

EXORCISMS SURGE

There have been many news reports over the past few years of Americans who are seriously troubled, in need of spiritual peace. Saddled with personal problems, some were so desperate as to seek ways to purge themselves of demons.

Take the case of Gary Dale Mort. About six weeks before Christmas last year, this Muncie, Indiana man kicked his wife out of their house and set it on fire. He was shot by police after he flashed what turned out to be a pellet gun; he was not seriously injured. In 2017, he slammed his car into a store. When questioned, he said the crash was intentional, an act he attributed to his being possessed by a demon. He had sought, unsuccessfully, to get a priest to perform an exorcism.

Is he possessed? Would an exorcism work? No one knows. Most of those who believe they are possessed are not; they suffer from a host of clinically diagnosed maladies. But not everyone can be helped by conventional psychiatric treatments. Some are indeed possessed and clearly benefit from an exorcism.

Mike Mariani wrote a splendid article on exorcisms last year in *The Atlantic*. He pointed to survey data that indicate that roughly half of Americans believe in demonic possession, and an even higher number believe in the devil.

In fact, Gallup polls show that in 1990, 55 percent said they believed in the devil; the figure jumped to 70 percent in 2007. More recently, an article in England's *Catholic Herald* noted that belief in God was declining in the West but belief in the devil remained strong.

While religions other than Catholicism offer exorcisms, no institution has a richer tradition in dealing with them than the Catholic Church. Requests for exorcisms are spiking, leading to an increase in trained exorcists.

The devil works by pressuring a person to accept evil (demonic oppression), or by seizing control of a person's body, speaking through him (demonic possession). Either way, the priest who confronts those who claim to be in the snares of the devil is trained to proceed with caution.

The priest begins by sending the person making the request to a psychiatrist for evaluation. That's the end of the line for most: they receive the mental health care they need, but are no longer considered a candidate for an exorcism. Still, there are some who defy the standard explanation for a person's serious mental condition; they may be a candidate for an exorcism.

It is not just priests, or Catholics, who believe that there are persons seeking help who are beyond the scope of experts. Jeffrey Lieberman, chairman of Columbia University's psychiatric department, says he knows of some cases where it "could not be explained in terms of normal human physiology or natural laws."

Who are the most likely candidates for an exorcism? Approximately 8 in 10 are survivors of sexual abuse. Mariani explains why. "The exorcists—to be clear—aren't saying sexual abuse torments people to such an extent that they come to believe they're possessed; the exorcists contend that abuse fosters the conditions for actual demonic possession to take hold."

From a Catholic perspective, this is daunting. It suggests that those who do such evil acts as sexual abuse create the fodder that attracts the devil to victimize the victim again. If this is true, the offenders are responsible for much more than molestation, and will have to answer for it.

What is driving our current state of affairs? Mariani speculates that two concurrent phenomena—the increasing belief in the occult and the rise in demands for exorcisms—are a

reflection of what ails us.

Surely the social decomposition that has occurred in Western civilization over the past half century must be seen as playing a lead role in contributing to our social ills. Historically, such times are marked by a fascination with the occult: magic, witchcraft, astrology, and the like are deceptive substitutes for God. It should be stressed that the devil thrives in such an environment.

Millennials are especially attracted to the paranormal. Turned off by organized religion, they are more likely to be drawn to the occult than to atheism. However, that doesn't resolve anything: what they typically experience is spiritual hollowness, a void that cries out for fulfillment. It is not easy to satisfy that appetite without God, but some still try.

William Friedkin, the director of the classic movie, "The Exorcist," once said, "I've known quite a few atheists who, while unmoved by the idea of God, seem to be afraid of the Devil and conscientiously avoid horror films." But such persons misunderstand the point of the novel upon which the film was made.

The author of *The Exorcist*, William Blatty, said his book was not meant as a horror story, but as "an argument for God." In fact, he meant it to be "an apostolic work, to help people in their faith. Because I thoroughly believed in the authenticity and validity of that particular event."

