

BILL DONOHUE'S LETTER OF COMPLAINT TO THE U.N.

Bill Donohue mailed a formal complaint on May 15, 2014, with documentation, to the High Commissioner for Human Rights at the United Nations in Geneva regarding the conduct of Felice Gaer, Vice-Chairperson of the U.N. Committee Against Torture. Donohue charges her with violating specific strictures governing the impartiality of committee members. The basis of his complaint is Gaer's recent exchange with officials from the Holy See, and her compromising relationship with an external activist organization, the Center for Reproductive Rights. To read the letter, click [here](#).

The Limbaugh Letter, "My Conversation with Bill Donohue"

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**My Conversation with
Bill Donohue**

by Rush Limbaugh

A privilege to speak with this religious freedom warrior, president of the Catholic League, a bold presence on television, the author of many books, including [Secular Sabotage: How Liberals Are Destroying Religion and Culture in America](#) and [Why Catholicism Matters: How Catholic Virtues Can Reshape Society in the 21st Century](#):

Rush: Dr. Donohue, this is great. I have wanted to talk to you for the longest time, and I'm really appreciative that you've been able to make the time here.

Donohue: Wait, what? For you? What, are you kidding me? You're number one, buddy. [Laughs]

Rush: You intrigue me. I've been watching you for years on tv. Since I've got you here, could you tell me a little bit about the Catholic League? How old is it? What is its purpose?

Donohue: It was founded in 1973 by a man I never got a chance to meet; he died a couple of years before I took over in 1993. Back in 1973 Father Virgil Blum, a Jesuit priest, professor of political science at Marquette University, founded the Catholic League. Even though that was the year of Roe v. Wade, that wasn't his top issue. His top issue was anti-Catholicism. He wanted this organization to be somewhat analogous to the ADL [Anti-Defamation League] in the Jewish community. His driving issue more than anything else back in '73 was actually school vouchers. Then abortion, then other things. But that was it, to defend individual Catholics and the institutional church.

Though he was a priest, he felt the need for a lay organization. I can tell you from my conversations with a lot of bishops and cardinals over the years, they very much feel there is a need for a lay organization because, quite frankly,

I can say some things that they may want to say, but they're constrained by the collar. There's a need for Catholics to enter into a more robust debate.

All our money comes from voluntary contributions. We don't get our money from Wall Street; we get our money from Main Street. We have the support of many bishops and priests, obviously, but we don't get a dime from the Catholic Church. I don't report to a bishop. I report to a Board of Directors, mostly attorneys and businessmen and women. We're a 501(c)(3) – basically an anti-defamation organization.

Rush: To my mind, you are the country's foremost Catholic advocate, but you obviously go way beyond. You're obviously focused on civil liberties as a whole, with an emphasis on religious freedom.

Donohue: I started off teaching in Spanish Harlem and I went on to get my Ph.D. in Sociology from NYU and then went on to be a college professor in Pittsburgh. I wrote a Ph.D. dissertation and two books on the ACLU. I'm the guy who gave Bush 41 everything he used against "the Little Duke" [Michael Dukakis] back in '88.

Rush: Aha!

Donohue: It was the Little Duke who made the ACLU an issue when he said he was a [card-carrying](#) member. I was at The Heritage Foundation then. The ACLU book [[The Politics of the American Civil Liberties Union](#)] got me there. I wrote another book about the ACLU [[The Twilight of Liberty: The Legacy of the ACLU](#)], and now I'm writing books about the Catholic Church. I've taught political science and Constitutional law, the latter as a result of tracking the ACLU. I don't address the ACLU as much anymore because I didn't want to turn this into Bill Donohue's anti-ACLU crusade. Quite frankly it has been eclipsed by so many other governmental and cultural forces.

Rush: I don't think there's an advocate who does it better, and you do it in a way that's not overtly devout or religious.

Donohue: Well, you've got to have a sense of humor. I'm Irish. I come from a blue-collar background. My father left me when I was a child. I was raised by my grandparents who were born in Ireland, didn't have any education. My mother was a nurse. I got taught by the Marxists at NYU and The New School for Social Research, but it didn't have any effect on me because I had common sense. I'm fed up with the left in terms of their hypocrisy. I think that's what drove me. I started as a Democrat. I became Republican, but I've been happily independent over 20 years. I'm proud to be a conservative. I'm a former Bradley Resident Scholar at The Heritage Foundation. But I am not a Republican, I am not a Democrat, and I want to keep that clean so that I can go where the action is.

Rush: Now, you may laugh at the question, but I need to ask it. Are you a devout Catholic? Whatever the Church's teachings are, you support them? You're not in business to establish your own point of view on the religion.

Donohue: There's no question I am a devout Catholic. The Catholic League is not a debating society. We're here to defend the right of the Church to say whatever it wants in the public arena and people are free to agree or disagree. As John Paul II said, "We're not here to impose anything. We're here to propose." Might I have a few teachings that I might wrestle with? Well, yes, which I'm not going to make public because it's not about Bill Donohue. It's about me saying we have this indispensable moral voice and it needs an airing and a respectful hearing instead of catcalls. We don't have our own views. We don't have our own teachings. Whatever the teachings are of the Catholic Church, we're simply saying, "Give it a respectful hearing and then we go our way."

Rush: Okay, I wanted to set the table with that. What is your assessment of the state of religious freedom in the country

today, and how has it changed since you took over the Catholic League?

Donohue: When I took over in 1993, quite frankly, I wondered if I would have enough work to do. That's because, like a lot of Catholics, I was not myself a victim of discrimination. That existed in the 18th, 19th, and maybe the first half of the 20th century. I'm not just using JFK as the proverbial example, and it is true that in the 20th century the progress that individual Catholics made was gigantic. But while individual Catholics have made tremendous progress, the denigration and defamation of the institutional Church through the movies, through TV, what's said in the schools, and artistic exhibitions and the like – it's incredible the double standard, the hate-filled obscene comments that are made and lies about the Catholic Church. I think a lot of Catholics have said: "Well, that's for Father Murphy to take care of." No. We need something like Article 5 of NATO: If there's an attack on my church, it should be viewed as an attack on me.

Rush: Bill, that's one of the reasons why this is so important. I think the flock, if I can term it that way, is somewhat like many in the Republican Party. They're just scared. They're scared of media. They're scared of opposition and they'd rather slink away than engage this defamation of the Church. I remember in 1993 when ACT UP ran through St. Patrick's throwing condoms at Cardinal O'Connor. I wondered, why is it up to the Church to change? The Church is not reaching out and demanding these people be anything. If you don't want to be a Catholic, don't go in. Stay away. What is the threat? Why does the Catholic Church, religion in general, threaten so many on the left?

Donohue: The biggest threats today come from government. They used to come from the media. The biggest change, and this is pernicious, it's not just coming from Hollywood, it's now coming from government which obviously is much scarier. Father Blum, the founder of the Catholic League, said the problem

with Catholics is they're "[political eunuchs](#)." That's why we have to have a Catholic League to try and jack these people up and get with it. As I like to say to Senator Schumer – and he gets a kick out of this: "The Catholic League is theologically Catholic, but we are behaviorally Jewish." In other words, we're going to be a little tougher and stand up for our rights.

Now, why the threats? Most of the attacks – not all, but the lion's share of them – have to deal with matters sexual. Evangelicals, Orthodox Jews, Muslims, Mormons, and others share the same idea of sexual ethics, which is what I call "sexual reticence." In other words, the necessity of restraint. "Restraint" is not a dirty word. It's actually good if people practice it. The people who don't practice it, well, they wind up dead. Physically dead, spiritually dead, morally dead.

Why the Catholic Church? We're the big fat target. Orthodox Jews are too small, so are the Mormons, so are the Muslims and they fear the Muslims. Evangelicals they don't like, but they're kind of scattered. They don't have that same kind of institutional big target. We've been around for 2,000 years. We've got the Pope at the top. If your goal is libertinism, which essentially means license to do whatever you want, no holds barred, if the three most dreaded words in the English language are, "Thou shalt not," no, you're not going to like the evangelicals, the Orthodox Jews, the Mormons, and the Muslims, but boy, the one you want to get, the big fat target, the bull's-eye, is the Roman Catholic Church. Because to the extent that you can weaken its moral authority, its moral voice, you will have largely been able to win. That's what is driving almost all of it.

Rush: Are they afraid that you're judgmental of them? Are they afraid that you are going to succeed in curtailing their freedom?

Donohue: I think they're afraid that I would succeed in getting forth the message to enough people that these attacks are malicious, that they're unfair, and that we need to have a respectful voice for the Catholic Church. I'll give you one quick example. In the last week I've spoken to some very nice liberal guys – Alan Colmes, Joe Piscopo – who were unaware that in the St. Patrick's Parade we do not bar gays from marching. We bar gays from having their own banners and contingents. We also bar pro-life Catholics from marching in their own contingent with their own banners. If the St. Patrick's Day Parade is "anti-gay," then it must logically be anti-life. Nobody believes that. When I get that message out, fair-minded liberals say, "I'm with you Bill." But our side has been intimidated. I can't tell you the number of the Catholics who have wined and dined me, who are good men and women, but I've just about given up with them. I said to them, "Listen, guys, I can give you the talking points. I can frame the issues. You know what I can't do?" And they ask, "What's that, Bill?" "Courage: it's not transferable." The reason you've made it, Rush, is not just because you're a brilliant commentator, but because you have courage. If you don't have it, forget it.

Rush: Are you worried the Church will succumb? That there might be enough pressure brought to bear that the Church would dramatically alter its position, say, on female priests?

Donohue: No.

Rush: You've never had any doubts about that?

Donohue: No. And I'll tell you why. One, they can't change. We can change meat on Friday; we can change celibacy. That's a man-made rule. That's what they call in the Catholic circles a "discipline." It's not dogma. It wasn't written in Scripture. It was optional for the first thousand years, and then they made it a requirement. They can change that next week if they want. But there are certain things they can't change, such as

women priests, positions on abortion and marriage, and the like. So I'm not worried about that.

