mysteries were coming to life. Suddenly, he saw Maria in the MRI kicking and moving her lower body as if she was re-growing the synapses, and he knew that God was healing her. He prayed even harder.

The neurosurgeon began calling Maria the "Miracle Girl." Even he was convinced Maria's recovery was more than just modern medicine at work. On April 17, Maria was discharged from the hospital. She would go on to an inpatient rehab facility where she would spend 10 days. By the end of April, Maria was home with her family.

She would continue on with physical therapy for the rest of the year. At one of her appointments, an infectious disease doctor wanted to see how she was recovering. He told Anthony that what Maria had was extremely rare. In fact, there were only 22 cases of pediatric epidural abscess in medical literature. When he saw Maria moving around he was amazed.

A couple months later, Maria was being evaluated by a neuropsychologist. After reading her medical history, the doctor was amazed that Maria could move around normally. This expert asked Anthony a very familiar question: were they, by chance, religious?

It has been a year since Maria's sickness, and she has made a full recovery. While the secular experts cannot explain it, those of us who keep the Catholic faith can see the hand of Providence in her recovery. As it says in James [5:15], "And the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up."



PHOTOS OF MIRACULOUS RECOVERY

To see photos of Anthony Foti's daughter and her miraculous recovery, click [here](#).

WHY THE NEED TO BASH OPUS DEI?

Bill Donohue

Opus Dei is loved by millions of Catholics all over the world for its yeoman efforts in getting Catholics to practice their religion more seriously. Founded in 1928 by a Spanish priest, Josemaria Escrivá, it is a spiritual home to lay Catholics and clerics who are committed to living the faith on a daily basis; most are laypersons. Escrivá was canonized by Pope John Paul II in 2002.

Militant secularists, and many so-called progressive Catholics, hate Opus Dei. Why? It symbolizes everything they detest: it is unashamedly Catholic, orthodox, and wildly successful.

The latest effort to trash Opus Dei is a book by Gareth Gore, *Opus*. Like so many who hate the organization, he is caught up in the mystique of Opus Dei. He can't understand why men and women are drawn to an entity that is so deeply religious, especially given the decidedly secular bent of western civilization.

To be sure, Opus Dei is one of the most countercultural organizations in the world: it openly rejects the secular playbook promoted by the ruling class. This is not lost on Simon & Schuster.

The publisher flags the book by saying Opus Dei opposes "reproductive freedom" and "LGBTQ+ rights." Correct. Practicing Catholics defend life from the moment of conception to natural death; they understand marriage to be the exclusive union of a man and a woman; and they know that sex is binary. In other words, Catholic teachings are in harmony with what nature ordains and science decrees. Gore disagrees with nature

and science.

Why is it that many authors who abhor Catholicism are so sloppy in their writings? Is it because they know they will get a cheerful reception from their ilk and will therefore not be held accountable for their errors? This was certainly true of my old debating partner, Christopher Hitchens. He was extremely well read and very bright, but he was also a lousy researcher. His misstatements of facts about Mother Teresa were astounding.

Gore is another sloppy writer. Indeed, he is worse than Hitchens. His book is strewn with hyperbole, innuendo and out-and-out falsehoods. Yet he had the audacity to say in an interview that his book is "100 percent correct." Here are a few examples of his inattention to detail.

"During a trip to Nicaragua, the pope refused to let one cardinal kiss his ring because he had disobeyed a papal order." But Ernesto Cardenal was not a cardinal—he was a priest. More important, he was Minister of Culture who worked for the communist dictator, Daniel Ortega, the Sandinista thug who has impoverished and enslaved the people of Nicaragua (he is still doing this today). With good reason did Saint John Paul II rebuke him.

Gore says that Mother Teresa of Calcutta attended the beatification of Saint Josemaria—she did not. Also, when he died the servants did not have to be awoken in the middle of the night to make preparations—he died in the middle of the day.

The well respected Catholic Information Center in Washington, D.C. has not been staffed by an Opus Dei priest for the past forty years; that didn't happen until 1992. Gore also says that there are "hundreds of similar centers around the world." In fact, there are only two.

Gore can't get over how financially successful Opus Dei is. So

what? Does anyone complain about Harvard's outsized endowment? It has well over \$50 billion. To show how truly sloppy he is—his editors are just as remiss—he writes that “millions of dollars were spent on a huge school-building program across Spain.” Yet his footnote refers exclusively to summer camps!

It is to be expected that Gore would not pass up the chance to trot out a case of the sexual abuse of minors. But when he cites the case of a married layman who was guilty of molestation, accusing Opus Dei of never reporting it, he is showcasing his sophomoric research. The abuse occurred in the man's home and Opus Dei never knew about it.

An Opus Dei member, Bob Best, is said to have given Escrivá a gift, which the founder then “handed it to some Spanish bankers, who used it to sign a check to pay for a new Opus Dei project.” Wrong. The gift was given to Opus Dei members, not “bankers.” This is incontestable—there is a tape of the exchange. Also, Best did not join Opus Dei when he was in high school; he joined when he was at Villanova. Another error: Gore tries to link the *Culture of Life Foundation* to Opus Dei, but there is no institutional connection.

Just as easy to disprove is the canard about Opus Dei “recruiting” members, instructing them to keep their vocation secret, not even telling their families. Gore says this is part of the founders “instructions” given to Opus Dei members. Wrong again. There is no mention of this in the “instructions.”