There is some good news here. It is hard to believe in the devil without believing in God, so perhaps the uptick in Americans believing in the devil will draw them closer to God.

VICTORY IN CALIFORNIA; CONFESSIONAL BILL WITHDRAWN

The seal of confession is safe in California. The bill to bust it has been pulled.

On July 8, the eve of a scheduled hearing on SB 360, California State Sen. Jerry Hill withdrew his bill; it would have broken the seal of the confessional in some instances. He pulled his legislation once he realized he didn't have enough votes to make it out of the Assembly Public Safety Committee.

The effort to stop the bill was led by Los Angeles Archbishop José Gomez. The Catholic League played an ancillary role, mobilizing tens of thousands of Catholics: we provided them with email contacts that they used effectively. We are proud of Archbishop Gomez and all of those Catholics who supported him. We are also happy to report that many non-Catholics stepped up their support as well.

In making the case against SB 360, we cited three major concerns: the damage it would do to religious liberty; the dubious predicate of the bill; and its unenforceability.

The idea of having the government police the details of a Catholic sacrament is draconian. Furthermore, it would forever place in jeopardy the religious liberty protections afforded by the First Amendment. It would also do irreparable damage to the priest-penitent relationship, compromising, as it would, the confidentiality of the confessional.

Sen. Hill said that the bill was necessitated because "the clergy-penitent privilege has been abused on a large scale, resulting in underreported and systemic abuse of thousands of children across multiple denominations and faiths."

On June 12, Bill Donohue wrote to Sen. Hill about his claim.

“Could you please provide my office with documentation to support that claim? I will not be coy: I don’t believe you can. But go ahead and prove me wrong.” He never answered, and we both know why.

On June 25, Donohue wrote to Assemblyman Reginald Byron Jones-Sawyer, chairman of the Public Safety Committee in charge of the bill. He asked him to reconsider the legislation. “It is not only the wrong remedy,” he said, “it is unenforceable as well.”

These are just two of the many exchanges with lawmakers we had about this bill.

This is a smashing victory. Many thanks to all of those who contacted these legislators. Without your input—your follow through—there may very well have been a different outcome. We can set the agenda, and provide the email contacts, but only you can make it happen. There is strength in numbers.

Donohue very much appreciated the kind note of gratitude that Archbishop Gomez sent. We stand ready to support him, and all the bishops, who are defending religious liberty during these turbulent times.

PA LAWMAKER MERITS CENSURE

Recently, the Catholic League asked members of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives to support HR 387, a measure that would censure Rep. Brian Sims for his threats, his misogyny, and his religious bigotry. This represents the second effort on our part to secure justice for the victims of Sims’ offenses.

On May 7, the Catholic League contacted every member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives about this matter. We sought their support for our call to censure Rep. Brian Sims for his bullying and his vicious anti-Catholicism.

We were subsequently told by counsel for the House Ethics Committee that our request must meet the standards outlined in the House Rules and the Legislative Code of Ethics (Act 154 of 1968). That Act deals mostly with conflict of interest violations. This is a different matter, which is why we are now supporting a resolution by Rep. Jerry Knowles to censure Sims.

What Sims did on May 5 was outrageous. Unprovoked, he approached an elderly Catholic woman who was praying the rosary outside a Planned Parenthood clinic in Philadelphia and started bullying her.

For eight uninterrupted minutes, Sims badgered her, telling her to go pray at home. When she asked him to stop, he followed her around and threatened to make her home address public so that others could harass her.

Two days earlier, Sims tweeted that Planned Parenthood protesters are "racist, classist, bigots." He apparently has no clue about the origins of this organization. It was founded by Margaret Sanger, a notorious white racist who said it was her goal to "weed out" the "undesirables," by which she meant African Americans.

Sims also went into a protracted anti-Catholic rant. "How many Catholic churches are you protesting in front of? There are 400 Catholic priests in Pennsylvania indicted for child molestation." [Wrong. Over a period of 70 years, 301 priests had an *unsubstantiated accusation* made against them. Two were prosecuted.]

