

THE RADICAL NATURE OF LENT

Those who observe Lent are not known as cultural radicals, yet they clearly qualify as such.

Repenting for our sins is common practice for Catholics during Lent, though it is not understood—may even be the object of scorn—by secularists. Many of them do not believe in the existence of sin, never mind making reparations for it. Even more countercultural is the Lenten practice of self-denial.

In a society marked by self-absorption, nothing could be more extreme than self-denial. The idea that we should deny ourselves what we want rings hollow with narcissists, many of whom are secularists. They are the true children of Humanist Psychology.

Abraham Maslow posited that we all have needs, some of which are basic, such as food and water and feeling safe. At the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs is self-actualization, the idea that we owe it to ourselves to be self-fulfilled.

Not surprisingly, his work was celebrated in the 1960s and 1970s, the two most culturally corrupt decades in American history. It was in the 1970s that Tom Wolfe coined the phrase the "Me Society," and Christopher Lasch wrote *The Culture of Narcissism*.

Carl Rogers, another humanist psychologist at this time, wrote that self-actualization means we are all arbiters of our own truth, and only by acting on our feelings can we be truly human. He argued that rebellion against traditional moral norms, as found in Christianity, was good for the individual and society.

Maslow and Rogers helped destroy people's lives. In fact, Rogers destroyed an entire order of nuns in Los Angeles, the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The naive nuns

followed his advice by questioning the norms and values they had committed themselves to, and wound up totally deracinated.

Maslow and Rogers got it all wrong. They never understood the Lenten precept that self-denial can be liberating. By giving of ourselves to Jesus, and to others, we experience real self-actualization, not the one steeped in self-absorption. Selflessness has its own rewards.

Selflessness also pays significant social dividends. Mother Teresa could not have comforted so many of the sick and dying had it not been for her selflessness. Had she been self-absorbed, no one would have benefited from her care. There are many other persons who have also yielded great social dividends by sacrificing for others, though they're not publicly known.

Who were the men and women who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust? They were not secularists—they were people of faith.

Samuel P. Oliner, and his wife, Pearl M. Oliner, are the authors of *The Altruistic Personality*, a book about who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. These two non-believing Jewish sociologists interviewed nearly seven hundred persons, comprising rescuers, nonrescuers, and survivors in several countries in Nazi-occupied Europe.

They found there was a significant difference between rescuers and nonrescuers when it came to accepting “the importance of responsibility in maintaining their attachments to people.” They learned that “More rescuers were willing to give more than what they might necessarily receive in return.”

Catholics and Protestants who were imbued with their faith were the most likely to rescue Jews. Pearl Oliner explained why Catholics had the best record. They were “significantly marked by a Sharing disposition.” In short, these Catholics embodied the “altruistic personality.”

Who were the least likely to rescue Jews? The self-absorbed. The Oliners concluded that “self-preoccupation,” or the tendency to focus on oneself, not others, was the principal reason why they failed to act. “In recalling the values learned from their parents, rescuers emphasized values relating to self significantly less frequently than nonrescuers.” It was the “free spirits,” the self-actualization types, who balked when it came to helping Jews.

Regrettably, our society is more self-absorbed now than ever before.

Lent is delightfully different. It signals an awareness that there is much more to this world than “me,” and that self-giving is a national treasure, not simply a personal attribute. We need more Lenten cultural radicals, not less of them.

BULLYING RELIGIOUS STUDENTS

The Oxygen channel recently featured an episode on the Freeman brothers, Bryan and David. In 1995, they committed matricide and fratricide.

Why did they kill their mother and father? News reports said it was because the boys became neo-Nazis. This is true, but it is incomplete.

Most news stories said the brothers were raised in a strict religious home, and that they rebelled against their parents, who were Jehovah’s Witnesses. After they rebelled, they took to drugs and alcohol, and it was in a rehabilitation center where they met Nazi skinheads.

As it turns out, these accounts are seriously misleading. The evidence shows that the boys did not rebel against their parents until after they were bullied by students *because they were religious and wore a suit and tie to school*.

Why does this matter? If school officials had been attentive to the bullying of the Freeman brothers, perhaps they would have intervened, and perhaps future events might have been different. We will never know. Had it been a gay or transgender person being bullied, they most certainly would have intervened.