Some years ago it was rumored that FBI director Louis Freeh was an Opus Dei member. This has been definitively proven to be false, yet Gore continues to say it was “widely rumored.” His ignorance is stunning.

Malice, not ignorance, is at work when Gore portrays the late Cardinal George Pell as a pedophile. As anyone who knows anything about this issue, the fabricated charges against Pell

were thrown out of court. Indeed, he was unanimously acquitted. I have personally written a great deal about this subject, and I find mindboggling that Gore's editors would allow him to promote this invidious falsehood.

It is so typical of left-wing writers to malign the Catholic Church for reaching out to young people, depicting such efforts as something nefarious. Gore does the same to Opus Dei.

We learn that young people are not attracted to Opus Dei because of what it stands for; they are "recruited" and "captured" by its adult members. Gore must be thinking of the way left-wing college professors manipulate and recruit unsuspecting students, indoctrinating them in the latest Marxist iteration.

It is equally obnoxious for Gore to accuse Opus Dei of "swindling" people. Like every voluntary organization, Opus Dei raises funds to pay for its expenses. When the ACLU raises money, it's seen as something routine, if not noble. But according to Gore, when Opus Dei raises money, they do so by asking donors to "come up with lists of people who could be swindled." This is libelous.

Gore makes no bones about his politics. "For all its talk about allegiance to the Vatican, the Church, and the teachings of Jesus Christ," he writes, "Opus Dei seems unconcerned that many of the conservative forces it now embraces in the United States are openly hostile to the pope—even going so far as to undermine his authority and plot against him."

Leaving aside the conspiratorial tone—no one is "plotting" against the pope—it is true that many conservatives, including non-Catholics, have been less than enthusiastic about some of the things the pope has said. For example, he is openly hostile to market economies, refuses to condemn Communist China's crackdown on Catholics, and has portrayed conservative

Catholics, especially those attracted to the Latin Mass, as pariahs.

More significant, it is rich to read Catholic bashers complain about conservative critics of the pope. They have been trashing Church teachings on marriage, the family, ordination, celibacy and sexuality for decades, and their treatment of Pope Benedict XVI and John Paul II was often brutal, yet today they call for everyone to fall in line—perhaps because they perceive the current moment as more favorable to their views.

Gore mentions *The Da Vinci Code* many times in his book. In doing so he gives credence to the book as if it were a work of non-fiction. This is nonsense. This matters because he insists that his book is “100 percent correct.” Thus does he give cover to the falsehoods in *The Da Vinci Code*.

I have written extensively on this issue. The fact is that the book by Dan Brown, and the movie that was based on it by Ron Howard, is a work of fiction.

Brown begins his book with a page titled, “Facts.” Listed as “facts” are three demonstrably false and defamatory statements. Brown’s first “fact” alleges that a secret society, the Priory of Sion, kept alive the story that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married. But the fact is this tale was exposed as a hoax that was made up in the 1950s by an anti-Semite Frenchman (who was sent to prison for fraud).

The second “fact” alleges that a “religious sect” called Opus Dei was an evil organization. This tells us everything we need to know about Brown.

The third “fact” is the most malicious: it claims that historical documents show that the divinity of Jesus was forged in fourth century. Pure nonsense.

There are 25 references to the divinity of Christ in the Gospels and more than 40 references in the New Testament. Not

only that, the letters of Paul were written in the 40s and 50s—earlier than the Gospels. All of these writings are much closer to the time of Jesus than the so-called Gnostic Gospels, and even those books—which were excluded from the New Testament—regard Jesus to be the Son of God.

It is important to note that even fair-minded liberal reviewers of Gore's book see right through his agenda. That is why Matt Murray, the executive editor of the *Washington Post*, took issue with his "rather partisan" approach, saying it sometimes comes across as a "slog." Indeed, Murray says that "Gore can't hide his disdain for the founder." This accounts for his "snarky" style and his "tone of snideness." Gore's disdain also extends to questioning "truths," which is why he puts the word in quotes.

When this review was published, Gore went ballistic, invoking obscenities. Instead of defending his work, he chose to berate Murray for taking "time out of his busy schedule to basically say that my book doesn't include enough positive stuff about Opus Dei."

With good reason does Murray say that "some chapters read more like a prosecutor's brief" than a fair assessment of Opus Dei. This leads him to conclude that the book lacks a "nuanced understanding of the organization." Gore greets this criticism with indignance, but that doesn't prove Murray wrong.

It is said that education can conquer ignorance. Not if it is willed. Ideologues are not persuaded by empirical evidence, data, and logic. They are informed by a set of tightly woven ideas that are impervious to reason.

To be fair, there are conspiratorial kooks on the right who claim bogeymen are trying to undermine America. However, they are mostly without effect, owing to their notorious stupidity. But those on the left, especially those who write books which appear to be well sourced, are not so easily identified.

That's why they are a much bigger menace.

Historian Arthur Schlesinger, Sr. once said that anti-Catholicism is the nation's "last acceptable prejudice." Gareth Gore's book is the latest proof that he was right.

YEAR IN REVIEW 2024

Michael P. McDonald

2024 will go down in American history as a pivotal year. The people standing for tradition, reason, and faith fought to reclaim their country, and the Catholic League was right there in the thick of it.

By far, the biggest story of 2024 was the presidential election, and as history unfolded, we tirelessly worked to educate Catholics on the critical issues at stake.

To this end, we published a report on the religious liberty policies of Donald Trump and the Biden-Harris administration. We noted how Trump was pro-religious liberty and never supported groups hostile to Catholics. We could not say the same for Biden-Harris and found their record sorely lacking. Our comprehensive report did more to educate Catholics on this subject than any other document put out by other organizations.