And there's another reason. When Napoleon told Cardinal Consalvi he was going to destroy the church, Consalvi said, and I'm paraphrasing, "Listen, if we cardinals and bishops with all the people that we've had screwing up for 18 centuries haven't destroyed the Church from within, you're not going to do it from outside either." There is a Holy Spirit. We blunder, we make our mistakes, but no, we're going to be here and I'm not worried about that.

Now, am I concerned that there are some bishops, some priests, and a whole lot of nuns who have gone off the rails? Oh, yeah. I've named names. There's no question about it. These Catholic dissidents – if I was that unhappy with an organization I am voluntarily staying with, I'd go someplace else. We don't lack for religions in this country that accept pro-abortion positions and gay marriage and everything else. It's mostly the mainline Protestant denominations. I say to people, "If you want to join, don't walk down the street, run. Because they're shutting the doors very quickly." If that were the answer they should be booming, but instead the Catholic Church is holding steady, Orthodox Jews are growing faster than Reformed Jews and Conservative Jews, the evangelicals are growing faster than the mainline Protestants. People don't want to give up something just so they can adopt the editorial policies of *The New York Times*. They want something to put their teeth into. The Catholic seminaries that are the most orthodox are growing. The same is true with orders of nuns. Those orders of nuns that have mistaken their vocation for that of social work are dying out.

Rush: The left worldwide long ago concluded that in the arena of ideas they can't win. They cannot out-argue. Because they're not on the right side of any morality. However, they have attempted to corrupt the institutions that oppose them.

Donohue: That's right.

Rush: You don't worry that the College of Cardinals can somehow be corrupted ten, 20, 30 years from now? What about the priesthood? Some say that the abuse of children thing is the result of infiltration, to create the exact image of the Church that has happened.

Donohue: The sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church was an absolute, utter disgrace. John Jay College of Criminal Justice, not an arm of the Catholic Church, put the timeline as overwhelmingly from the mid-60s to the mid-80s. Mid-60s, the beginning of the sexual revolution. Mid-80s, because I would argue AIDS was discovered in '81 and that put the brakes on people.

Why did it affect the Catholic Church? When the winds of culture change dramatically, it gets through the military, it gets through the churches, everybody. That's not an excuse. You had two principle actors: the molesting priest and the enabling bishop. Most of the molesting priests, according to John Jay, were men who had sex with men. Now they don't use the word I'm going to use: homosexuality. John Jay said less than five percent were pedophiles. In other words, it was guys hitting on adolescent guys.

Now, I can say this to you because you'll give me a chance to say it. I've said it a million times, but nobody wants to quote me on this. Most gay priests are not molesters, but most of the molesting priests have been gay. Now, I'm Irish. My people have a problem with alcoholism. It doesn't mean if you're born Irish you're going to become an alcoholic. It means that maybe you ought to take a look at certain communities. That's all I'm saying.

Now, the enabling bishop. What drove him? Clericalism. That's the term that's used in Catholic circles. Those who are not Catholic would probably understand it more in terms of

elitism, arrogance, pomposity. "The bishop knows best." "Don't worry about that, I'm taking care of things." Yes, you took care of things real well, some of you.

This should never have happened. They were teaching in some of the seminaries in the 1970s that all kinds of sexual expression was okay. As in the 1977 book [Human Sexuality](#), by a former priest, Anthony Kosnik. It's stunning. Everything goes. I'm saying the Catholic Church became corrupt, morally speaking, on matters sexual in the 1970s when the lid blew. Not all seminaries, obviously, but too many of them. So there was this enabling factor, "Send the guy to therapy and he'll be just fine." Well, some people are intractable. I'm not saying you throw them in the street or lock them up, although some of them certainly should be, but what you can't do is put them back into ministry.

"Give the poor devil therapy" was the zeitgeist. That was the spirit of the times in the 60s and 70s. You could rehabilitate anybody. Therapy was for everybody. People were bragging about their analysts, and too many bishops got advice from the psychiatrists and they accepted it. It was a sad chapter. In the last six years, we have [seven](#) credible accusations made against 40,000 priests. There's a serious problem of child rape going on in other demographic communities about which you will hear nothing. Almost every case you hear today is an old case which is being resurrected. There's no bigger devil in this than the Catholic left and those who claim to be Catholic and have one foot out the door or who have long left and who are angry. Particularly watch out for the ex-priest, the ex-seminarian, and the ex-nun.

Rush: Exactly. You said the government is now the greatest threat. I assume you're talking about government imposition, a policy of violation of religious freedom, such as forcing religious institutions to dispense contraceptives and pay for them. I've often wondered, look at a great Catholic school like Georgetown. Why do they cave? Why do they not stand up

when this kind of attack is made on the morality of the Church? Maybe “caving” is the wrong word.

Donohue: No, it isn't. They have caved. They've long caved. They're a disgrace. I've asked Jesuits, “Can you explain to me the difference between George Washington University and Georgetown?” There are two pro-abortion groups on the campus of Georgetown. One of them is Hoyas for Choice and the other was founded by Sandra Fluke. Now, you have good Catholic schools like Catholic University of America run by John Garvey. They're not going to put up with that. But there's a craven need on the part of a lot of Catholics to be liked.

In the late 90s, Cardinal O'Connor asked to see me. But we never got around to what he wanted to see me about because when I got in, I was ticked off. He said, “Sit down, Bill, what's the matter?” I said, “What's wrong with a lot of these priests? They never stand for anything. They're a bunch of wimps.” He said, “Bill, you're right. They want to be liked.” I said, “I like to be liked too, your Eminence. I'm not a masochist. But I want to be respected first.” These people want the acclamation and affirmation of secular liberals. They themselves are liberal and they're almost ashamed to be Catholic. They don't want to be called “parochial.” That would be the worst thing in the world. So they will bend over and suck up to the secular left so much that they lose their own identity.

Rush: Not just the Catholic Church, but many religions have thrown in with the left. If you trace it back you find when socialism or Big Government-ism, whatever you want to call it, was translated to mean “charity,” it was like a magnet. The Church glommed onto it and ended up supporting socialist politicians and socialist governments because theft and redistribution was called “charity” – which it isn't. I think you have much the same circumstance here with these universities.

Donohue: They also want to be welcomed to parties. They want to get those Park Avenue parties and the ones in Georgetown. They want the recognition of the secular left that they're not like Donohue: "Donohue is a conservative. Donohue still actually believes in these old-fashioned ideas. You're an open-minded guy." It's so open I sometimes wonder where the mind has gone. They've sold out. And they're happy to sell out because in return they get to be a member of the liberal club.

Rush: That's why I asked if you worry something like that could happen down the road in the College of Cardinals. It's clear that it can happen.

Donohue: There's no question about that. Remember what Pope Paul VI said back in 1972, referring to the sexual abuse crisis, the homosexual scandal: "The smoke of Satan is in the Church." Didn't just about every one of the Apostles turn on Jesus?

Rush: Right, yes.

Donohue: But I scratch my head every day about the renegades and heretics: "Why don't you just move on? Why do you camp out where you're no longer wanted?" It's because they know where the power is and if you can change the Catholic Church from within – Gramsci, the Italian Marxist, talked about this. He said, "Marx was wrong to take the economic lever as the path to socialism. The path to socialism is: take command of the cultural centers." Take command of the media, the arts, entertainment, change people's thinking. He did say get into the Catholic Church.

Rush: It wasn't long ago – ten years ago – that most, if not all, major religious groups opposed same-sex marriage, but there's a February [poll](#) by something called the Public Religion Research Institute that says that 58 percent of white Catholics, 56 percent of Hispanic Catholics now favor allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry. Do you believe polls like

that?

Donohue: No. Take the new [Pew](#) poll results. If you take a look at practicing Catholics, those who go to church once a week, the figure of support for gay marriage is 33 percent. There's a difference of 23 percent, which is an enormous margin, between practicing Catholics and non-practicing Catholics, those who almost never go to church. I got my doctorate in this area in sociology. The first thing we've got to do is disaggregate. If I ask someone, "Are you a vegetarian?" and he says, "Yes," but he's eating a hot dog – would I count him in a poll of vegetarians? Quite frankly, what's going on here is a bit of a game. They don't like to disaggregate. When they do, they find that practicing Catholics, for example, did not vote for Obama in either of the last two elections.

But that said, there has been a softening up. You've got a whole generation of kids who have been reared to believe from K right through graduate school that today's gays are yesterday's blacks. Most blacks take umbrage at that. Where we're winning, fortunately, is on abortion.

Rush: Yes.

Donohue: More young people, not just Catholic, are becoming pro-life. I suspect that's due to two reasons: 1) pictures – sonograms; and 2) nobody wants to talk about it. A lot of these young kids have friends or a brother or sister they've never met. In other words, their mother or their friend's mother had an abortion. That could have been them. Couple that with the sonograms – the picture doesn't lie – and I'm very optimistic. We're not going to change all the laws tomorrow. In New York it will always be legal to kill kids, because it's a very liberal state, but I think Roe could be overturned and it will go back to the states. On gay marriage it's more difficult because the gays have been very successful at taking that value of the American creed called "equality" and selling it.

Rush: I know. Marriage is what it is, except it isn't. [Laughter] Marriage is now something that is discriminatory, and it isn't. It's in the process of being redefined.

Look, since we've ended up here, back on February 27 you were on CNN with Chris Cuomo, who went after you for your support of that vetoed bill in Arizona, the religious liberty bill. The words "gay" or "homosexuality" weren't in it. But few people – you were one – stood up and defended and properly explained that bill. Cuomo said to you, "Nobody's saying that a religious organization has to perform gay marriages because of this." You said, "Oh, wait a minute..."

Donohue: That's where we're going.

Rush: So clearly you think this bill could lead someday to somebody suing or demanding the Church marry a gay couple. Right?