COURT CHECKS NAVY'S ANTI-RELIGIOUS BIAS

In recent years, the armed forces has done a very poor job protecting the religious liberties of men and women in uniform. When it comes to granting religious exemptions from the Covid-19 vaccination, the Army and the Navy have the worst record. The good news is that the Navy got its anti-religious bias checked this week by a federal court of appeals.

There have been approximately 16,000 requests by members of the armed forces for a religious exemption from the vaccine, a mere 15 of which have been approved. The Air Force has approved nine of them; the Marines have granted six. No one in the Army or Navy has been approved.

Regarding the Navy's flat-out denial of religious exemptions for anyone, the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled on February 28 that "Defendants have not demonstrated 'paramount interests' that justify vaccinating these 35 plaintiffs [which include Navy SEALs] against COVID-19 in violation of their

religious beliefs.” More than 99% of active-duty members of the Navy have been vaccinated.

It is not as though the Navy does not believe in exemptions from the vaccine—it’s just that it has a problem with those seeking an exemption on religious grounds. For example, regarding active-duty members, the Navy has approved at least 10 permanent medical exemptions, 259 temporary ones, and 60 administrative exemptions (e.g., in cases involving time in service until separation or retirement).

Why the animus? Why is the Navy (and the Army) opposed to granting religious exemptions? Their hostility is as immoral as it is unconstitutional.

As the Supreme Court has noted, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) of 1993 affords “greater protection for religious exercise than is available under the First Amendment.” Indeed, the only way the Navy can succeed in its quest to deny religious liberty is to prove to the courts that it has a “compelling governmental interest” in invoking its rule. But that has been undercut in this instance by its willingness to grant exemptions on secular grounds.

Unfortunately, elites in the military, following the elites in virtually every other sector of society, have been infected with the woke virus: they have become captive to the politically correct mavens who are steering the dominant culture. It certainly wasn’t this way when Bill Donohue was in the Air Force in the late Sixties.

WHY RELEVANT RELIGIONS ARE IRRELEVANT

The surest way to kill a Western religion is to change its teachings to mirror those of the dominant culture. The data are clear: The more relevant a religion's teachings become, the more irrelevant the religion is.

People want to join a group or an organization because there is something special about it. This is as true of fraternities and sororities as it is religions. If there is nothing special about them, why bother?

Regarding Catholicism, it is not the most orthodox dioceses or orders of priests and nuns that are in trouble; it's the least orthodox. Evangelical Protestants are not in dire straits the way mainstream Protestant denominations are. In fact, evangelicals and Pentecostals are the fastest growing Christian denominations in the world. Similarly, Orthodox Jews are witnessing an uptick in members; the Conservative and Reform branches are declining.

In other words, orthodoxy attracts; heterodoxy repels.

One person who knows this better than most is Juhana Pohjola. He is on trial in a "free" country for being a Christian. To be specific, he is a Finnish Lutheran bishop who has been accused (along with a former political leader in Finland) of a hate crime for publicly professing the biblical teaching on marriage. Both face up to two years in prison.

Not surprisingly, Bishop Pohjola has been quite critical of the extent of which Finland has bowed to militant secularism. His most poignant comments, however, are reserved for the secularizing of Christianity in his home country. The Lutheran Church, he says, has taken its cues from secular society.

“Unfortunately it did not have the strength to be faithful to its own confession and calling in the society and go against the cultural and anti-Christian tide. But it followed more the voice of people (*vox populus*) than God in his revealed Word (*vox Dei*). The lack of clear confession of Christ Jesus, sin and grace and questions of natural law like sanctity of life and marriage have made the established church *more and more irrelevant and meaningless in the public arena and everyday life among the people* (our italics).”

Ditto for all Western religions. Instead of resisting the morally debased dominant culture, they have succumbed to it. There is no virtue in Christian religions playing copy cat with postmodernism. The denial of truth—that there is an objective reality based on what nature and nature’s God has ordained—is at the heart of the crisis in Christianity in the West.