We additionally pointed out Harris' outright hostility to Catholics on several occasions. She stiffed Catholics this year by refusing to go to the Al Smith Dinner. While serving in the Senate, she was openly hostile to judicial nominees who were faithful Catholics. As California Attorney General, she crippled pregnancy resource centers and targeted pro-life

activists.

While Harris had problems with Catholics that upheld the teachings of the Church, in her corner was a whole slew of Catholic dissidents. We called out these rogues.

Ultimately, Trump decisively won the election, in large part thanks to him carrying approximately 58 percent of Catholics. Moving forward, the work will turn toward ensuring that the safeguards for religious liberty are as robust as they can be. To that end, Bill Donohue urged Supreme Court Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito to resign early in the new Trump administration so they can be replaced by younger justices who will protect the court's religion friendly majority for years to come. Bill also raised concerns over Robert F. Kennedy's departures from Catholic teachings and the prudence of appointing him as Secretary for Health and Human Services.

While Trump's victory represents a return to tradition and commonsense, the opposition went down swinging. In 2024, we saw a concentrated effort from the federal and state governments targeting Catholics and other people of faith.

We called out the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network after the Federal agency flagged "the purchasing of books (including religious texts)" as a sign of extremism. We also went after the Department of Justice (DOJ) for using the FACE Act to punish peaceful pro-life activists while giving a pass to violent pro-abortion radicals.

The FBI continued to stall in revealing the truth behind its probe of Catholics from 2023. Even after DOJ Inspector General Michael Horowitz released a report on the matter, several critical questions remained. For now, it appears that our doggedness to uncover the whole truth has at least curtailed the worst of it. Hopefully, the new administration can definitively put this issue to rest.

Another area we battled with the FBI was the release of Audrey Hale's manifesto. In 2023, Hale, a woman who falsely believed she was a man, attacked the Christian Covenant School in Nashville, killing six people including three children. For over a year, the FBI withheld the manifesto from the public. Normally, such documents are released right away. We hounded them to disseminate the manifesto.

When it was finally released, it was clear why the FBI kept it hidden for so long. The manifesto showed that Hale was a very sick person, and her woes were further compounded by identifying as transgender.

We also pushed back on the Department of Homeland Security after it came to light that an internal advisory board recommended flagging those who served in the military, are religious, and support Trump as potential extremists and domestic terrorists.

We proved Biden's White House and the media were wrong to insist the ban on religious symbols at the annual "egg roll" party was in line with previous administrations. We found evidence to the contrary highlighting their deception.

Another disturbing trend was how the Biden administration used Orwellian language to influence public thought and sideline traditional Catholic values. We issued a report examining this.

On the state level, perhaps the greatest display of anti-Catholicism came from Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer. While wearing a "Harris Walz" hat, Whitmer mocked the Eucharist by placing a Dorito on the tongue of a kneeling Liz Plank, a podcaster. We led the charge against Whitmer, alerting all Catholic parishes in Michigan of her horrendous act. We created such a media firestorm that she was compelled to put out a statement.

In the statement, Whitmer tried to say she was not mocking the

Eucharist. Instead, she was championing the CHIP Act also insisting that no one was kneeling. Of course, this was a flimsy excuse and photographic evidence quickly proved she was lying. We did not fall for it and jumped back into the fray to confront her dishonesty.

We also called out a dangerous ballot initiative in New York that would trample parental rights and religious liberty. We mobilized Catholics across the state to vote no on Proposition 1. Bill wrote an excellent booklet highlighting the adverse impact the initiative would have, and we sent the booklet to important stakeholders in the Empire State. Unfortunately, New York is too far gone, and Proposition 1 passed.

Joining the government in targeting Catholics came a large swath of characters from all walks of life.

Twice in 2024, anti-Catholic activists defiled St. Patrick's Cathedral. In the first instance, LGBT radicals hijacked the cathedral to stage a funeral mocking Catholic traditions for a man who falsely claimed to be a woman. Then again, during the Easter Vigil Mass, protesters invaded the cathedral screaming "Free Palestine" and holding a banner that read "SILENCE = DEATH." In both instances, we called out the crashers and the media, which either ignored the story or tried to frame the radicals as the victims.

After Harrison Butker, the kicker for the Kansas City Chiefs, spoke in defense of traditional Catholic values at Benedictine College, he was criticized by the NFL and slammed on social media. We happily came to Butker's defense with greater effect than any other Catholic organization.

The Olympics' opening ceremony featured a skit mocking the Last Supper starring transgenders. We wasted no time in contacting International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach and other officials around the world, targeting the Olympics' sponsors, and calling out those telling us it was

not intended as an insult to Catholics.

Additionally, we called out the NBA for its selective interest in “human rights.” While the league claims to promote social justice in America, it partners with China, one of the worst persecutors of Christians.

We also confronted the Freedom from Religion Foundation (FFRF) after they tried to intimidate us. The atheists complained to the IRS that we “engaged in unlawful political campaigning.” We were undeterred, because we did nothing wrong, and promised to continue to publicly hammer anti-Catholic bigots.

Meanwhile, a coordinated effort by Christian bashers attempted to discredit Trump nominees Pete Hegseth and Mike Huckabee. We exposed the bigots targeting these men for their faith.

All of these attacks were not just acts of random bigotry. The secular left needs to weaken the power of the Church and the resolve of individual Catholics to advance their agenda, particularly on the issues of abortion and transgenderism.