Donohue: Let me be more specific even. I played a role along with others in killing the nomination of Dawn Johnsen, who in 1988 worked on an ACLU case to strip the Catholic Church of its tax-exempt status because the Church is pro-life. I know where they're going. Which brings me back to HHS. I refer to Obamacare as "the abortion-inducing-drug mandate." Contraception is not exactly a hot-button issue with Catholics, including practicing Catholics, these days. But abortion is a different matter altogether. Why did the HHS mandate try to force contraception, sterilization? Why did they throw in the abortion-inducing drugs? Because that's the camel's nose under the tent. That's where they want to go. The big prize is not contraception. It's abortion.

Rush: Yes. It always circles back to that.

Donohue: The most pernicious thing about the HHS mandate is not even forcing Catholics to pay for abortion-inducing drugs. It goes back to 2000 in California where the Obama Administration picked up the idea from the ACLU that a

Catholic organization is not a Catholic organization in terms of exemptions if it hires and serves people who are not Catholic. So we're being punished. This is the most dramatic thing about this and a lot of people don't know about it. The government of the United States wants to redefine what constitutes a Catholic organization. Catholic hospitals don't have signs up saying, "Jews, Muslims, Atheists, Mormons, you're not welcome." We welcome them in. The Little Sisters of the Poor tend to old people who are not Catholic. They don't ask what your religion is as a condition of service.

This Administration, and this is what's so maliciously obscene about it, it's worse than abortion. They're saying, "You're no longer a Catholic organization because you hire and serve people who are not Catholic." I can't say this enough times to people. Talk about separation of church and state; this is the government redefining what religion is! By the way, when this gets before the Supreme Court, I predict a victory. I think the Obama Administration is in for a sad awakening.

Rush: Before we go I need to ask you something I've observed. The left in this country has traditionally opposed the Pope. They like this one. What is it about Pope Francis that they like? Do they think he's in the process of rejecting Catholic doctrine? He supposedly said, "Who am I to judge gays?" Are leftists looking at that as though the Pope might be malleable?

Donohue: See what they do? The left obviously lusts for power, and they're dishonest. What the Pope actually said was: "If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will," two conditions, "who am I to judge?" What the left does, and the Catholic left is the worst, they take that and run with it because they're trying to tell the bishops and the priests and the laypeople in this country, "You've got to get with the program." Cuomo tried to do this with me, "You're out of step with your Pope." But the Pope never said that. They try to create momentum.

Now, it is true that when it comes to socioeconomic issues, he's out of Latin America, he has a different model. People are free to disagree on that. People said to me, "Why didn't you come against Rush Limbaugh for criticizing the Pope on that?" I said, "This is really stunning. Rush Limbaugh didn't say anything. He never used an insulting term like Bill Maher and you people do all day long. He disagreed with the Pope. You're the guys who disagree with the Pope for a living. That's how you make your money at *The National Catholic Reporter*. And you say because Rush disagrees with the Pope, as many, many Catholics do, that's a problem?" How about my friend [Father Sirico](#) of the Acton Institute and many others who are free marketeers? That doesn't constitute anti-Catholicism. I don't go after anybody for disagreeing with a public policy position of the Catholic Church unless they get insulting.

The left likes this Pope because he does tend to more of the left policies when it comes to the economic area. But look what he says about marriage. Look what he says about abortion. Look what he says about so many other things that matter. The left never quotes those. Here's what I like about Pope Francis. He is very much against clericalism. He is shaking up some of these bishops who have gotten too comfortable. He calls them the "airport bishops." This is where the right and the left can come together: "Stop with your elitism." The Pope is a populist guy. He resonates with the people. That's long overdue. I don't like pompous priests and he certainly has no use for them.

Rush: By the way, thank you for defending me on that and speaking up properly. You nailed that.

Donohue: It was just so unfair. It was so transparent.

Rush: Well, I appreciate it. But you know something else? They look at the Catholic Church like it's a political organization, getting votes. It's not. They're trying to

corrupt everything.

Donohue: They are. They know where the power is. It all comes down to sex. The straights want their sex. If a kid comes along, abort them. The gays want their sex. If they get a disease, I should pay for it. It's libertinism, and the Church represents traditional moral values. Which, by the way, in the Pew survey, 81 percent of Catholics – 81 percent, the highest rating – say the Pope is doing an excellent/good job on the defense of traditional moral values. I put that statement out because I know left-wing Catholics won't be trumpeting it.

Rush: Bill, I want to thank you for your time. There is no better advocate for what he believes than you, and I've long admired your work. I wish you all the best and if there is ever anything we can do to help, would you please let me know?

Donohue: I would. Thank you, buddy.

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BISHOPACCOUNTABILITY'S REPORT ON POPE FRANCIS

According to BishopAccountability.org, "He [the pope when he was a bishop in Argentina] released no documents, no names of accused priests, no tallies of accused priests, no policy for handling abuse, not even an apology to victims."

The report excerpts a quote from a 2010 interview where Archbishop Bergoglio was asked about pedophilia. In part, he responded by saying, "in my diocese it never happened to me." What the report left out was his condemnation of pedophilia,

and his criticism of the way some bishops handled the problem of sexual abuse.

BishopAccountability highlights five cases where Bergoglio may have had knowledge of abuse allegations, but it is clear that it has no evidence that he knew about any of these cases. Moreover, only one of the priests was an archdiocesan priest from Buenos Aires (more on him below); two were religious order priests and two were from other dioceses.

The report estimates that between 1950 and 2013, “more than 100 Buenos Aires archdiocesan priests offended against children.” Again, the report cites no evidence for this claim. It further undermines its credibility when it makes a strained analogy: it compares the size of the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires to the number of priests accused in the dioceses of Manchester, Providence, and Los Angeles. Even a high school dropout would have chosen a Latin American analogy.

The report tries to sound authoritative by compiling a list of 42 clergy who have been accused of abuse in Argentina. Perhaps it thought that no one would check its own sources. We did. Here is what we found:

- Thirty-four of those priests had no connection to the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires.
- One was acquitted when the allegations could not be proved.
- One was tried in the United States, and the charges were dismissed before he moved to Argentina.
- One priest admitted to abusing a 15-year-old in the Diocese of Quilmes, and was transferred to the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires to live.
- One priest was credibly accused in the United States, and was then assigned to missionary work by his order. He was sent to Buenos Aires in August 2013, after Bergoglio was elected pope.
- One priest was accused of abuse in Uruguay, and was then

transferred to Buenos Aires.

Of the three remaining clerics, only one was an archdiocesan priest, Father Carlos Maria Gauna. He was accused of inappropriately touching two girls (he allegedly touched their buttocks) at a Catholic school, and was disciplined as a result. One was a Marianist brother, and there is no evidence that Bergoglio ever heard about, much less failed to report him. Finally, he is accused of commissioning a “secret” study of a Salesian priest, aimed at discrediting the accuser, but absolutely no evidence is provided to support this charge.

This so-called report is the most McCarthyite attack on Pope Francis that we have seen. We will be sure that the bishops learn of it.

Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights

www.catholicleague.org

DEBUNKING “PHILOMENA”

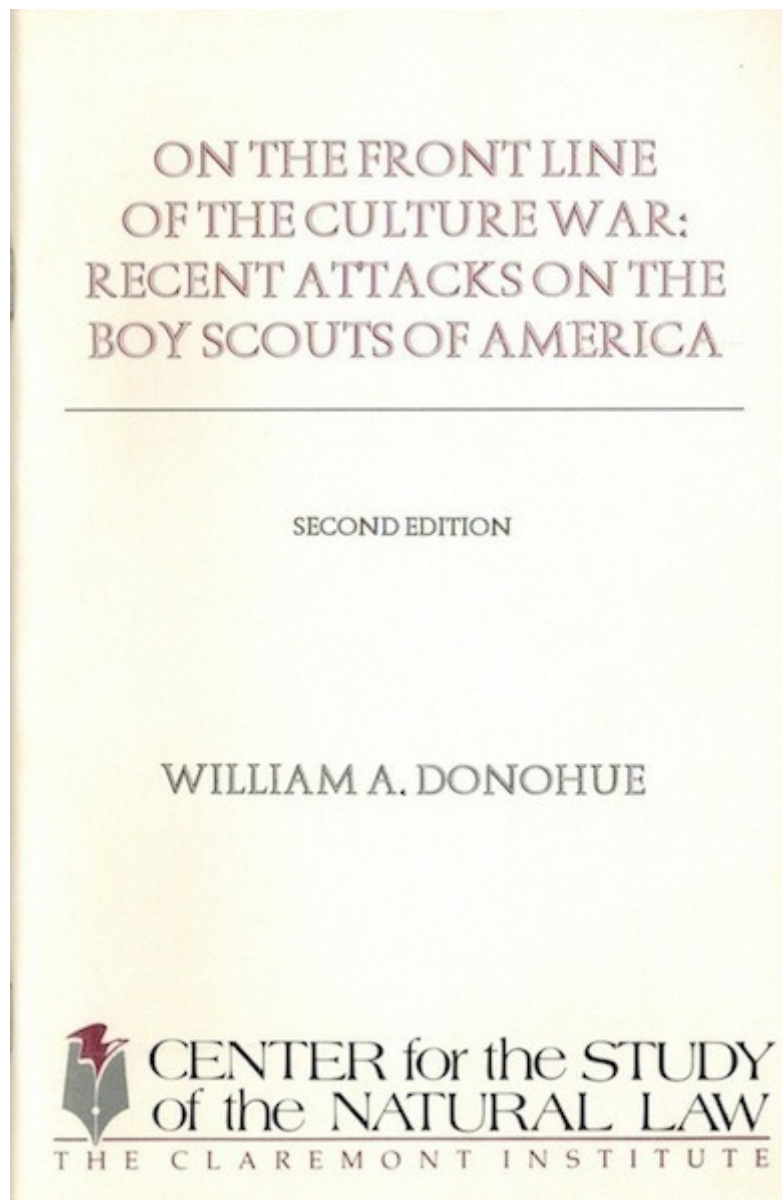
To read Bill Donohue’s special report on the anti-Catholic film, “Philomena,” click [here](#).