Denying the existence of truth is not only a violation of our Judeo-Christian ethos, and therefore morally wrong, it is also a recipe for self-destruction. We either stick to our principles, as found in the natural law, the Ten Commandments and (for Catholics) the Catechism, or we become so trendy that we become invisible.

HATING THE WORKING CLASS IS CHIC

There’s a big difference between the Democrats of old, who were liberal but not leftists, and Democrats today, many of whom are associated with left-wing politics. Not too long ago, the working class identified with the Democrats, but the

hostility that many Democrats have shown for them has driven them toward the Republicans.

Today, the Democrats are more the party of plutocrats, not the working class. The latest iteration is the support that Democrats are showing for Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's suspension of civil liberties for truckers who object to his authoritarian Covid measures.

Trudeau's response to truckers tying up traffic was to declare martial law. He assumed police powers that literally gave him dictatorial control, that allows him to censor the media and freeze the bank accounts of those who opposed him. Some non-violent Canadians were beaten by the police and protesters had their savings raided by the state.

In a recent Trafalgar Group poll, 55% of Americans disapproved of Trudeau's handling of the trucker protest. Among Republicans, the figure jumped to 87%; independents registered over 74% disapproval. But among Democrats, only 17% disapproved (two out of three approved).

How to explain this disparity?

The issue has nothing to do with violence—the truckers were non-violent almost to the person. Clearly the most violent protesters over the past few years have been those who supported the Black Lives Matter movement: dozens of innocent Americans were killed, police stations were set on fire, churches were vandalized and looters fleeced department stores. Yet in a survey published by Pew in September, it was disclosed that 85% of Democrats said they support Black Lives Matter (78% of Republicans opposed them).

Similarly, Trudeau's authoritarian crackdown on the truckers was not motivated by a desire to stop the violence—there was almost none. Besides, he never objected to the violent Black Lives Matter protesters. In fact, this “privileged” white boy, who is worth \$10 million—he inherited it all—took a knee last

year in support of Black Lives Matter. Conveniently, he was not wearing blackface at the time.

It's not hard to figure out what is going on. Trudeau and most Democrats are not liberals anymore—they've joined the ranks of the left. As such, they are marked by a strong tyrannical streak and a searing contempt for the working class (Marxists have long given up on them).

For example, support for the Covid lockdowns, and other draconian measures, comes heavily from the blue states, places where liberal Democrats reign. It is not those who live in the suburbs and in the rural areas who love the masks—it's liberal city dwellers—the same ones who like Black Lives Matter. It's not the working class which supports the racism that is inherent in critical race theory, or the insanity that marks transgenderism. No, it's the urbane sages who swallowed whole everything they were taught by their left-wing professors.

Richard Nixon was the first Republican president to reach out to the working class. Then the Reagan Democrats emerged as a force for Republicans in the 1980s. More recently, Trump did more than any Republican to welcome the working class.

Ever since the Hardhat Riot of 1970—when New York City construction workers broke the heads of spoiled anti-American white kids—the working class has been hated by liberal Democrats. Obama disparaged those Americans who “cling to their guns or religion,” and Hillary spoke with derision about the “basket of deplorables.”

In fact, Hillary bragged after her 2016 loss to Trump that a majority of her voters came from “dynamic” areas that represent “two-thirds of America's gross domestic product.” In other words, she set anchor with the Silicon Valley elites, not the lunch-bucket crowd.

The working class is comprised of patriotic men and women who value common sense more than books, and who believe in God

more than algorithms. By contrast, the elites who are governing the Democratic Party score low on measures of patriotism, and most have never served a day in the armed forces. They don't worry about crime the way the working class does—they live in gated communities with their own security. To top things off, they have no need for God—they're smarter than Him.

The working class knows all of this, which explains why they loathe the Democrats. They resent their condescending attitude, and their hypocritical double standards. Which is why they're done with them.

CORPORATE ELITES ARE PLAYING BLACKS

We chose to review the diversity statements and programs of ten large-scale corporations. We then compared them to the racial profile of their top executives. The results are an eye-opener.

The worst offender, meaning the corporation with the biggest hypocrites, is Goldman Sachs.

Goldman Sachs

In June 2020, Goldman Sachs announced that it “has a message right now to the companies they invest in: drive diversity throughout the organization, or we may just drive away from your stock.”