In 2024, the media covered for the pro-abortion extremists in the Democratic Party. Repeatedly, we were told there was no such thing as late-term abortions by the “fact checkers” and the talking heads.

Even during the presidential debate between Trump and Harris, and again during the vice presidential debate between JD Vance and Tim Walz, who as governor of Minnesota signed a law which repealed protections for infants born alive following a botched abortion, the pundits lied saying that late term abortions are “misinformation” and babies born alive receive lifesaving care following an abortion.

The worst was the *New York Times*, which omitted the relevant portion of the sentence that proved Walz repealed safeguards for newborn babies.

We routinely pointed out the truth to correct these false narratives.

There was also a lot of action on transgenderism. The secularists went on a tear trying to advance this cause. Across the country parents and religious people saw their rights eroded so that men and women can pretend to be the opposite sex. In several instances, parents lost custody of their children or children were permitted to “transition” without parental consent. Additionally, faithful Catholics and Christians were denied the opportunity to provide loving homes to children in need.

Fortunately, we may have reached a tipping point on this issue. Across Europe, many nations have pulled back on their support for transgenderism. Closer to home polls throughout the year showed people rejecting this anti-scientific ideology.

We struck while the iron was hot with an ad blitz at both the Republican and Democratic conventions calling on both parties to commit to protecting children from this insanity. We also showed our support for those who realized they were hoodwinked by transgenderism and have decided to “detransition.” Look for more of these people in the year to come.

We also fought back on several other key issues and scored critical victories in the process.

We exposed the myth of “Christian nationalist” violence comprehensively showing that the “violence” often cited has almost nothing to do with Christianity. It is just a fraudulent attempt to silence Catholics.

We set the record straight after the *Washington Post* published a report on abuse at Catholic-run Indian boarding schools in the United States. We thoroughly tore apart the erroneous conclusions.

When the media was totally silent about a report by the United

States Conference of Catholic Bishops noting the almost complete eradication of clergy sexual abuse, we highlighted this good news.

Bill also released his new book *Cultural Meltdown: The Secular Roots of Our Moral Crisis*, and our documentary "Walt's Disenchanted Kingdom" won its ninth award.

We continued displaying our life-sized nativity scene in Central Park. Additionally, we arranged for a billboard this year in Madison, Wisconsin, home to FFRF. Our ad took aim at them for their mockery of Christmas with their Winter Solstice exhibit. We also defended a Catholic League member who wanted to display a Nativity alongside a menorah but was denied. The building decided to do the equal but intolerant thing and removed all displays. Meanwhile, around the country, atheist and satanic groups tried to dilute Christmas, but we pushed back.

We achieved great things this year, but it is only the beginning. It will take time to utterly route the secularists that maligned and marginalized Catholics in the last few years. The cultural forces that engendered these attacks remain potent and will attempt to corrode our values in the future. The culture war cannot be won in a single election cycle. It takes years of dedicated effort. The forecast for 2025 looks brighter. However, there is still work to be done, and the Catholic League will be there to see it through.

Michael McDonald is the Catholic League's Communications Director.

PEOPLE OF FAITH MAKE THE BEST CITIZENS

This is the article that appeared in the November 2024 edition of Catalyst, our monthly journal. The date that prints out reflects the day that it was uploaded to our website. For a more accurate date of when the article was first published, check out the news release, [here](#).

Bill Donohue

Citizenship is central to a free society. Without men and women acting responsibly, and giving of themselves to others, freedom is jeopardized for everyone. The attributes that make for good citizenship include such virtues as self-discipline, self-responsibility, community service and patriotism.

These virtues do not come naturally to us—they must be carefully nourished. Those who do the nurturing include parents, teachers, the clergy and community leaders. Some do a better job than others, and that varies on several measures, one of which is religion.

Do people of faith make for better citizens than their secular counterparts? From the data we have collected, it appears to be so.

We examined the data collected by the Pew Research Center on the percentage of adults who identify as highly religious. Using the data, we compared the twelve most religious states to the twelve least religious, or most secular, states on several variables.

The twelve most religious states are: Alabama (77 percent of adults identify as highly religious), Mississippi (77 percent), Tennessee (73 percent), Louisiana (71 percent), Arkansas (70 percent), South Carolina (70 percent), West Virginia (69 percent), Georgia (66 percent), Oklahoma (66 percent), North Carolina (64 percent), Texas (64 percent), and

Utah (64 percent).

The twelve least religious states are: New Hampshire (33 percent of adults identify as highly religious), Massachusetts (33 percent), Vermont (34 percent), Maine (34 percent), Connecticut (43 percent), Wisconsin (45 percent), Washington (45 percent), Alaska (45 percent), New York (46 percent), Hawaii (47 percent), Colorado (47 percent), and Oregon (48 percent).

Here's how they match up on eleven different issues,

Religious Liberty Laws

Ten of the most religious states have a religious-liberty law.

One of the least religious states has a religious-liberty law.

Abortion

Abortion Rate:

The average percentage of pregnancies aborted per 100,000 in the most religious states was 4.19 percent. This comparatively low figure was driven by restrictive abortion laws in Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Louisiana, Arkansas, West Virginia, Oklahoma, and Texas. All of these states had zero abortions last year. Georgia saw a small decline while Utah, South Carolina and North Carolina posted an increase.

The average percentage of pregnancies aborted per 100,000 in the most secular least religious states was 14.44 percent.

Restrictive Abortion Laws:

All twelve of the most religious states have restrictive abortion laws.