On a previous occasion, Sims became equally aggressive by intimidating three pro-life teenage girls. He offered \$100 to

anyone who would identify the girls, hoping to have protesters show up at their house to harass them.

To this day, Sims refuses to apologize for any of his behavior. He makes threats and puts innocent persons in danger. Moreover, he always chooses either young females or elderly ladies to bully. To make matters worse, he singles out Catholics, making the most bigoted remarks about their religion.

This man is not fit to be a dog catcher, never mind a sitting member of the Pennsylvania legislature. What more does it take to censure him?

U.S. Senator Al Franken was driven from office after revelations of sexual misconduct. What Sims did was worse. Franken's offenses took place before he was elected to the Senate—Sims committed his offenses while in office. Justice demands that no public official be permitted to get away with such obscene conduct.

This is not simply a Pennsylvania issue—it is a national issue. We implore lawmakers from both parties to act responsibly and censure Rep. Brian Sims.

WISCONSIN BILL ASSAULTS CONFESSIONAL SEAL

A bill to bust the seal of the confessional was scheduled to be introduced in late August by three Democratic lawmakers from Wisconsin: Sen. Lena Taylor, Rep. Chris Taylor and Rep. Melissa Sargent. The clergy in Wisconsin are already mandated reporters of sexual abuse; this bill would remove the

exemption afforded the confessional.

The sponsors of the bill have provided no evidence that this bill would remedy anything. Indeed, they cannot cite one case of sexual abuse that would have been reported to the authorities had the religious exemption for the confessional not existed.

This bill is a monumental flop. Not only does it not solve anything, it will not convince a single priest to subject himself to excommunication for violating his vows. Moreover, a lawsuit will immediately be filed challenging this violation of the First Amendment by state officials.

The government has no business policing the sacraments of the Catholic Church. This is nothing but grandstanding by politicians pretending to be champions of the victims of sexual abuse.

Why don't these brave lawmakers go after the lawyer-client privilege? Don't attorneys learn of instances of the sexual abuse of minors? Why not target psychologists and psychiatrists as well? They hear about cases of sexual abuse, yet they are forbidden to violate their professional commitment to their patients.

Why are Catholic priests being singled out? This is religious profiling. Indeed, the bill is manifestly anti-Catholic.

We contacted every member of the Wisconsin legislature about this bill. The state needs to back off and keep its hands out of the internal affairs of the Catholic Church or any other religion. We see this as a national issue, one that has grave implications for religious liberty throughout the country.

We urged Sen. Scott L. Fitzgerald, the Majority Leader, who is a Republican, to lead the opposition to this bill.

SEXUAL ABUSE ENABLER AWARDED \$2.45 MILLION

Imagine the following scenario.

A cardinal in the Catholic Church knows that for 20 years a priest in his archdiocese has sexually abused hundreds of young persons, yet he never once reported his crimes to the authorities. When this is disclosed to the public, the cardinal stands fast, refusing to budge. When a protest of angry Catholics forces him to resign, he is allowed to teach at a local Catholic college and is awarded the title “distinguished professor.”

There’s more. Imagine the cardinal being charged by prosecutors with two felonies and with lying to the police. Imagine further that the archdiocese agrees to award him \$2.45 million over three years; he is also given medical and dental coverage. But he has to agree not to sue the archdiocese first! He agrees.

This is exactly what happened on July 30 when the Board of Trustees at Michigan State University awarded former president Lou Anna Simon about \$2.5 million (of taxpayers’ money), plus benefits, after she was forced to resign. She is charged with two felonies and with lying to the police about Dr. Lawrence Nassar. Nassar is in prison for sexually abusing young athletes when working as a sports doctor at the university; hundreds of young girls are believed to have been molested by him.

Simon’s payout follows her refusal to resign—she did so under protest. The school then awarded her the title “distinguished professor.”

We all know what would happen if the scenario about the cardinal were true. It would be the lead story in every newspaper, and would be given non-stop coverage on broadcast and cable TV.