Good thing that principle doesn't apply to themselves. If it did, it would mean sudden death.

There are 9 Executive Officers at Goldman Sachs. All are white. They have no blacks, Hispanics or Asians in these top

positions.

Here are the other corporate phonies, in alphabetical order.

American Express

American Express asks workers to rank themselves on a hierarchy of “privilege.” If they say things like “We are all human beings,” they will be in violation of the company’s race-based regulations; it is seen as a “microaggression.”

Lucky for the whites on the Executive Team that only a few of their colleagues can charge them with “microaggressions.”

There are 30 members on the Executive Team: 25 are white, 2 are black, 2 are Hispanic and 1 is Asian.

Apple

In June 2020, Apple CEO Tim Cook said he was launching a Racial Equity Justice Initiative that will “challenge the systemic barriers to opportunity and dignity that exist for communities of color, and particularly for the black community.”

Too bad Apple didn’t begin by applying its diversity commitment to themselves.

Apple’s leadership consists of 14 persons: there are 12 whites and 2 Asians. There are no blacks or Hispanics.

Bank of America

Bank of America’s racial-equity program for employees informs them that white toddlers “develop racial biases by ages three to five,” and therefore everyone “should be actively taught to recognize and reject the ‘smog’ of white privilege.”

There appears to be a lot of “smog” at Bank of America.

Of the 24 top executives, 19 are white, 2 are black, 1 is Hispanic and 2 are Asian.

Cigna

In July 2020, Cigna president and CEO David Cordani boasted that he was launching a new “Building Equity and Equality Program” to support “diversity, inclusion, equality and equity for communities of color.”

Looks like Cigna doesn't regard Hispanics and Asians to be “people of color.”

The Executives and Management Team has 11 members, 8 are white and 3 are black. There are no Hispanics or Asians on the top team.

Citigroup Inc.

On its website, Citigroup has a section on racial equity wherein it pledges to “Work with marketing, communications and legal partners to establish guidelines that increase representation of people of color on Citi accounts and within leadership teams.”

Looks like the pledge was vacuous.

There are 17 members on its Executive Management Team: 13 are white, 1 is black, 1 is Hispanic and 2 are Asian.

Facebook

In July 2021, Facebook announced that by 2024, its goal was to hire more minorities and to “increase the number of US-based leaders (Director-level employees and above) who are people of color by 30%.”

If that is the case, it had better get on its affirmative-action bandwagon right away—it has a long way to go.

There is a total of 23 top executives at Facebook. Of that number, 21 are white, 1 is black and 1 is Asian. There are no Hispanics.

JPMorgan Chase & Co.

Jamie Dimon, the chairman and CEO of JPMorgan Chase, says,

“Everything has to start at home, where we’re working to drive our diverse and inclusive culture into every corner of our firm.”

Looks like they missed most of the corners.

On the Operating Committee of JPMorgan Chase, there are 18 persons, 16 of whom are white. They have no blacks, 1 Hispanic and 1 Asian.

Morgan Stanley

James Gorman, chairman and CEO of Morgan Stanley has doled out millions of dollars to black organizations. He has also encouraged workers to make donations, including to Black Lives Matter. He brags about adding a fifth value to the company’s core values: “Committing to Diversity and Inclusion.”

It seems that Gorman’s latest core value is more smoke than substance.

There are 20 members on the Operating Committee of Morgan Stanley. Of that number, 16 are white, 2 are black and 2 are Asian. There are no Hispanics.

Walmart

Walmart teaches its employees that the U.S. is a “white supremacy system,” and that white people “promote white supremacy thinking” that is “damaging to both people of color and to white people.”

It appears that the leadership of Walmart is dominated by white supremacists.

Of the 9 top executives, 8 are white and 1 is black. There are no Hispanics or Asians.

All ten of the chairmen and CEO’s of these major corporations are white, and all are men. Moreover, Bank of America, Goldman Sachs and JPMorgan Chase asked shareholders to reject their equity audits.

These elites are playing us, especially blacks. Their insincerity is stunning. According to their own standards, most of them are white racists. That being the case, they should resign.