One of the least religious states has a restrictive abortion

law.

Total Number of Abortions:

Lots of changes have taken place since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned and the issue of abortion was returned to the states. For example, the states have implemented different policies, resulting in dramatic differences.

Last year, 92,810 abortions were performed in the most religious states.

The figure for the least religious states was 236,110.

Number of Abortion Facilities:

There are a total of 33 abortion facilities in the most religious states (eight have none).

There are a total of 264 abortion facilities in the least religious states.

Transgenderism

Laws against Minors Receiving Gender Affirming Care:

All twelve of the most religious states have laws against minors receiving gender affirming care.

One of the least religious states has a law against minors receiving gender affirming care.

Laws Protecting Women's Sports:

Eleven of the most religious states have regulations protecting women's sports.

Two of the least religious states have regulations protecting women's sports.

Laws Protecting Women's Bathrooms and Locker Rooms:

Eight of the most religious states have some form of protection.

None of the least religious states have any protections for women's facilities.

Parental Rights

Eight of the most religious states have laws protecting parental rights.

None of the least religious states have laws protecting parental rights.

Education

School Choice:

Eleven of the most religious states have some sort of school choice program.

Three of the least religious states have some sort of school choice program.

Sexually Explicit Material:

Nine of the most religious states have regulations barring sexually explicit materials in schools.

None of the least religious states have regulations barring sexually explicit materials in schools.

Internet Porn

Eleven of the most religious states require age verification to view porn over the Internet.

None of the least religious states require age verification to view porn over the Internet.

Prostitution:

All of the most religious states ban prostitution.

All of the least secular states ban prostitution, but Maine and New York in recent years have watered down some of the provisions against prostitution. In Maine, it is decriminalized to sell sex, but it is still illegal to buy sex. In New York, the law banning loitering for the purpose of prostitution has been repealed. Additionally, California also repealed its law banning loitering for the purpose of prostitution, but it is not one of the most secular states.

Self-Destruction

Drug Overdose Rate:

There is little difference between the most religious and the least religious states on this variable.

Suicide Mortality Rate:

There is little difference between the most religious and the least religious states on this variable.

Medical Assisted Suicide:

All twelve of the most religious states ban medical assisted suicide.

The least religious states are split six to six on this issue.

Drug Legalization:

In the most religious states, four have made no effort to legalize drugs; five have legalized medical marijuana; and three have decriminalized marijuana.

In the least religious states, only one has made no effort to legalize drugs; two have decriminalized marijuana; and nine have fully legalized marijuana.

Self-Giving

Community Service:

In the most religious states, citizens contributed a combined total of 963,500,000 service hours.

In the least religious states, citizens contributed a combined total of 793,000,000 service hours.

Military Service:

Per capita, the rate of enlistments, ages 18-24, were much greater in the religious states than in the least religious states.

The findings are profound. People of faith not only value religion personally, they live in states where religious liberty is protected. They value life, beginning in the womb. They accept our God-given nature, and do not approve of schemes to transition to the opposite sex (which is a fiction anyway).

Pornography is rejected, whether it is available online or in elementary and secondary school books. Parents have rights that schools need to respect. They should also have the right to send their child to the school of their choice, without paying twice—once for public education and once for the private option.

People of faith are not selfish. Indeed, they are more likely to be self-giving. This matters greatly to those whom they serve; their voluntary efforts are an example of putting their faith into action. Everyone benefits when young men and women serve in the armed forces, and in this regard religious Americans are a role model for everyone.

It makes sense that secularists are not gung-ho on religious liberty—if religion doesn't matter much in their own lives, why should they care? Their acceptance of abortion and

transgenderism smacks of radical individualism. It also explains why they don't demand a crackdown on sexually explicit material in the schools or online porn. And, of course, it makes sense that those who are pre-occupied with themselves have little interest in giving back to their community or serving in the armed forces.

To be sure, there are many religious persons who are self-absorbed, and there are many secularists who are not. But *overall*, the data indicate that people of faith make for better citizens, and that is an important cultural marker.

THE MYTH OF CHRISTIAN NATIONALIST VIOLENCE

This is the article that appeared in the October 2024 edition of Catalyst, our monthly journal. The date that prints out reflects the day that it was uploaded to our website. For a more accurate date of when the article was first published, check out the news release, [here](#).

Bill Donohue

As a sociologist and a Catholic advocate, I am quite interested in the left-wing accusation that Christian nationalists are a violent-ridden threat to America. Those who make this charge are mostly academics and activists. I was skeptical about their claim, so I decided to fact check their work.

I am no longer skeptical: I am convinced these people are not only frauds—their goal is to demonize conservative Christian activists.

Christian nationalists are defined by their critics as those

who seek to integrate Christianity and American civic life.

Perhaps the most prominent person floating this charge is Amanda Tyler, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty (BJC) and lead organizer of Christians Against Christian Nationalism. A while ago I read the testimony she gave in October, 2023 before the U.S. House Oversight Committee's Subcommittee on National Security, the Border, and Foreign Affairs.

This prompted me to email Christians Against Christian Nationalism, asking them to provide me with the evidence that Christian nationalism "inspires acts of violence and intimidation."

They wrote back referencing Tyler's October 25, 2023 testimony and her written testimony on December 13, 2022 before the House Oversight Committee's Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties.

The following analysis is based on the two testimonials.