Guess who covered the Michigan State story? Almost no one. AP picked it up, as well as the Michigan media, and there was a critical piece on the website of Forbes. The *Boston Globe*, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post* relegated this story to the sports page, as if the story was really about Nassar! ABC, CBS, NBC, PBS, CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC totally ignored it.

The three newspapers mentioned have been the most consistent, and hard-hitting, critics of the Catholic Church in its handling of sexual abuse cases. Yet there was no big story, and no editorial, about the corruption at Michigan State. Just a short story alongside MLB news.

Bill Donohue has been saying for years that the public, especially Catholics, are being played. The clergy abuse scandal is a disgrace, but it is also a disgrace the way the media, and others, have treated sexual misconduct stories when they do not involve the Catholic Church. The lack of outrage over the way Michigan State handled its former president settles the issue.

The double standard is nauseating. In the eyes of the media, victims' lawyers, state attorneys general, late-night talk show hosts, educators, and activist organizations, not all victims of sexual misconduct are equal. What counts is the identity of the victimizer.

RELIGIOUS RIGHTS FOR FED CONTRACTORS SPIKE

The Trump administration has released a proposal that would strengthen the religious rights of federal contractors. Current law exempts religious non-profit organizations from federal laws on discrimination.

The proposed rule would expand the religious exemption to any company where the owners claim that their sincerely held religious beliefs would be compromised if they had to comply with certain federal regulations. The rule would also extend to companies the same right currently afforded non-profit religious entities in making hiring and firing decisions.

There is a sound religious liberty principle involved in the proposal. The reason why religious non-profits are allowed these exemptions is to ensure that employees practice fidelity to the tenets of the organization's religion. If they did not, their *raison d'être* would implode. What is the purpose of having a religious non-profit if its mission can be subverted by employees who are hostile to it?

In the private sector, the Trump administration is saying that the religious convictions of the owner should not be forfeited because his organization is a for-profit entity. The Department of Labor quite properly cited the U.S. Supreme Court Hobby Lobby ruling which allowed a for-profit company not to provide for contraceptives in its healthcare plan; the religious convictions of the owner were sustained.

Beginning August 15, the public has a month to comment on the proposal. We did do so.

This is just one more instance where the Trump administration has moved forward extending religious liberty to all Americans.

NEW YORK TIMES CHIEF EDITOR CONTACTED; D.C. REPORTER IS ANTI-CATHOLIC

The following is a letter by Bill Donohue to the executive editor of the New York Times about a prominent reporter for the paper who recently made anti-Catholic remarks at a public event.

August 1, 2019

Mr. Dean Baquet
Executive Editor
New York Times
620 8th Avenue
New York, NY 10018

Dear Mr. Baquet:

One of your reporters, Carl Hulse, recently voiced an animus to Catholicism that is astonishing. His remarks are so offensive that they disqualify him from objectively covering Catholic issues, and this is especially true of Catholic nominees for the judiciary. That is why I am asking you to remove him from such assignments.

On June 26, Hulse was interviewed by Times columnist Maureen Dowd about his new book, *Confirmation Bias: Inside Washington's War Over the Supreme Court*; it was held at the 92nd Street Y in New York. Hulse certainly proved he is very knowledgeable about bias—his comments reeked of it. Here is a sample of his anti-Catholic bias.

The conversation centered around Catholic justices on the Supreme Court. Dowd laid the groundwork saying that after she read his book, "I began worrying about the Catholic deep state." She does not concern me: Dowd is an opinion writer; Hulse is the chief Washington correspondent for your newspaper. But I hasten to add that though two percent of the population is Jewish, and a third of the high court is Jewish, no one ever complains about having too many Jews on the Supreme Court.

Hulse did not mince words. He spoke about "a serious Catholic sort of mafia" that exists. "There is a Catholic cabal," and a "real Catholic underground that is influencing this probably in an outsized way."

This is the kind of paranoia we would expect from tabloids at the checkout counter of a supermarket, not from the New York Times. That he felt so comfortable voicing his anti-Catholic bigotry in public is disturbing; it speaks volumes about his mindset.