ON THE FRONT LINE OF THE

CULTURE WAR: RECENT ATTACKS ON THE BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

To read Bill Donohue's special report, "On the Front Line of the Culture War: Recent Attacks on the Boy Scouts of America,"

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Bill Donohue

President

Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights

Prejudice, as the psychologist Gordon W. Allport stressed, is always an “unwarranted” attitude. If someone experiences severe discomfort by eating certain foods, there is nothing prejudicial about refusing to eat any more of them. But there is something prejudicial about making sweeping generalizations about an entire category of food, or a community of people, when one’s experiences are limited. One contemporary example of prejudice is the popular perception of the nuns who ran Ireland’s Magdalene Laundries.

From the mid-eighteenth century to the late nineteenth century, the laundries housed “fallen” girls and women in England and Ireland. Though they did not initiate the facilities, most of the operations were carried out by the Sisters of Charity, the Sisters of Mercy, Good Shepherd Sisters, and the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity. The first “Magdalene Home” was established in England in 1758; Ireland followed in 1765 (the first asylum being a Protestant-run entity).

The popular perception of the laundries is entirely negative, owing in large part to fictionalized portrayals in the movies. The conventional wisdom has also been shaped by writers who have come to believe the worst about the Catholic Church, and by activists who have their own agenda. So strong is the prejudice that even when evidence to the contrary is presented, the bias continues.

There is a Facebook page dedicated to the laundries titled,

“Victims of the Irish Holocaust Unite.” Irish politicians have spoken of “our own Holocaust,” and Irish journalists have referred to the “Irish gulag system.” But the fact is there was no holocaust, and there was no gulag. No one was murdered. No one was imprisoned, nor forced against her will to stay. There was no slave labor. Not a single woman was sexually abused by a nun. Not one. It’s all a lie.

How do we know it’s a lie? The evidence is fully documented in the McAleese Report on the Magdalene Laundries, formally known as the “Report of the Inter-Developmental Committee to establish the facts of State involvement with the Magdalene Laundries.” The Report, which was released February 5, 2013, was chaired by Senator Martin McAleese.

An analysis of the McAleese Report will show how utterly false the conventional view of the Magdalene Laundries is. First, however, we need to understand the genesis of the popular mythology. Nothing helped to put a monstrous face on the laundries more than the movie, “The Magdalene Sisters.”

“The Magdalene Sisters”

The 2002 movie is often described as a “fictionalized” account of what happened inside the laundries. The *New York Times* prefers to speak of “semifictionalized” stories that have been recounted on the screen. As we will see, the McAleese Report does not validate the cruelties portrayed in the film, but the problem is few have even heard of the Report, much less read it. It’s the movie’s thesis that is embedded in people’s minds, and it is one of unrelieved horror: sadistic nuns who punished young women with impunity, all in the name of Catholicism. Here is a sampling of how the movie was received.

- “Slave Labor in Irish Convents as Terrible as Prison.” This was the headline in the *New York Times* story of September 28, 2002. The movie review spoke about “the

victims of a stringently moralistic brand of Irish Catholicism,” referring to the “religious labor camps” run by the nuns. “Some 30,000 women are thought to have passed through their gates.” Whom did they meet? “Most prison movies have a monster authority figure, and so does ‘The Magdalene Sisters.’” Specifically, the audience meets the “ogre” head nun, Sister Bridget, “a twisted diabolical autocrat.”

- Exactly two months later, the *Times* ran a story, “Irish Recall Sad Homes for ‘Fallen’ Women.” It said the movie depicted “the casual cruelty and commonplace despair in the homes,” explaining that a host of television documentaries “have revealed an array of abuse and cruelty by institutions run by the Catholic Church, often with the collusion of the state.”
- On August 3, 2003, the *Times* carried a piece by Mary Gordon, a long-time critic of Catholicism. After restating the themes of the two *Times* articles from the previous year, she opined that the “moral horrors” were not examples of mere “sadism”; rather, they reflected the even more pernicious “belief that they were intended for the victims’ own good.”
- In 2003, Roger Ebert took to the pages of the *Chicago Sun-Times* commenting how “these inhuman punishments did not take place in Afghanistan under the Taliban, but in Ireland under the Sisters of Mercy.”
- The first of three articles by the Associated Press in 2003 referred to “the nuns’ deep-seated greed and corruption,” and to Sister Bridget’s “whip to keep the girls in line.”
- The second article said “some 30,000 women were virtually imprisoned,” and that they “sometimes suffer[ed] physical and sexual abuse.”
- The third article cited the 30,000 figure as well, and described the laundries as “forced-labor” establishments.
- An August 15, 2003 review in the *Washington Post* said

the laundries were “veritable prison camps” that were run by “an unmovable monster,” Sister Bridget.

- On the same day, in the same newspaper, it said that in watching the film “it’s difficult not to be reminded of a World War II concentration camp.” It spoke of the “30,000 women [who] were incarcerated,” and the “ghastly images” that it “uncomfortably shares with so many fictionalized Holocaust films.” Indeed, “the nuns begin to resemble Nazi guards.”
- A 2003 review in the U.K.’s *Guardian* picked up on the Nazi angle by speaking of “Dr. Mengele.” It also described “the beatings, the breast-binding, the head-shaving, the forced fasting [and] the weekly mortification sessions, when the women were stripped and laughed at for their vanity.”
- On August 1, 2003, the *New York Daily News* concluded that “the whole system was sadistic and indefensible,” saying “the church” was deserving of all the scorn.
- On the same day, the *San Francisco Chronicle* pulled no punches, saying, “For some, the asylums were like a roach motel—girls checked in, but they never checked out, except 40 or 50 years later, in a pine box.”
- *Newsday* offered its review the same day, speaking of the “moral fascism” of the laundries.
- The *New York Post* also chose August 1 to say, “You’ll walk away amazed at the heartlessness of the people running the asylums and wondering how such a gruesome practice could have existed into the late 20th century.”

Yes, it would be amazing if this heartlessness were tolerated as recently as the late 20th century. What is truly amazing is that so many movie reviewers would come to rock-solid conclusions, believing the worst about the nuns. Indeed, they acted as though the movie portrayed indisputable historical facts. What made it easier for people to believe the movie’s narrative was the news stories coming out of Boston at this time: the priestly sexual abuse scandal, with Boston as the

epicenter, erupted as front-page news in 2002.

Regrettably, reviews are still coming in, years later, offering the same conclusion. In 2011, a feminist magazine at Yale put it this way: "The abuse committed by the nuns and priests overseeing the laundries was physical, sexual and psychological. Oftentimes the women had their heads shaved, and were stripped naked to be examined. They were subject to a variety of horrific tortures, beatings for disobedience, and sexual degradation." In fact, none of this is true.

Peter Mullan

The man behind "The Magdalene Sisters" is Peter Mullan. The Irish writer and director said he got the idea for the movie by watching the 1998 TV film, "Sex in a Cold Climate." That was a 50-minute documentary that described the lives of four women who lived and worked at the laundries. It made a big splash at the time, especially because it featured Phyllis Valentine, a woman who said she was interred in the laundries because she was deemed "too pretty" by the nuns.

If, of course, it were true that the nuns rounded up "pretty girls" for placement in the laundries, that would indeed be a big story. It would also suggest that other such cases must have surfaced by now (unless we are prepared to believe that Valentine was the only "pretty girl" encountered by the nuns). But they haven't: only Valentine has made this claim. In her case, we know that at age 15 she was moved from the orphanage where she was raised to the laundry. Such a transfer was standard practice, whether the girls were homely or pretty. By the way, the laundry was literally next door to the orphanage. It should come as no surprise that not a single nun who worked at either the orphanage or the laundry was asked to verify the "pretty girl" tale.

To say Mullan hates Catholicism would be an understatement. His comment that "There is not much difference between the

Catholic Church and the Taliban" is unqualified. Anyone capable of saying the Catholic Church is a terrorist organization can be trusted to portray it that way. So when he says that "The film encapsulates everything that is bad about the Catholic Church," he is simply telling the truth. That was his goal, and he succeeded. He sought to throw as much mud as he could, and hope that at least some of it would stick. Mullan is so riddled with hate that he contends, "The worst thing about the Catholic Church is that it imprisons your soul, your mind and your d***." This is the man whose depiction of the Church is taken at face value by movie reviewers.

Recently, a writer for the website Decent Films, raised some serious questions about the movie's controversial elements. Steven D. Greydanus noted that "Mullan's black-and-white (or rather black and more black) depiction of clergy and religious is absolute: Not a single character in a wimple or a Roman collar ever manifests even the slightest shred of kindness, compassion, human decency, or genuine spirituality; not one has the briefest instant of guilt, regret or inner conflict over the energetic, sometimes cheerfully brutal sadism and abuse that pervades the film." It should be noted that other reviewers admitted that they actually liked the fact that not one redeeming character was presented in the film.

Perhaps the most maverick statement about the movie was made by Valerio Riva, a member of the administrative board of the arts council that runs the Venice Film Festival (the movie won the festival's top award in 2002). He called Mullan's work "an incorrect propaganda film." In fact, he said "the director is comparable to Leni Riefenstahl," Hitler's favorite director and Nazi propagandist.

Boston College professor James M. Smith is one of the few academics to research the laundries. He is hardly an apologist for the asylums, so what he says bears consideration. In his research, he never met a single woman who lived and worked in

the laundries who described the kind of unconscionable conditions that Mullan describes. To be exact, sexual abuse manifestly did not occur. Moreover, none of the women Smith met said they were stripped naked and examined by nuns. Perhaps most important, he charges that Mullan never solicited or incorporated any comments made by the nuns who ran these facilities.

Patricia Burke Brogan backs up Smith's observations. A former novice who wrote a play on this subject, "Eclipsed," she admits she never witnessed any physical beatings. Speaking specifically about Mullan's movie, she said, "I could not stand it. Some of the parts were really over-the-top. The nuns were monsters." It is not shocking to learn that when Mullan is asked to respond to those who challenge his account, he refuses to offer a specific rebuttal; he simply replies that his movie understated the horrible conditions.