In Tyler's testimony in 2023, she says, "The greatest threat to religious liberty in the United States today...is Christian nationalism." Such a sweeping statement would ordinarily be peppered with one example after another. She provides none. She simply makes an assertion, providing no evidence.

Her testimony in 2022 offers some examples to support her thesis about the violence of Christian nationalists.

The first example she mentions occurred in Charleston, South Carolina in 2015. Dylann Storm Roof shot and killed 9 people at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church. By all accounts, he was a seriously disturbed neo-Nazi who wanted to start a race war. But there is no evidence that he was a Christian nationalist.

Roof came from a troubled home. When he was born, his divorced

parents got back together for a while, but it didn't last. His father remarried and allegedly beat his new wife, before getting divorced once again.

Roof dropped out of school, spending most of his time taking drugs, getting drunk and playing video games. He was busted twice for narcotics. He was also known for burning the American flag.

No one doubts he was a racist. But no one ever accused him of being a Christian nationalist.

The second example cited by Tyler was the tragic Tree of Life Synagogue mass shooting in Pittsburgh in 2018. Robert Gregory Bowers killed 11 people and wounded six. It was the deadliest attack on any Jewish community in the nation's history.

His parents divorced when he was a year old. His father committed suicide while awaiting trial on a rape charge. Like Roof, Bowers was a disturbed racist and a right-wing nut. But no one who knew him ever said he was a Christian nationalist.

The third and fourth incidents mentioned by Tyler took place at Christchurch mosque in New Zealand on March 15, 2019. Brenton Harrison Tarrant was charged with 51 counts of murder, 40 counts of attempted murder, and one count of committing a terrorist act.

His parents separated when he was a young boy and his home was destroyed by a fire. When his mother remarried, he went to live with her and her husband. The new husband beat her (Brenton's mom), Brenton, and his sister.

Brenton left home and went to live with his father. That didn't work out: Brenton found his father dead by suicide. Those who knew him, which were only a few, said he was disturbed but none ever described him as a Christian nationalist.

The fifth example cited was a shooting that took place in 2019 at Chabad of Poway synagogue in Poway, California. John Timothy Earnest shot and killed one woman and injured three other persons. In an open letter that he wrote prior to the shooting, he said Jews were plotting to kill the European race.

Earnest was an evangelical. Church members were split on whether his religious beliefs had anything to do with his shooting rampage. There is no evidence that he identified as a Christian nationalist, nor is there evidence that he was branded as such by those who knew him.

The sixth killing spree took place at Tops Supermarket in Buffalo, New York in 2022; it is located in a predominantly black neighborhood. Payton S. Gendron shot and killed 10 black people.

He was a classic loner. His father was an alcoholic and a drug addict for 40 years, resulting in the demise of two marriages. Gendron had no friends and was known to wear a hazmet suit in the classroom.

He was fascinated by violence, even to the point of bragging how he stabbed his own cat and then smashed the animal's head on concrete. He finished the cat with a hatchet.

Not only was he not a Christian nationalist, he wasn't even a Christian. Tyler concedes this point but nonetheless lists him as a Christian nationalist. This proves how desperate she is to make her case.

The seventh and last incident—the January 6, 2021 Capitol debacle—is labeled by Tyler as “an insurrection.” It was not. Insurrections involve the overthrow of the government. This was a rally that turned into a riot. The only person killed that day was an unarmed female veteran, shot by a cop. Security were shown on camera opening the doors of the Capitol to the protesters. Not exactly standard insurrectionist fare.

Most of Tyler's claims were just that—assertions. They were not evidentiary. Her central thesis is that “The greatest threat to religious liberty in the United States today...is Christian nationalism.”

“Christian Nationalism and the January 6, 2021 Insurrection” is a report sponsored by BJC and the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), a notorious anti-Christian atheist organization. It was published in 2022.

There are seven chapters in the Report, all supposedly chock full of evidence that the riot was a Christian nationalist event. Yet the first three chapters are merely a commentary on Christian nationalism, and don't even attempt to tie the violence at the Capitol to it. Of the other four chapters, two were written by Andrew Seidel, an attorney who works for FFRF.

Katherine Stewart is an author and investigative journalist. Here is the first sentence in her chapter: “By now, most Americans understand that Christian nationalism played a role in last year's violent attack on the Capitol.” She cites not a single source. It is simply an unsupported assertion. This is the extent of her “evidence.”

Seidel wrote chapters five and six. Chapter five covers events leading up to January 6, and chapter 6 claims to provide evidence that the riot was of Christian nationalist origin.

Chapter five says there were two violent Christian nationalist episodes leading up to January 6: one occurred on November 14, 2020; the other occurred on December 12, 2020.

Seidel argues that after supporters of President Trump rallied on November 14, “violence erupted in D.C.” It did. But the source he cites from the *Washington Post* simply says that Trump supporters clashed with counterdemonstrators. So what? The news story says not a word about Christian anything.

The December 12 incident saw another nighttime clash between

the two factions. The source he cites notes that the Proud Boys, a right-wing group that supports Trump, was involved. They were. What Seidel doesn't mention is that four of them were stabbed.

Chapter six begins by saying that Paula White, one of Trump's spiritual advisors, delivered "an explicitly Christian nationalist and openly militant prayer." What was it? "Blessed is the nation whose God is Lord" (Psalm 33:12). That was it.

Other "evidence" that the riot was a Christian nationalist event include statements by Katrina Pierson, a Trump campaign spokesperson. She said, Trump "loves the United States of America. He loves God." Ergo, this is an invitation to Christian nationalist violence.