THE PRAYER SCARE AND BEYOND

A half century ago, those who were not religious tended not to be anti-religious, so they had no impact on the faithful. That's changed. With almost three in ten Americans not adhering to any religion, there has been an increase in secular militancy, the likes of which we have never seen before in this country.

It's not just the increase in the "nones" that is troubling (those who answer "none" when asked what their religious affiliation is), it's the changing cultural milieu that is a problem. We can thank the ruling class –the elites who command our most important institutions—for this development. Their hostility to religion is so strong that they even object to people praying, or talking about religion, in public.

A high school student from Plainwell, Michigan was suspended for three days this year when he was caught talking to another student about religion on school property. The conversation was private and there was no attempt at proselytizing: the student who was engaged in dialogue shared the convictions of the student who opened the conversation.

The suspended student says he was told by a teacher that he must stop talking about his Christian religion with other students for fear of hurting their feelings. Those who might overhear their commentary, the student was informed, might be offended or feel unsafe. Furthermore, he was told that it was

his responsibility to contact school officials if he heard about hurtful comments made by other students. His case is now in federal court.

A year ago, an off-duty police officer in Louisville, Kentucky was suspended for four months for praying outside an abortion clinic. He stopped to pray with his father, who was part of a pro-life group. He was wearing his police uniform at the time but tried to cover it up with his coat. His lawyer said the cop did not engage in political activity and prayed quietly outside the facility. He recently won a settlement from Louisville of \$75,000.

In a suburb of Seattle, a high school football coach was fired for engaging in voluntary silent prayer with his players after games. The school told him he should have prayed in a school-hall closet or the press box—that way he would not be seen by other students—and not on the 50-yard-line. The Supreme Court has agreed to hear his case.

Ironically, the first person Bill Donohue ever met who exhibited a prayer scare was the founder of the ACLU, Roger Baldwin. He interviewed him in his home in New York City in 1978 (it was part of my New York University Ph.D. dissertation). Here is the exchange (it can be found in Donohue's first book, *The Politics of the American Civil Liberties Union*):

Donohue: The ACLU has even gone so far as to deny the right of people to voluntarily take the time during the day, as a schoolchild, to say a prayer.

Baldwin: Not on school time.

Donohue: Well, whose rights are being infringed upon if there is a silent prayer voluntarily said by a student?

Baldwin: If they don't say anything? You mean if they don't--

Donohue: Right. Are you afraid they are going to proselytize the rest of the class?

Baldwin: Well, they tried to get around it. They've tried to

get around it even further than you by calling it meditation.

Donohue: What's wrong with that?

Baldwin: You don't say anything about God or religion or anything. I suppose you can get by with that but it's a subterfuge, because the implication is that you're meditating about the hereafter or God or something.

Donohue: Well, what's wrong with that? Doesn't a person have the right to do that? Or to meditate about popcorn for that matter?

Baldwin: I suppose that—it sounds very silly to me because it looks like an obvious evasion of the constitutional provision.

In the three current aforementioned cases, and the Baldwin one, there is something going on here that transcends any alleged constitutional problem.

It's ironic: These people accuse religious Americans, especially those who talk about religion in public, or pray in public, as being irrational, yet their prayer scare makes no rational sense. What are they really afraid of?

The cancel culture is more than just about speech—it's about religious thoughts. These mind-control freaks are beyond weird. Indeed, they are a danger to a free society.

SHAMELESS CUOMO RETURNS

On March 6, Andrew Cuomo, the disgraced former governor of New York, ripped off congregants at a black church in Brooklyn by turning his speech into a shameless exercise in self-pity. He played the victim card. He went on to blame the Democratic Party, "prosecutorial misconduct," the media, and the "cancel culture" for his woes, falsely claiming that he has been "vindicated."

He did not say why he didn't have the courage to stay in office and fight for his vindication, owing, no doubt, to the fact that he was ready to be impeached.

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of Cuomo's speech at the black church was his insistence on wanting to "tell my truth." He should have been asked to leave at that point.

New Yorkers have had it with the Cuomos. It's time they got the message and quietly slipped away.

IN DEFENSE OF POPE BENEDICT XVI

This article and the one found [here](#), are Bill Donohue's response to critics of Pope Benedict XVI.