Investigations Launched

Media commentary about the laundries eventually led to an investigation about the treatment of wayward youth in every Irish institution. In 2009, Ireland's Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse published its findings; it became known as the Ryan Report (after the chairman of the Commission, Justice Seán Ryan).

News stories about the Ryan Report quickly emerged maintaining that abuse was rampant in these institutions. Upon closer inspection, however, we learn that the Ryan Commission listed four types of abuse: physical, sexual, neglect and emotional. Most of the evidence showed there were no serious violations. For example, physical abuse included "being kicked"; sexual abuse was considered "kissing," "non-contact including voyeurism" and "inappropriate sexual talk"; neglect included "inadequate heating"; and "lack of attachment and affection" was deemed emotional abuse.

Even by today's standards in the West, these conditions are hardly draconian; in the past they were considered pedestrian. And consider the timeline: fully 82 percent of the incidents reported took place before 1970. As the *New York Times* noted, "many of them [are] now more than 70 years old." Keep in mind that corporal punishment was not uncommon in many homes (and in many parts of the world), never mind in facilities that housed troubled persons.

Nonetheless, Irish commentators (see the website culchie.works) continue to carp, condemning those who say we need to "place it in the context of the time." They argue that this leads us down a dangerous road. "Do we excuse Nazi genocide of Jewish and other people because it was 'just the way things were done then'?" This is exactly the kind of obscene hyperbole that makes a mockery of what happened in Nazi Germany: delinquent Irish women who lived in quarters with inadequate heat are placed on a par with innocent Jews who were baked in ovens.

A year after the release of the Ryan Report, the Irish Human Rights Commission expressed its dissatisfaction with government probes into these institutions. It specifically called for an investigation of the Magdalene Laundries; the Associated Press (AP) labeled them "prison-style Catholic" homes. A year later, in 2011, the United Nations joined the fight: an AP story explained that a U.N. panel urged Ireland to investigate allegations that for decades girls and women were "tortured" in Catholic laundries.

Ironically, of the ten nations on the U.N. Committee against Torture, half of them were guilty of bona-fide instances of torture. In its annual tally of freedom around the world, Freedom House had just accused Morocco of "arbitrary arrest and torture." The year before, Amnesty International said that "Senegal security forces continue to torture suspects held in custody, sometimes to death." Human trafficking was cited by a Cyprus news agency as a "huge problem in the north of the

island,” adding that “cabaret owners routinely threaten women with torture in chambers beneath their nightclubs.” The International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims concluded that “torture and ill-treatment” are “still highly prevalent” in Ecuador. Similarly, Freedom House observed that “torture remains widespread” in China. These were the nations accusing Irish nuns of torturing women in the laundries!

Responding to the growing interest in this subject, Justice for Magdalenes, a non-profit organization, undertook its own investigation; its findings, “State Involvement in the Magdalene Laundries,” represents the work of several researchers, including professor James M. Smith. This document was submitted in 2012 to those working on the McAleese Report.

The word “torture” typically conjures up images of relentless and extraordinarily brutal acts; it is not generally invoked to describe unpleasant conditions. Yet in the 14 instances where “torture” is mentioned in the document, there is not a single instance where a woman used this word to describe how she was treated; there were 11 references to the word as part of the nomenclature, e.g., the United Nations Committee against Torture, and three occasions where it was cited in a very general way.

Even more astounding, on p.10 of the document it says evidence of torture is detailed in an upcoming section. Yet the word never appears again until p.82 where the U.N. Committee against Torture is cited in a footnote.

What follows are the first few sentences of paragraph 6 where “torture” is allegedly described: “Seven (7) female witness reports related to continuous hard physical work in residential laundries, which was generally unpaid. Two (2) witnesses said that the regime was ‘like a prison,’ that doors were locked all the time and exercise was taken in an enclosed yard. Working conditions were harsh and included standing for long hours, constantly washing laundry in cold water, and

using heavy irons for many hours.” Drudgery? Yes. But if this is “torture,” then it is safe to say that millions have suffered this fate without ever knowing they did.

The McAleese Report

Information garnered for the McAleese Report constitutes the most comprehensive collection of data ever obtained on the Magdalene Laundries. A full statistical analysis of all available data was conducted by the McAleese Committee, with the assistance of the Central Statistics Office. Additionally, 118 women who lived in the asylums were interviewed. Though their accounts reflect their experiences of the past half century, they match up well with what many scholars have previously unearthed about earlier times. Moreover, the size of the sampling is significant, especially in comparison to the few women that were the source of laundry-bashing movies.

The first of many myths to be dispelled is the notion that the laundries were an exclusively Irish or Catholic phenomenon. Not only did they exist throughout the United Kingdom, they were a fixture in many parts of Europe, North America and Australia. In the United States, the first asylum for “fallen women” was founded in Philadelphia in 1800, and spread from there to New York, Boston and Chicago. Depending on the setting, they were run by Catholics, Protestants, and non-denominational lay committees. In Ireland, no new ones were established after the founding of the State in 1922; the last ones were closed in 1996.

The first laundries were run by lay women, though in time they would be taken over by the nuns. It was the Sisters of Charity, the Sisters of Mercy, Good Shepherd Sisters, and the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity who played the key role. The first “Magdalene Home” was established in England in 1758; Ireland followed in 1765, the first asylum being a Protestant-run entity.

These were institutions that served prostitutes, and women seen as likely candidates for the "world's oldest profession." Unmarried women, especially those who gave birth out-of-wedlock, were likely candidates. Contrary to what has been reported, the laundries were not imposed on these women: they were a realistic response to a growing social problem. For example, in 1868, it was estimated that there were at least 1,000 prostitutes and 132 brothels in Dublin alone.

Those who sought refuge from the streets found a welcome hand in those who served in the "rescue movements." The nuns soon took over, offering these women an alternative to exploitative conditions. In her research of seven institutions up to the year 1900, Maria Luddy found that the "majority of women who entered these refuges did so voluntarily...just over 66 percent" and that "entering a refuge was, for the majority of women, a matter of choice." The other facility available to them, the workhouse, was rejected because of the inferior conditions. Luddy also found that the decision to stay was made by the women, not the nuns.

Not only is it a myth that the laundries were "imposed" on these women, it is equally fatuous to believe that the nuns forced them to stay. They were not held hostage. Frances Finnegan's analysis of the Magdalene Laundries up to the year 1900 "also confirm a high proportion of both voluntary entries and exits." The actual figures of voluntary entrance and exit are higher than what Finnegan found. "It should be noted that cases where women left to re-join family or friends," the Report says, "or who left to take up employment are not included by Finnegan in the figures for voluntary departure..."

James M. Smith concurs with this analysis. "In the nineteenth century," he writes, "regardless of how they entered these institutions, it was the women themselves who made the decision to stay." Why? "With little or no social welfare system to fall back on, her choices were limited to entering the county home, begging on the streets, or possibly resorting

to prostitution.” So while the laundries were not exactly a hotel, they sure beat the available options. The most common alternative was the workhouse, but as the Report points out, such institutions were explicitly “designed to be grim and foreboding places in order to deter all but the most desperate from seeking refuge there.” Others wound up in the “lunatic” asylums, which were even worse.

Another myth, floated by Mullan and the media, is that the laundries were highly profitable institutions run by greedy nuns. Summarizing Mullan’s comments, a CNN story contended that “The laundries were quite profitable—helped by the almost slave-labor of the young workers.”

The evidence cited in the Report debunks this myth. The analysis of the financial records shows that the laundries “operated on a subsistence or close to break-even basis, rather than on a commercial or highly profitable basis and would have found it difficult to survive financially without other sources of income—donations, bequests and financial support from the State.” Now if Mullan’s account were accurate, we would have to believe that the donations and bequests were made either by evil persons who sought to keep these women locked in slave-labor camps, or by idiots. That the donors sought to help, not hurt, the women is closer to the truth.

The McAleese Report sought information on all ten Magdalene Laundries that were established prior to the foundation of the State. It looked at five issues, the most controversial being routes of entry, state inspections, and routes of exit. “In each of these areas,” the Report concluded, “the Committee found evidence of direct State involvement.” So much for the malarkey that the nuns ran institutions parallel to state-run facilities.

The first big myth that was blown to smithereens was the number of girls and women who entered the laundries: it was

determined that 10,012—not 30,000—spent time there. So what accounts for the fact that the public has come to believe that there were three times as many women in the laundries? It's what they've been told by Mullan and his sympathetic friends in the media. In other words, the same people who distorted what happened in the asylums distorted the number of those who lived there.

Mullan et al. would have us believe that those who lived in the laundries were forced to stay there in perpetuity. In fact, the average length of stay was seven months; eight in ten stayed less than three years. The majority had no knowledge of their parental background, and only 12.5 percent said both parents were alive. Almost one in four had previously been institutionalized. By every measure, these were troubled girls and women.

Until the McAleese Report was published, it was widely believed that the nuns did whatever they wanted, free from state oversight. This view is also incorrect. The laundries were subject to the same Factories Acts that governed similar non-religious institutions; they were routinely inspected. The Report found that the laundries "were generally compliant with the requirements of the Factories Acts, and that when minor breaches occurred, they were remedied when brought to the attention of the operating Congregation."

The majority of women either left on their own, went home, were reclaimed by a family member, or left for employment. Only 7.1 percent were dismissed or "sent away," and less than two percent ran away. One might have thought that if Mullan's depiction were accurate, a lot more than 1.9 percent would have run for the hills. That so few did is further testimony of the bogus portrayal he offered.

Living Conditions

The two most serious accusations made against the nuns who

operated the Magdalene Laundries were a) they tortured the residents and b) they sexually abused the girls and women. Both are totally inaccurate. Not once in the McAleese Report is the word "torture" even mentioned—the charges are a complete fabrication. Exactly one woman claimed to have been sexually abused, but it was committed by a lay woman auxiliary who decided to stay in the institution for life. *No nun ever sexually abused anyone.*

This is not to say that the women never experienced sexual abuse. They did. But it was in their home, or in the Industrial School where they came from (the majority of women interviewed were previously housed in an Industrial School, places that housed neglected youths). Not only were these women not abused by a nun, all of them said they never even heard of another woman being molested by any member of the staff.