This matters so much because there is hardly a Catholic nominee for the federal bench, as well as for the state courts, whose religious affiliation is not questioned by senators, the media, or activists. This is certainly the case with Catholic nominees not suspected of dissenting from Church teachings on the issues of life, marriage, and the family. I know this because we at the Catholic League have been engaged in these fights.

In 2003, Alabama Attorney General Bill Pryor was asked by Senator Chuck Schumer of the Senate Judiciary Committee about his "deeply held beliefs" [read: his Catholic convictions]. He was asked by Senator Dick Durbin whether he understood the "concerns of those who don't happen to be Christian, that you are asserting...a religious belief of your own, inconsistent with the separation of church and state."

In 2005, John Roberts was nominated for the Supreme Court and had to undergo a torrent of anti-Catholic accusations from those in the media and activist organizations. Two senators, Dianne Feinstein and Arlen Specter, asked if he agreed with comments made by then-presidential candidate John F. Kennedy to the effect that separation of church and state had to be absolute. Thus did they dig up the old canard about “dual loyalties.” Were they even aware that Kennedy’s infamous Houston remarks were voiced following an outburst from anti-Catholic bigots in the Protestant community?

Later in 2005, as soon as Samuel Alito’s name was mentioned as a possible candidate for the Supreme Court, his religion was cited as a source of genuine concern by activists such as Eleanor Smeal, president of the Feminist Majority Foundation. Owing to the controversy over the drilling that Roberts had to endure, he was spared this experience by members of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

In 2009, Sonia Sotomayor was unscathed by anti-Catholicism. This is not surprising: she has never been known for stating her fidelity to Church teachings on issues of life, marriage, and the family. In fact, she was praised as a model Catholic by Catholics United. This organization, as we learned from the Wikileaks email dump of 2016, was set up by Hillary Clinton operative John Podesta for the purpose of creating a “revolution” in the Catholic Church.

In 2017, Senators Feinstein and Durbin were back at it, this time grilling federal court appointee Amy Coney Barrett about her Catholicity. “When you read your speeches,” Feinstein said to Barrett, “the conclusion one draws is that *the dogma lives loudly within you* (my italics).” Senator Durbin was just as pointed. “Do you consider yourself an orthodox Catholic?” He then said, “What’s an orthodox Catholic?”

Last year, Senators Kamala Harris and Mazie Hirono raised questions about the suitability of Brian C. Buescher to be

seated as a federal district judge. His problem? He belongs to the Knights of Columbus. They were concerned about the “extreme” Catholic view that marriage should be a union between a man and a woman.

Other recent examples, taken from Wisconsin and Michigan, could be added, but the point is the same: there should be no religious test for public office, and there should be no religious bigotry in journalism.

Hulse’s paranoia is something that needs to be addressed. There is no Catholic conspiracy. There is no Catholic mafia. Those who think this way are so biased that they have no legitimate role to play in public discourse.

Please do not give Hulse any more assignments where his anti-Catholic thinking may come into play. It does not matter that he says he is a Catholic. Bigotry has nothing to do with one’s biography; it has to do with one’s convictions.

In 2016, you said on WNYC public radio about the *New York Times*, “We don’t get religion. We don’t get the role of religion in people’s lives.” You were right. Now you have an opportunity to do something about it.

Sincerely,

William Donohue
President

CUOMO BANS CAT DECLAWING

The same governor who pushed for a bill that allows doctors not to attend to the health of a child after he or she has survived an abortion signed a bill recently banning the

declawing of cats; New York is the first state to do so.

Andrew Cuomo has no stomach for cat declawing. He called it “a cruel and painful procedure,” one that is positively “inhumane,” yet there is no record of him ever speaking that way about abortions at any stage of pregnancy. Nor has he ever branded infanticide an “archaic practice,” though that is exactly what he called cat declawing.

Cuomo had better stay put in his job. Were he to seek office outside New York he would be in for a wake-up call: Most Americans are much more repulsed by dismembering a human baby in utero—to say nothing of sanctioning infanticide—than they are cat declawing. The man’s ethical priorities are appalling. It makes one wonder what religion he belongs to.