Seidel also says that some people carried a cross and a Christian flag, and some were even spotted singing "God Bless America." More evidence that this was a Christian nationalist event was the sighting of men blowing shofars. A shofar is a Jewish musical instrument—not exactly a prop used by violent Christian nationalists.

Tyler wraps up the Report with similar "evidence." Signs such as "In God We Trust" are considered proof that Christian nationalists were on a tear. She says that as the violence took place, something curious happened: Christian leaders who condemned it "for the most part did not name Christian nationalism as a contributing or driving factor." I wonder why.

There are some positive signs that the false alarms about Christian nationalism are taking a toll on those responsible for sounding them.

In July, Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley gave a speech before a friendly audience noting that "some will now say that I'm calling America a Christian nation." With confidence, he said, "So I am."

This was encouraging because Hawley sent a message to militant secular zealots that he will not be put on the defensive. Indeed, he is proud to defend the idea that America is rooted in the Christian faith, and that our society is best served by following its tenets.

We can have a nation based on secular values or Christian values. The former celebrates the perverse notion that everyone is entitled to his own sense of morality. The latter maintains that without a moral consensus, ideally anchored in our Judeo-Christian heritage, we are ensuring that moral destitution rules the day.

At bottom critics of Christian nationalism have a problem with America. The Founding Fathers were adamant in their conviction that a free society was dependent on the kinds of values that inhere in Christianity. In 1892, the Supreme Court even acknowledged that "We are a Christian nation." In 1952, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, a liberal, wrote that "We are a religious people whose constitution presupposes a Supreme Being."

Were all these famous Americans out to shove Christian teachings down the throats of the masses? Only those who want to upend Christianity think this way.

No doubt there are crazies who fit the label "Christian nationalist." But if those who make a living off of selling the idea that Christian nationalists are a violent-ridden threat to America, and they can't provide convincing evidence, then they are frauds. Worse, accusing Christians of bomb threats and arson—absent any proof—makes *them* a bona fide threat to America.

CATHOLIC ASSESSMENT OF KAMALA HARRIS

This is the article that appeared in the September 2024 edition of Catalyst, our monthly journal. The date that prints out reflects the day that it was uploaded to our website. For a more accurate date of when the article was first published, check out the news release, [here](#).

Bill Donohue

There are many ways to assess any public person. My interest here is to assess Kamala Harris from a Catholic perspective.

Before issuing an abbreviated rendition of this article at the end of July, the last news release I wrote about Harris was in May. It was occasioned by her foul mouth. Everyone concedes that politicians of all stripes are known to curse, but they typically do so among themselves, or at private events. Not her.

On May 13, with the cameras rolling, she spoke at an Asian American organization, saying, "We have to know that sometimes people will open the door for you and leave it open. Sometimes they won't, and then you need to kick that f**king door down." She then descended into her proverbial cackle.

Why the obscenity in a public forum? She is the Vice President of the United States. Nice role model for young minority girls.

Sometimes Harris says things that embarrasses her family. Her father, who is from Jamaica, took umbrage at a comment she made suggesting that Jamaicans are all a bunch of potheads.

In 2019, Harris was asked on a radio talk show if she supported legalizing marijuana. She responded, "Half my family's from Jamaica. Are you kidding me?"

Her father, Donald Harris, quickly rebuked her, saying his grandmothers and deceased parents “must be turning over in their graves right now to see their family name, reputation and proud Jamaican identity being connected, in any way, jokingly or not with the fraudulent stereotype of a pot-smoking joy seeker and in pursuit of identity politics. Speaking for myself and my immediate Jamaican family, we wish to categorically dissociate ourselves from this travesty.”

Harris not only makes offensive comments, her feminist views are so extreme that she reflexively sides with women who accuse men of sexual harassment.

When Brett Kavanaugh was being considered for a seat on the Supreme Court, he was accused by Christine Blasey Ford of sexually assaulting her when they were teenagers. But under stiff questioning, her account fell apart. In March 2024, the *Washington Examiner* ran a piece that said it all. “Half a Decade Later, Christine Blasey Ford Still Has No Corroborating Witness.”

At the time, Harris sat on the Senate Judiciary Committee; it was charged with assessing Kavanaugh’s suitability to be on the Supreme Court. Before he uttered one word at the hearing, Harris said of Ford, “I believe her.” After Ford came off as a fraud, Harris stuck to her guns and tweeted that Kavanaugh “lied.”

At least she is consistent. In 2019, when she was a senator, Biden was accused by women of touching them inappropriately. At a presidential campaign event in Nevada, she said, “I believe them.” She even wrote a piece for *The Hill* that was titled, “Harris: ‘I Believe’ Biden accusers.” Fortunately for her, the media never ask her to explain herself.

Of primary interest to Catholics is Harris’ position on social and cultural issues. Let’s begin by assessing her definition of culture. She spoke about this at the 2023 Essence Festival

of Culture in New Orleans.

“Culture is—it is a reflection of our moment and our time. Right? And present culture is the way we express how we’re feeling about the moment and we should always find times to express how we feel about the moment. That is a reflection of joy. Because, you know...it comes in the morning.” She then broke out into a fit of laughter. But she was not done.

“We have to find ways to also express the way we feel about the moment in terms of just having language and a connection to how people are experiencing life. And I think about it that way, too.” No one knew what she was talking about.

Harris may be incoherent in her speeches, but her policy decisions, especially on social and cultural issues, are not in doubt.