Physical abuse was uncommon. "A large majority of the women who shared their stories with the Committee said that they had neither experienced nor seen girls or women suffer physical abuse in the Magdalen Laundries," the Report notes. But they did say that in their time in an industrial reformatory school there were instances of brutality. As for the laundries, a typical complaint was, "I don't ever remember anyone being beaten but we did have to work very hard." Another common criticism went like this: "No they never hit you in the laundry. They never hit me, but the nun looked down on me 'cause I had no father."

One of the biggest myths about the laundries contends that the women had their heads shaven by mean-spirited nuns. Here is what the Report found: "None of the women told the Committee that their heads had been shaven, with one exception. The exception occurred where one woman had her head shaved because she had lice."

Besides the testimony of the women, the Report lists many

comments made by physicians who worked in the laundries. What they had to say is among the most enlightening aspects of the Report: their experiences completely debunk the horror stories told by Mullan and his ilk. What follows is a selection of their remarks. To offer an accurate picture, statements by all of the doctors in the Report are listed.

Dr. Michael Coughlan:

- "I had expected to find a very unhappy, deprived group who would have significant medical and especially psychological complaints and special needs. I was, therefore, surprised to encounter a group of ladies who appeared to be quite happy and content with their current environment and who presented with the type of symptoms and problems that reflected those of the wider Practice population."
- "My expected image of them all looking the same in drab uniform was quickly dissipated when I observed that each one presented dressed in colourful clothes and those who came directly from the Laundry were wearing a type of overlapping protective overall or apron, under which I could notice that they were wearing a variety of more personal choice of clothes."
- "Whenever I sensed that one of the ladies had something personal or sensitive to discuss, I always asked the Nurse or Nun to leave and afforded them the opportunity to elaborate in confidence. Interestingly, I cannot recall any occasion that the patient complained in any manner about her treatment by the Nuns in the Home, neither recently nor in the distant past..."
- "With respect to the question of any evidence of past injuries, broken bones or any other suggestions of physical or psychological abuse in the past, I cannot remember coming across any patient that presented with symptoms or signs that would or should have alerted me to such maltreatment, apart from one case when a

resident got scalded with hot water, which I believe was an accidental injury.”

- “Overall, my experience [with the Magdalene] was a happy and gratifying one. The Residents were a delightful and happy group of ladies, each with their own unique personality and they appeared to me to have a good and friendly relationship with the Mercy Sisters. Equally, my impression was that the Sisters were very caring towards the Residents and I never found any evidence to the contrary.”

Dr. John Ryan:

- “[T]here were a number of incidents of fractures but they were all from falls and usually out in the city, but none were suspicious in any way and I did not come across any evidence of unexplained bruising or scalding etc.”

Dr. Donal Kelly:

- “Many of these ladies were forgotten by their own or orphaned. They were poorly educated and some were mentally retarded. If the Sisters of Charity had not provided them with a home I don’t know who would have cared for them....Never did I witness any evidence of physical or mental abuse.”

Dr. Harry Comber:

- “There was no evidence of any traumatic injuries inflicted during my time, nor did anyone ever show me evidence of any previous injury....The women seemed reasonably happy, although some regretted the loss of opportunity to have a life, families and children of their own....I would be surprised if there was, in the time I was there, any mistreatment of them, either verbal or physical.”

Dr. Malachy Coleman:

- "I always felt that the ladies were well fed and well cared for. Their complaints were routine and normal consistent with those presenting in general practice. I saw no evidence of any traumatic injuries either historically, prior to my taking up the post, or for the time I cared for the ladies."
- "My overall impression of the Good Shepherd Convent in the main, was of an institute run by caring nuns which contained a number of ladies who were unlikely to be able to care for themselves."
- "While the ladies were very deferential to the nuns I did not at any stage get an impression of coercion or fear in the relationship between the ladies and the nuns. If anything I think the nuns did too much for the ladies and so decreased their capacity to care for themselves."

Post-McAleese

When Peter Mullan is asked if his portrayal of women being raped in slave-labor camps is an exaggeration, he replies, "You ask any woman who was there and they'll tell you the reality was much worse." Well, the McAleese Report details the stories of 118 women who lived and worked in the Magdalene Laundries and they say it's all a lie. The doctors who worked there say it's all a lie. What needs to be explained is why.

In the case of Mullan, it's rather easy: he admits that he hates the Roman Catholic Church. But there are others, too, and their motives may not be as easy to uncover.

Let's begin with press coverage of the McAleese Report. The most striking aspect of media reaction to it was how little there was of it. In most instances, the Report was either ignored or treated lightly. Worse, in some cases it painted a negative picture of the laundries, thus calling into question

whether anyone actually read the Report. Sadly, this was true of the Catholic media, as well. *Our Sunday Visitor*, however, was a prime exception; it did a very fair analysis of the Report by Michael Kelly.

It has been my experience that when bad news about the Catholic Church surfaces, it is seen as good news by three groups: hard-left Catholics; hard-right Catholics; and anti-Catholics.

Catholics of a left-wing orientation typically respond to bad news about the Church by saying this proves that Vatican II did not go far enough; Catholics of a right-wing orientation typically respond to bad news by saying this proves Vatican II went too far (or that it should never have been held in the first place).

In the case of the Magdalene Laundries, of course, it makes no sense to invoke Vatican II (the Council was convened between 1962 and 1965). What brings critics on the left and right together is an abiding tendency to believe the worst about the Church. Why? Because in doing so it validates their position.

For example, hard-core left Catholics are highly critical of the Church's teachings on sexual ethics, which they regard as repressive. They want a more expansive, and tolerant, view of sexuality. They naturally incline, then, to a hypercritical perception of priests and nuns who hold to traditional Church teachings on sexuality. So in their view, it is not hard to believe that the nuns who supervised the women in the laundries were scolds, if not worse.

Hard-core right Catholics look at the Church through the lens of purity, and are aghast whenever they learn of sinful behavior, particularly sexual misconduct, on the part of priests and nuns. Their purist streak accounts for their deep-seated—and wholly justifiable—anger at sexual abuse on the part of the clergy and the religious. Yet this disposition

also inclines conservative Catholics to swallow too readily wildly exaggerated, and even totally fabricated, allegations of abuse such as Mullan's moonshine about the Magdalene Laundries. For example, Michael S. Rose, who has chronicled contemporary priestly sexual abuse, was quick to believe Mullan's account.

Left-wing and right-wing Catholics of a strong bent have something else in common: when bad news about the Church breaks, they congratulate themselves for holding to their convictions. At bottom, it is their appalling self-righteousness that unites them; they have more in common than they know.

Regarding the anti-Catholics, most of those who were unmoved by the McAleese Report either work in the media or are activists who belong to a professional victims' group. As soon as the Report was released, they got a boost from Enda Kenny, Ireland's Prime Minister. He made a public speech lamenting the history of the laundries, stopping just shy of a formal apology. Astonishingly, he gave no evidence he had read a word of the Report. Immediately, professional victims' groups took aim at him, saying his remarks were insufficient.

The *New York Times* was particularly delinquent. The day after the Report was released, February 6, it issued a story on how unsatisfied the activists and the "survivors" were with Kenny's statement. It said practically nothing about the myths that the Report debunked. Instead, it continued the myth by writing about the "virtual slavery" that existed in the laundries. The next day the *Times* wrote again about the "slave labor" that took place. To this day, the *Times* has not written one story on how the Report convincingly disputes the lies that have been told about the Magdalene Laundries. Had the Report verified the worst accounts, it is a sure bet it would have been front-page news. The same is true of the BBC: it ran many stories on the laundries, but had virtually nothing to say about the McAleese Report.

The pressure on Kenny to issue a formal apology—Mullan is the one who should have been pressed to apologize—continued to mount. On February 19, he caved. This, in turn, invited anti-Catholics to focus not on the Report, but on the professional victims. On March 1, John Spain, writing for IrishCentral.com after the Report was released, continued to write about “The ‘National Shame’ of the Taliban Tabernacle—Ireland’s Recent History of the Magdalene Laundries.” Instead of quoting from the Report, he simply gave voice to a few women who brand themselves “Magdalene survivors.” He couldn’t quote from the Report because that would have undermined his agenda.

There is a long history of activists who have lied with alacrity about their cause, and this is especially true of those who claim to represent victims, or survivors, of abuse. In the 1980s, no one championed the cause of the homeless in the U.S. more than Mitch Snyder. Never mind that he never supported his own family: he was treated as a hero because he lectured the nation on its heartless response to the homeless. The truth is Snyder literally lied his way to fame. When he testified in 1984 before a Congressional committee, he was asked how he came up with the figure of three million homeless Americans (this number was cited by everyone who wrote or taught about the subject at the time). He admitted he simply made it up. More recently, David Clohessy, the director of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP), admitted under oath that he has lied to the media about his work.

There are, of course, honest parties to this discussion, observers who have long been critical of the laundries, but who upon reading the McAleese Report, sought to correct the record. No one has done so with greater valor than Irish writer Brendan O’Neill.

When O’Neill read that the *Irish Times* was trying to look at the good side of exposing abuse, even if it didn’t happen, he was taken aback. Worse was a playwright who told the newspaper that even if the stories weren’t true, they “served an

important function at the time—that is, to raise awareness about the problem of abuse in Catholic life more broadly.” To which O’Neill responded, “This sounds dangerously like a Noble Lie defence—the idea that it is okay to make things up, to spread fibs, if one is doing it in service of some greater good.”

“Anyone who points out that reports and depictions of abuse in Catholic institutions have been overblown risks being denounced as an abuse apologist or a sinister whitewasher,” says O’Neill. He insists, not without reasons, that those “who are genuinely interested in truth and justice should definitely be concerned that films and news reports may have left the public with the mistaken belief that women in Magdalene Laundries were stripped and beaten and that thousands of Irish and American children were raped by priests.”