Ten years ago, Bill Keller, former executive editor of the New York Times, wrote an op-ed in the newspaper about me. He said I was a strong defender of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger who, he accurately said, "used to be known as 'God's Rottweiler.'" Ratzinger is now Pope Benedict XVI, and Bill Donohue is the Rottweiler's Rottweiler."

Not sure whether Keller meant that as high praise or not, but I'll take it.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI is back in the news, and it is not flattering. He is being accused of not taking action against four molesting priests when he was archbishop of Munich and Freising from 1977 to 1982. Benedict defends himself against these accusations.

The news comes after the publication in German of a 1,900-page

independent audit of the Munich archdiocese between 1945 and 2019.

It is important to note that the investigation was not something that government authorities commissioned—it was done at the behest of the Church. No other institution in Germany, religious or secular, has ever asked a law firm to probe its record regarding sexual misconduct.

It is also important to note that attorney Martin Pusch, who is also an author of the report, cannot be certain that Benedict's account is wrong. He explicitly said "we believe that this is not so (my italic)."

Of the four cases, two involve priests who were sanctioned by the courts but were permitted to do pastoral work. One was convicted in another country and was allowed to work in the archdiocese. Most of the media attention focuses on Peter Hullermann, a homosexual priest predator.

Regarding the Hullermann case, in his 82-page response to questions posed by the investigators, Benedict initially said he had no recollection of being at a 1980 meeting about the priest. He has since apologized for making a "mistake," saying that an "editing error" inaccurately conveyed that he was not there. The files document that in this meeting, no decision to transfer Hullermann was made.

In 1979, Hullermann was accused of sexual abuse with a postpubescent boy in Essen. After he was convicted, he was transferred to Munich for therapy. After the therapy, he was transferred to another parish. Who made that decision? It wasn't Benedict: it was Fr. Gerhard Gruber, the vicar general. Gruber admits that he, and he alone, was responsible, explaining that he never told Benedict (who was then known as Cardinal Ratzinger).

So what is the problem here? Benedict, we know, approved the transfer, but that's about it. We know that his office "was

copied on a memo" about Gruber's decision, but even the New York Times in 2010 admitted that such memos were routine and "unlikely to have landed on the archbishop's desk."

Ratzinger left the archdiocese in February 1982 to head the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. In August of 1982, Hullermann was reassigned to Grafting and in 1986 he was convicted of sexually abusing boys while he was there. Benedict was long gone.

If Benedict is guilty of anything, from what we know so far, it is that he did not always act like the "Rottweiler" he is accused of being. When he learned of a priest who was an exhibitionist, but who never physically abused anyone, he did not treat him the way he should have. He should have seen this as a red flag—normal men don't act that way.

In all the news stories on this issue, never once do therapists come in for criticism. Yet they played a big role in persuading elites in every sector of society of their powers to transform miscreants, especially in the latter part of the 20th century. There was no one they could not "fix," or so they thought. Their role was pivotal in the decision of elites, including bishops, not to crack the whip.

The Germans have also been duped by charlatan therapists. In 2020, Germany showed how "progressive" it is when it announced that convicted sex offenders would be allowed to visit prostitutes in brothels as part of their "treatment."

It should also be known that Germany does not have a mandatory reporting law governing the sexual abuse of minors.

Bild is Germany's biggest tabloid. It is known for running articles that questioned whether Benedict covered up sex crimes. Three months ago its editor, Julian Reichelt, had to step down after allegations that the publisher tried to cover up the findings of an investigation into his sexual misconduct and bullying.

For the record, no one in the Church has done more to stem clergy sexual abuse than Benedict. It was he who took the initiative to issue a document barring men with “deep-seated homosexual tendencies” from entering the priesthood. He was hated by “progressives” long before this, but this decision made him their biggest enemy.

In the first year of his pontificate, Benedict removed the notorious serial molester, Fr. Marcial Maciel Delgollado, founder of the Legionaries of Christ, from ministry. Significantly, he defrocked some 800 molesting priests from 2005 to 2013.

This is hardly the first time that Benedict has been treated unfairly. He is the scourge of the left, both in and out of the Catholic Church.