AMERICA MAGAZINE DEFENDS COMMUNISM

“Communist ideology is very similar to Christianity.” That is what Vladimir Putin said last year in defense of Soviet communism. Agreeing with Putin is a contributor to *America*, the influential Jesuit magazine, Dean Dettloff. A more prominent Jesuit, Pope Francis, disagrees: When asked about his economic views in 2013, he flatly said, “The Marxist ideology is wrong.”

Dettloff’s article, “The Catholic Case for Communism,” is the most spirited defense of communism to appear in some time. That it was published by a prominent Catholic magazine (it is featured on its website) makes it all the more astonishing.

There are many things that Dettloff says that are worthy of a

robust reply, but there is one paragraph, in particular, that deserves a rebuttal.

“Communism in its socio-political expression has at times caused great human and ecological suffering. Any good communist is quick to admit as much, not least because communism is an unfinished project that depends on the recognition of its real and tragic mistakes.”

Communism “has at times caused great human and ecological suffering”? It just doesn’t get more innocent than this.

R.J. Rummel is a professor emeritus at the University of Hawaii at Manoa; he is one of the world’s most noted experts on democide, or what may be called megamurder.

Regarding the megamurders committed by communist regimes, the death toll is staggering. Under the Soviet Union, Rummel says 61 million people were killed; Stalin was responsible for killing 43 million of them. Under Mao, Rummel puts the number at 77 million. Proportionately, Pol Pot beats everyone: between April 1975 and December 1978, he killed 2 million Cambodians out of a population of 7 million.

Attempts by Dettloff to romanticize American communists fail miserably. In fact, they gave Hitler their blessings.

In 2014, Ronald Radosh, a well-known student of communism, wrote a splendid review of a book by Stephen H. Norwood, *Antisemitism and the American Far-Left*, published by Cambridge University Press. What he said is no longer controversial.

“With the infamous Nazi-Soviet Pact that began in August of 1939 and lasted until Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June of 1941, American Communists quickly became open supporters of Hitler and showed little concern for the fate of Europe’s Jewry. At home, they quickly attacked all Jewish groups, including trade unions that fought against Hitler’s fierce war on the Jews. As Norwood writes, the American Communists

'clearly favored Nazi Germany over Britain.'

Dettloff writes that "any good communist is quick to admit" the great human suffering that communism has engendered, noting that they acknowledge its "mistakes." He is wrong on both counts.

Eric Hobsbawm was one of the most significant English historians of the 20th century. He was a Marxist who refused to associate with anyone but intellectuals, viewing ordinary middle-class people with contempt. In 1994, he was asked a hypothetical question by an author: if communism had achieved its aims in Russia and China, but at the cost of 15-20 million people—as opposed to the well over 100 million it actually resulted in—would you have supported it? He answered with one word: "Yes."

Mao put into practice the communism that Hobsbawm heralded. In 1957 he told the Russians, "We are prepared to sacrifice 300 million Chinese for the victory of world revolution." He told his comrades, "Working like this, with all these projects, half of China may well have to die." By contrast, Mao had at least 50 villas and was immensely wealthy.

The communists made no "mistakes." That is a myth. There is a direct line between Marxist ideology and genocide. As Solzhenitsyn said, Stalin did not pervert

Marxism—he perfected it. Rummel, following Lord Acton's observation that "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely," opined, "Power kills and absolute Power kills absolutely."

To those who understand human nature, none of this is surprising. To those who don't, it is a mystery.

COMMISSION on UNALIENABLE RIGHTS NEEDED

One of the best gifts to emerge from the Trump administration is the creation of the State Department's Commission on Unalienable Rights. It is a tribute to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that he appointed his mentor at Harvard Law School, Mary Ann Glendon, to chair the commission.

Left-wing legal groups, which think they own the subject of human rights, are apoplectic at the very thought of such a commission. A coalition of 430 left-wing organizations have asked Pompeo to dismantle this human rights commission. Their arguments are so weak as to be embarrassing.