On September 13, 2019, I wrote a news release titled, “Kamala Harris’ Lust For Abortion.” Earlier in the year, I said, she defended abortion at any time during pregnancy, right up until birth. She also wanted to force states that restrict abortions to obtain federal approval from the Department of Justice before implementing them.

When Harris was California’s attorney general, she bludgeoned pro-life activist David Daleiden. He used undercover videos to expose how abortion operatives harvest and sell aborted fetal organs. She authorized her office to raid his home: they seized his camera equipment and copies of revealing videos that implicated many of those who work in the abortion industry.

In her role as California AG she also sought to cripple crisis pregnancy centers with draconian regulations. Specifically, she supported a bill that would force these centers to inform clients where they could obtain an abortion. She was sued and lost in the Supreme Court three years later.

Like many other Democrats, Harris is not content to sanction

child abuse in the womb. Even when they are born, she is okay with letting those who survive an abortion die.

To be specific, on February 25, 2020, Sen. Harris voted against the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act, a bill that would “prohibit a health care practitioner from failing to exercise the proper degree of care in the case of a child who survives an abortion or attempted abortion.” That’s called infanticide.

Harris’ record on abortion and infanticide is at odds with her opposition to the death penalty. When it comes to convicted serial rapists and mass shooters, she wants to spare their lives. In 2019, she was explicitly asked if she opposed the death penalty for acts of treason. She said she did.

There we have it. Harris says that those who endanger the safety of all Americans by attempting a violent overthrow of the government, or spying on the military for a foreign enemy, should have their lives spared, but innocent children who are moments away from being born are not entitled to have their lives spared. And children who survive an abortion, but are in need of medical attention, can be left to die on the table, and no one will be held accountable.

The Democratic Party is the proud party of homosexual activists and transgender radicals.

Harris is so happy to see two people of the same sex “marry” that she actually performed “marriages” between gay couples in 2004. She also opposed Proposition 8, the California initiative barring gay marriage. The people spoke—they voted for it—but she does not believe in “power to the people”: she believes in power to the ruling class (which won in the Supreme Court). No wonder her voting record earned her a perfect score of 100 percent by the anti-women and anti-science gay behemoth, the Human Rights Campaign.

When Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis supported a bill that would

prohibit teachers in the early grades, K-3rd grade, from being indoctrinated with gay and transgender propaganda, she opposed it. In doing so she also showed her contempt for parental rights; the bill prohibited efforts to undermine them.

Harris' enthusiasm for transgender rights includes allowing females who claim to be men to join the military and males who claim to be female to compete against girls and women in sports.

Religious liberty is a First Amendment right, but her deeds suggest she is not supportive of it. She is good at "God talk"—when referring to a specific year she occasionally says "in the year of our Lord." But talk is cheap. As a U.S. senator, she co-sponsored the "Do No Harm Act" that would force religious institutions to violate their doctrinal prerogatives.

Harris even co-sponsored the most anti-religious liberty bill ever introduced, the Equality Act. It would coerce Catholic doctors and hospitals to perform abortions and to mutilate the genitals of young people seeking to transition to the opposite sex. This bill would sideline the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, a bill passed by Congress and signed by President Bill Clinton ensuring that the government does not encroach on religious rights.

In 2018, the Catholic League was among the first organizations in the nation to protest her attack on a Catholic nominee for a federal district judge post. She badgered Brian Buescher at a hearing, simply because he was a member of the Knights of Columbus, a male entity.

As I pointed out at the time, Harris has never objected to Jewish women groups or the League of Women Voters. Just a Catholic male group. What really got her goat is Buescher's membership in a Catholic organization that is pro-life and pro-marriage, rightly understood. In other words, she was

invoking a religious test for public office, which is unconstitutional.

Not only does Harris harbor an animus against Catholics, she has no respect for separation of church and state. In 2021, she created a video to be played in Virginia black churches urging everyone to vote for Democratic gubernatorial candidate Terry McAuliffe. The video aired in 300 churches for several weeks. Harris starred in it, beckoning congregants to vote for him.

Harris is no friend of the black poor. She has consistently voted against school choice, thus keeping inner-city blacks in their place. If she truly believed in social justice, she would work to see that poor blacks have the same opportunity to send their children to the school of their choice. Instead, she consigns them to schools that no member of the ruling class would ever elect for their own kids.

Her biography explains why she is so insensitive to the black poor. She was raised in a home of privilege, and has lived a privileged life ever since. She has successfully exploited her connections to advance her career, having been anointed most of her posts. She even secured her first job out of law school as a deputy district attorney in Alameda County even though she was not a lawyer (she failed the bar the first time around).

Being a beneficiary of black privilege explains why she is so uncharitable. When she was California attorney general, her 2011-2013 tax returns showed she made \$158,000 but did not give a dime to charity. Liberals do not believe they need to have any skin in the game—it's the job of government to pay for the poor.

Another way the government is supposed to fulfill her social justice agenda is by supporting reparations for slavery. When she was in the senate, she co-sponsored a bill to do just

that. In doing so, she put herself in an awkward position. Her ancestors were slavemasters.

Her father, Donald Harris, who is a Stanford professor of economics, said in 2018 that his grandmother was a descendant of Hamilton Brown, who was a plantation and slave owner in northern Jamaica. Brown didn't own one or two slaves—he owned scores of them. Most of them were brought from Africa, which has a long history of slavery (it still exists today in some countries).

As I said four years ago, “if the average American has to pay X amount for slavery, Harris should at least have to pay 10X. Isn't that what redistributive justice is all about? Catholics need to know.”