What makes O’Neill’s account so persuasive is that he is an atheist; he has no vested interest to serve. His honesty is refreshing. “Catholic-bashers frequently accuse the Catholic religion of promoting a childish narrative of good and evil that is immune to factual evidence. Yet they do precisely the same, in the service of their fashionable and irrational new religion of anti-Catholicism.”

The horror stories associated with the Magdalene Laundries cannot withstand scrutiny, but they will continue to have a life of their own. That’s the way prejudice works. Unwarranted negative attitudes, especially when employed about a familiar whipping boy, are hard to shake. All we can do is pursue the truth and educate fair-minded people about what really happened. We certainly can’t count on the likes of the *New York Times* or the BBC to publish the truth.

STAR-LEDGER'S WAR ON ARCHBISHOP MYERS

Bill Donohue
President

Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights

May 2013

On April 28, an editorial in the Newark *Star-Ledger* called on Newark Archbishop John J. Myers to resign. There should be a resignation, but it should not be limited to one person: the entire editorial board of the newspaper should resign immediately.

The occasion of the editorial is the alleged failure of the Newark Archdiocese to police Father Michael Fugee. In 2001, he was charged with groping a teenager while wrestling. After initially being found guilty, the verdict was overthrown by an appellate panel of judges. Fugee agreed to certain conditions, which the newspaper says have been violated. The *Star-Ledger* wants Archbishop Myers to resign because he allegedly did not hold Fugee to the terms of the agreement. As will soon be disclosed, this accusation is patently false.

Accompanying the editorial was a front-page story on Father Fugee. The Sunday article, which ran over 2,000 words, recounted various aspects of this issue. It did not mention, however, that in addition to being cleared by the civil courts, the archdiocesan review board cleared Fugee of any wrongdoing. Nor did it mention that the case was sent to Rome for review; no charges were brought against him. In other words, Fugee's case was thrice thrown out. Also, the newspaper failed to mention that there has not been one allegation made

against this priest in the past 12 years. So why is the *Star-Ledger* going ballistic?

The following two paragraphs from the editorial explain the basis of its complaint:

“Part of the [court] deal was an agreement that Fugee signed, along with the archdiocese, committing all parties to keeping Fugee away from minors. Fugee was not to work in any position involving children, or have any affiliation with youth groups. He could not attend youth retreats, or even hear the confession of minors.

“With the full knowledge and approval of Myers, Fugee did all of those things. Look at the picture of him clowning around with children [whose faces were obscured] in today’s paper, and it makes you want to scream a warning. The agreement was designed to prevent exactly that.”

Sounds ominous. But it is a lie. The editorial board intentionally distorted the agreement so it could make its case to hound Archbishop Myers out of office. It also smeared Fugee by suggesting that children are not safe in his company. Here is exactly what the agreement said:

“It is agreed and understood that the Archdiocese shall not assign or otherwise place Michael Fugee in any position within the Archdiocese that allows him to have any *unsupervised contact* with or to supervise or minister to any minor/child under the age of 18 or work in any position in which children are involved.” (My italics.) [Note: In the next paragraph, the identical language is used to hold Father Fugee to these terms.]

In other words, the court agreement expressly allowed Father Fugee to have contact with minors, provided he was supervised. Nothing in either the news story or the editorial even suggests that Fugee was at any time unsupervised in his contacts with minors. If the *Star-Ledger* had such evidence, it

would have said so.

The news story is equally deceitful. At one point it comes clean by saying that the agreement “explicitly” mentions that “Fugee may not have unsupervised contact with children,” but then it immediately maintains that this is a rebuttable proposition. Referring to Archbishop Myers’ spokesman, Jim Goodness, it says that “Goodness denied the agreement had been breached, saying the archdiocese *has interpreted* the document to mean Fugee could work with minors as long as he is under the supervision of priests or lay ministers who have knowledge of his past and of the conditions of the agreement.” (My emphasis.)

Now, all of a sudden, the plain words of the agreement are seen as open to interpretation. But if the agreement says Fugee was not supposed to have *unsupervised contact*, what other plausible interpretation is there? The newspaper would have the reader believe that the agreement is ambiguous about this condition, when, of course, it is not.

The *Star-Ledger* makes the point that Father Fugee occasionally traveled outside his diocese. So what? Does it have evidence that he was without supervision? It cites his work in a Monmouth County church, St. Mary’s in Colts Neck, as a case in point. He was invited there by longtime friends and, more important, the church’s pastor, Father Thomas Triggs, knew of Fugee’s agreement with the prosecutor and made sure that he was supervised. In short, the agreement was not violated.

What is really going on here is an attempt to sunder Archbishop Myers—Fugee is not the man they want. They want Myers, and that is because they detest what he stands for.

The first editorial on Archbishop Myers was published by the *Star-Ledger* on April 17, 2002; it took him to task for his views on how best to handle allegations of sexual abuse. It said he “apparently still believes the church ought to decide

first who is suspect before notifying civil authorities." Let's hope he always does.

Several years ago I was confronted by a female reporter in my office who challenged me on this very issue. She wanted to know why allegations against a priest were not made instantly available on the diocesan website. When I asked her for her boss' phone number, she balked, wanting to know why. I told her that I was prepared to accuse her of sexually harassing me in my office and would demand that her name be posted on the media outlet's website. She got the point.

Does the *Star-Ledger* get the point? Apparently not: it wants every bishop to call 911 whenever an accusation is made, no matter how baseless it is. This is its idea of justice—for priests.

In 2003, Archbishop Myers released a set of strict procedures and guidelines that affected every employee in the archdiocese. The "Archdiocese of Newark Policies on Professional and Ministerial Conduct" was a comprehensive code of conduct that should have been welcomed by everyone, including critics of the Catholic Church. Instead, the newspaper made fun of it.

The October 8, 2003 editorial in the *Star-Ledger* provided a good window into the paper's thinking. John McLaughlin mocked the idea of finding "immoral behavior" offensive, commenting this must mean "no abortions or participation in abortions, euthanasia and homicide." (Why he objects to punishing murderers he did not say.) He also wanted to know why non-Catholics, who voluntarily agreed to work in the archdiocese, had to abide by these standards. So much for institutional autonomy.

In fact, Myers' autonomy is a problem for the newspaper. To wit: on May 7, 2004, it took him to task for saying that pro-abortion politicians should refrain from receiving Communion.

Does the *Star-Ledger* think it has the right to police Myers, or that he should check in with them before making house rules? If Myers told the newspaper that it should vet all internal policies by him before making them final, they would go off the deep end.

In the last election, the *Star-Ledger* endorsed President Obama, supported gay marriage, ridiculed the “war on religion,” and took umbrage at Myers for encouraging Catholics to defend “marriage and life.” These sentiments are held dear by the editorial page editor, Tom Moran, an angry ex-Catholic. Three years ago he said he cut his “emotional ties to the church long ago.” If only he would.

Not surprisingly, the groups cited by the *Star-Ledger* who are upset with Archbishop Myers are all dissidents. Consider Theresa Padovano, who heads Voice of the Faithful in New Jersey. Voice is described as a “lay reform group.” In fact, it is a small collection of elderly Catholics and ex-Catholics who are at war with the Church over many issues.

Voice supports discriminatory legislation that exclusively targets the Catholic Church: it wants laws that suspend the statute of limitations on sexual abuse cases involving minors, but never pushes for public institutions to be held accountable to the same standard. In Connecticut, it actually sided with those lawmakers who wanted to take over the administrative structure of the parishes. Indeed, it crafted a strategic plan to do just this, thus showing what it thinks about separation of church and state. It lost in its bid to strip the Catholic Church of its First Amendment rights, but it was not for lack of trying. By the way, Theresa Padavano is an ex-nun activist married to Anthony Padavano, an ex-priest activist who is also at odds with Catholicism.

The next group cited is the New Jersey chapter of Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP). It is labeled “a national advocacy and support group.” What it advocates is a

war on the Catholic Church and what it supports is unlicensed counseling of alleged abuse victims. To be specific, the national leader, David Clohessy, has testified under oath that he has intentionally lied to the media about his work, and has offered numerous counseling sessions in Starbucks, without a license. At a conference attended by Catholic League allies, he bragged how important it is to manipulate the media with pictures of children. He also refused to contact the authorities after he learned that his own brother was a sexual predator, thus violating the very standard he says bishops fail to respect.

Last year, Voice joined with SNAP to protest the “House of Worship Protection Act” in Kansas. Represented by the ACLU, they challenged a law that would prohibit the intentional disruption of services in a house of worship, something the Brown Shirts were known to do. They lost, but their effort to destroy freedom of religion remains one of their low points.

The third group, bishopaccountability.org, is branded by the newspaper as a “watchdog group.” Attack dog would be more accurate. It posts the names of accused priests on its website, admitting that it “does not confirm the veracity of any actual allegation.” The head of this group, Terence McKiernan, boasted to a SNAP audience, “I hope we can find ways of sticking it to this man.” The man he wants to “stick it to” is Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the Archbishop of New York and the president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Without any evidence, McKiernan told the crowd of Catholic bashers that Dolan was “keeping the lid on 55 names.” To this day, McKiernan has never disclosed the names of these priests. He knows it’s a lie.

If the *Star-Ledger* were honestly concerned about the sexual abuse of minors, it wouldn’t play favorites with the public schools. But it does. In 2000, a public school teacher in Teaneck, New Jersey, James Darden, was charged with sexually abusing a minor. The teenage girl contacted the Bergen County

Prosecutor's Office and eventually Darden pled guilty.

The victim then filed a one-count complaint against Darden, and the Board of Education, and others, arguing they were liable under the New Jersey Child Sexual Abuse Act (CSAA). She lost in 2011. That is because the law was conveniently written to apply only to schools which stand *in loco parentis* to the student, and the appellate court held that the public school in that case could not be sued under CSAA because the *in loco parentis* test was not made.