"We object to the Commission's stated purpose," the letter says, without ever stating what that purpose is. The stated purpose is two sentences long. "The Commission will provide the Secretary of State advice and recommendations concerning international human rights matters. The Commission will provide fresh thinking about human rights discourse where such discourse has departed from our nation's founding principles of natural law and natural rights."

It is the second sentence that clearly bothers the critics. "Fresh thinking" about human rights is surely a worry to those stuck in neutral. To be sure, change can be painful, but to those who do not regard intellectual maturation to be a problem, it can yield many benefits.

Natural law and natural rights are the bedrock of our freedoms. Enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, they give homage to the Creator, the proper author of unalienable rights.

Appeals to natural law are what allowed for the dismantling of slavery. Similarly, Nazis accused at Nuremburg could not have

been convicted by appealing to the positive, or government generated, law. The Nazis maintained, quite properly, that they were simply following orders. It took the invocation of natural law to convict them. The court held that the Nazis knew in their heart that the intentional killing of innocent persons was wrong.

Critics of the Commission say it “lacks ideological diversity.” This is risible: the coalition is comprised of the most ideologically pure organizations in the nation.

Here are just a few: American Atheists, the ACLU, Amnesty International, the ADL, Freedom From Religion Foundation, NARAL Pro-Choice, and the Open Society Foundations (run by George Soros). It also includes such stellar groups as the Sex Workers Project at the Urban Justice Center, a pro-prostitution entity funded by Soros.

Take the last one. No wonder the coalition is upset: no student of natural law and natural rights considers prostitution to be an unalienable right. Indeed, the right to trade one’s body on the street is one of those invented “ad hoc” rights.

The distinction between “unalienable rights” and “ad hoc” rights is what upsets the coalition. Pompeo drew the distinction when he announced the formation of the Commission. “The proliferation of rights not only causes tensions between rights claims,” he wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*, “it ‘blurs’ distinctions between universal, God-given rights and ad hoc state-based rights, threatening to erode the very basis of our liberal democracy.”

Pompeo learned a lot from Glendon. In her masterful book, *Rights Talk*, published in 1991, she said that the “rights-bearer as a lone autonomous individual” is closely tied to the tendency to see rights as absolute. That vision is exemplified by the ACLU (which Bill Donohue detailed in *The Politics of*

the American Civil Liberties Union and Twilight of Liberty: The Legacy of the ACLU). It entails such fanciful rights as dwarf tossing, mud wrestling, and the sale and distribution of child pornography.

Among the critics of the Commission are some Catholic figures. They are lead by Miguel Diaz, Marianne Duddy-Burke, Mary E. Hunt, and Father Bryan Massingale. That's quite a quartet.

Diaz was the U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See under Obama (a post held earlier by Glendon under George W. Bush). He was also a tireless champion of Kathleen Sebelius, the Secretary of Health and Human Services who tried to force Catholic non-profits to pay for abortions. Sebelius was most known for her work supporting Dr. George—"the Killer"—Tiller, the infamous partial-birth abortion operative.

Duddy-Burke is executive director of DignityUSA, a pro-homosexual "Catholic" group that rejects the Church's teachings on sexuality.

Hunt is most known for rejecting the Church's teachings on ordination and for accusing the Church of bigotry.

Massingale is a Milwaukee priest and Fordham professor who opposes religious liberty and rushes to the defense of gays who oppose Church teachings on homosexuality.

Ideological diversity, anyone?

What is driving the coalition of critics is their unanimous support for the rights of gay and transgender activists and their dismissive, if not contemptuous, posture towards religious liberty. Whenever there is a conflict between gay rights and the First Amendment right to religious liberty, they side with the former against the latter.

In short, their interpretation of human rights has nothing to do with the principles and tenets of the Founders. Their

vision is one of radical individualism and radical egalitarianism, two of the most pernicious ideological strands in American society.

Good luck to Mike Pompeo and Mary Ann Glendon. They are two of the most brilliant and dedicated Americans in public life today.