POPE BENEDICT IS RIGHT NOT TO APOLOGIZE

People who apologize for offenses they never committed—such as white people who apologize for being white—are either phonies or psychotic.

That is why it was so refreshing to learn that Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI did not apologize for offenses he never committed while serving as archbishop of Munich and Freising from 1977 to 1982.

In a letter Benedict recently released, he offered his “deepest sympathy” to the victims of clergy sexual abuse, saying he feels “great sorrow for each individual case.” But he did not offer a personal apology, and that is because none

was warranted.

In an appendix to his letter, Benedict did, however, provide a much-needed rebuttal to accusations made against him by a Munich law firm; it had been commissioned by the archdiocese to examine accusations of sexual abuse that occurred between 1945 and 2019. He was assisted in this endeavor by some of his supporters.

Benedict takes issue with three outstanding accusations; they form the basis of the charges against him.

The first issue deals with Priest X (Peter Hullermann).

In his preliminary response, Benedict admitted that he erred when he claimed in his memorandum, drafted in response to the law firm, that he was not present at a meeting on January 15, 1980 in which this priest was discussed. He offers a lengthy, and pointed, commentary explaining how his collaborators made an honest mistake.

One of them, Dr. Stefan Korta, inadvertently made a transcription error noting that Benedict (then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger) was not present at the meeting. He clearly was. In fact, the minutes show that he spoke at the meeting. But to call this a "lie" is malicious.

More important is what transpired at the meeting. The records show that the discussion did not revolve around sexual misconduct committed by the young priest. It focused on a request for therapy, which was granted. That is the sum of it. It is therefore scurrilous to charge that Benedict lied about the meeting.

The second issue is based on charges that Benedict did not act properly in handling the other three cases. The charges are false. Not only does Benedict dispute accusations that he knew of sexual abuse committed by these priests, the law firm report "provides no evidence to the contrary."

Benedict is unequivocal in his response. "The expert report contains no evidence for an allegation of misconduct or conspiracy in any cover up." Indeed, if the law firm had proof, it would have provided it. It does not.

The third issue claims that Benedict minimized acts of exhibitionism. In fact, this is patently false. In his memoir, Benedict notes that abuse, including exhibitionism, are "terrible," "sinful," "morally reprehensible" and "irreparable." In other words, he clearly condemned such behavior.

I need to clarify something. In my news release of January 25 on this subject, I accepted the accusation that Benedict downplayed exhibitionism, saying, "he did not treat him [the priest in question] the way he should have. He should have seen this as a red flag—normal men don't act that way."

I was wrong to accept this accusation at face value—Benedict never sought to make light of exhibitionism. I apologize for doing so.

There are fair-minded critics of Benedict, but there are also many who are ruthless. They have hated him ever since he headed the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, enforcing the Church's moral strictures.

Consider the reaction to a homily he gave on April 18, 2005. In an address before the College of Cardinals, who had assembled to elect a new pope, he spoke forcefully about the "dictatorship of relativism" that had engulfed the West.

Georgetown professor E.J. Dionne condemned Cardinal Ratzinger for using "fighting words." Fr. Richard McBrien from Notre Dame said, "I think this homily shows he realizes he's not going to be elected." New York Times reporter Peter Steinfels announced, "Oh well, that gets rid of him."

The next day he was elected pope.

As I said in my new book, *The Truth About Clergy Sexual Abuse*, “No one has understood why the clergy sexual abuse scandal took place better than Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.” That is largely because he correctly noted the effect of the sexual revolution on the Church, and the huge role played by homosexual priests.

I also said that he “does not get the credit he deserves for the actions he took. Quite frankly, no pope in the modern era worked to punish predator priests more than Benedict.” For example, when he was a cardinal, he pressed for a “more rapid and simplified penal process” in dealing with abusive priests. More importantly, he defrocked a record number of molesting priests. In point of fact, he not only removed the unrepentant serial predator, Fr. Maciel, from ministry, he did not hesitate to accept the resignation of former cardinal Theodore McCarrick when he turned seventy-five, the earliest possible date for him to do so.

Pope Benedict has nothing to apologize for. If anything, it is his vicious critics who owe him an apology.