And what did the *Star-Ledger* say about this? Nothing. Not only was there no editorial, there was no news story. If this had been a Catholic school that was able to skirt justice, the newspaper would have unloaded with both barrels.

At bottom, the *Star-Ledger* has unfairly maligned Archbishop Myers, and has treated Father Fugee like a political football. If Myers strapped a GPS tracking device on Fugee's body, it wouldn't satisfy the newspaper's craving for punitive action. For these reasons, the editorial board should resign with dispatch. The members are a disgrace to the profession of journalism.

OBAMA'S WAR ON RELIGION

Bill Donohue

In September 2012, Bill Donohue wrote a four-part series that was featured on Newsmax.com. The series focused on the war on religion that has been waged by the administration of President Barack Obama. The series caught the attention of many in the media and is sure to be a topic of discussion in many quarters.

Obama's Secular Mindset

The American people have been exceedingly fair in drawing a distinction between the personal religious beliefs and practices of presidential candidates and the public policies they adopt. This does not mean that personal predilections are without policy implications. To be sure, there are occasions when key personal anecdotes reveal something important about the mindset of candidates. Take, for example, what Michelle and Barack Obama told *People* magazine in 2008 about the "Obama House Rules."

Of the seven "House Rules" they enumerated, most were conventional, but one stood out: Michelle and Barack do not believe in giving Christmas gifts to their children. Barack explained that he wants "to teach some limits." The goal is noble. But of all the other choices available to them—setting spending limits, putting a limit on TV time—for some reason they chose the Christmas holiday as their teaching moment. This is more than unusual: non-Christians, as well as agnostics and atheists, are known to exchange Christmas gifts.

Against this backdrop, we can make sense of the controversy that erupted during the Obamas' first Christmas at the White House. At issue was whether they should break tradition and nix the display of a manger scene.

The flap started when the *New York Times* reported that the Obamas were planning a "non-religious Christmas." The leak came from a former White House social secretary who attended a luncheon for the new appointee, Desirée Rogers: allegedly, the Obamas were not going to permit the display of a nativity scene. When *Times* reporter Sheryl Gay Stolberg contacted the White House to see if this was true, the story was confirmed. Stolberg was told "there [have] been internal discussions about making Christmas more inclusive and whether to display the crèche." In the end, the Obamas decided to allow a manger scene. However, Christmas did not escape without controversy.

For reasons never explained, the White House Christmas tree was adorned with ornaments depicting drag queens and mass murderers (Mao Zedong was featured; he killed 77 million of his own people).

In 2008, when Obama was a presidential candidate, he made a comment about white working-class Christians that would come back to haunt him. "It's not surprising," he said, "[that] they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations." What proved to be so revealing about this admission was the venue: in a closed-door session, he addressed a forum of wealthy, left-leaning secularists in San Francisco.

Given his mindset, it is not surprising that Obama is opposed to the posting of the Ten Commandments on public property. More surprising are his reservations regarding the display of religious symbols on private property. He was only in office a few months when his advance team told officials at Georgetown University that they had better put a drape over any religious symbols that might appear as a backdrop to where the president was going to speak. To drive the point home, they made sure that the IHS symbol, a monogram of the name Jesus Christ, was not in sight.

On September 15, 2009, Obama addressed the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute's 33rd Annual Awards. It was to be a perfunctory speech, although it didn't turn out that way. To wit: Obama did not reference God, or the "Creator," when citing the Declaration of Independence. Here is what he said: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, endowed with certain inalienable rights..." This is not what Jefferson wrote. He was explicit about the origin of our rights, noting that all men were "endowed by their Creator" with certain unalienable rights. What Obama said was no accident; the remarks were prepared. Moreover, even after being roundly criticized for this startling omission, Obama

did the exact same thing only a month later at a fundraiser in Rockville, Maryland.

The fact is Obama is uncomfortable with America's Christian heritage. In 2010 he could not bring himself to utter the words "In God We Trust" when speaking in Indonesia about our national motto; instead, he substituted "E Pluribus Unum." But he is quite comfortable with atheists. In 2010, Obama became the first president in U.S. history to welcome a gathering of atheists: administration officials met with activists from the Secular Coalition for America, an umbrella group that includes American Atheists and other virulently anti-Christian organizations.

Obama is not equally jittery about all religions. When it comes to Islam, he can be very accommodating. For example, in 2010 he said he supported the right of Muslims to build a mosque at Ground Zero. The real issue, of course, was not a legal one—it was a moral one. He refused to discuss this matter.

It is not simply Obama who is uncomfortable with religion; it is true of the most active members of his party. Consider what just happened at the Democratic National Convention. On the first day, there was a panel discussion led by a notorious foe of the religious rights of Catholics, namely, Catholics for Choice (CFC). This group, which is nothing more than a well-funded letterhead sponsored by the likes of the Ford Foundation—it has no members—has twice been condemned by the bishops' conference as a fraud. Perversely, CFC addressed the subject of religious liberty! This would be like having the Klan speak about race relations at the RNC.

Until 2012, every Democratic Party Platform made some reference to God. But things changed this year, demonstrating once again that the administration has a "God problem." In 2008, the Platform mentioned that government "gives everyone willing to work hard the chance to make the most of their *God-*

given potential.” The italics, which I added, were deleted from the 2012 Platform. Worse, when CNN’s Piers Morgan asked DNC chair Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz why someone “deliberately” excised the word “God,” she replied, “I can assure you that no one has deliberately taken God out of the Platform.” After listening to this remarkable response, Morgan pressed her again, asking, “So it was an accident?” She refused to comment.

Once the pushback began, the Obama team folded and reinstated God. But even this process turned out to be a disaster. After ignoring the expressed will of the delegates—a voice vote to put God back in the Platform was split (it didn’t come close to the two-thirds majority that was needed)—it was ruled, by fiat, to have passed. Terri Holland, a New Mexico delegate, made a very revealing remark when she said that the revisions were made to “kow-tow to the religious right.” In other words, thoughtful Democrats would never want to pay homage to God in their Platform.

Obama’s Secular Allies

To learn more about Obama’s approach to religion, consider his base of religious friends. He sat for 20 years listening to Rev. Jeremiah “God-Damn-America” Wright. A black liberation theologian, Wright is known for his racially inflammatory sermons; for example, he has accused Zionism of containing an element of “white racism.” He is so extreme that he even blamed the 9/11 attacks on American foreign policy.

Another clergyman Obama greatly admires is Rev. J. Alfred Smith Sr., an Oakland, California pastor who was honored in 1975 by the violent Black Panther Party; in 1990, he was given an award by the anti-Semitic Nation of Islam. In Catholic circles, Obama’s favorite priest is Father Michael Pfleger, a race-baiting preacher from Chicago who has welcomed Nation of Islam minister Louis Farrakhan to speak in his church.

It was in Obama's first job where he cultivated his ties to the Catholic community. To be exact, he laid anchor with Catholic activists, not with Catholics in the pew. In 1985, he took a job with a Saul Alinsky-trained community organizer; from then on his network with Catholic left-wing operatives would only expand. What he took from these contacts was not Catholicism; rather, it was how to work with the Catholic left to promote a radical agenda.

Those same associations paid a hefty dividend when it came time for Obama to launch his Catholic National Advisory Council in 2008. Quite frankly, Obama's Catholic friends are almost all Catholic dissidents, at least on the major social issues. In the last presidential election, there wasn't one of his 26 Catholic advisors who accepted the Catholic Church's teachings on abortion, embryonic stem cell research, and school vouchers. That almost all of them agreed 100 percent of the time with NARAL, the radical abortion organization, was hardly surprising.

True to form, the 2012 group, "Catholics for Obama," is populated with dissidents like Rep. Rosa DeLauro, a staunch abortion-rights advocate who has a history of openly defying the Catholic Church. While this is hardly unusual anymore, it is still mind-boggling to learn that Catholic Democrats PAC is so queasy about orthodox Catholicism that it features a "Catholic League Watch" database online. What scares them about the Catholic League remains a mystery.

Obama's network of Catholic dissidents came into play when he selected Kathleen Sebelius as his Secretary of Health and Human Services. Her long-time involvement in the pro-abortion movement calls into serious question her status as a Catholic: Catholics can excommunicate themselves when they persistently and deliberately foster policies that are considered "intrinsically evil" by the Catholic Church; abortion is certainly one of those evils.

Sebelius was not simply a friend of George Tiller, the physician who specialized in killing babies who were 80 percent born-she raised money for him. So off-the-charts is Sebelius in her passion for abortion rights that she admits to never backing a single abortion-restricting law. For these reasons, Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas once advised her not to present herself for Holy Communion.

There are several other persons chosen by Obama who have had their problems with Catholicism. Harry Knox, a gay activist with the Human Rights Campaign, was appointed to serve on the Advisory Council for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. While Knox was denied ordination in the United Methodist Church and the United Church of Christ because he is a sexually active homosexual, it was his vile comments about the pope that garnered the most publicity at the time of his appointment.

For Knox, the pope is a liar who needs to “start telling the truth about condom use.” He even held the Holy Father accountable for “endangering people’s lives,” never explaining how someone who preaches abstinence could be held responsible for sexual recklessness. No matter, Knox also accused those who belong to the Knights of Columbus of being “foot soldiers of a discredited army of oppression.”

Another gay activist who hates Catholicism is Kevin Jennings. A former drug user and irresponsible teen counselor, Jennings was chosen to be the Safe Schools Czar. He is also a Christian basher who belongs to an urban anti-Catholic group, ACT UP. In 1989, activists from ACT UP stormed St. Patrick’s Cathedral during Mass; they chained themselves to the pews and spat the Eucharist on the floor. Predictably, Jennings is fond of lecturing Catholics about the Church’s teachings on sexuality, and for railing against the “hard core bigots” who comprise the “religious right.”

It was also the appointment of Chai Feldblum to join the Equal

Employment Opportunity Commission that made Christians wince. The Georgetown law professor was on record saying that in conflicts between religious liberty and sexual rights, the latter should triumph. Never mind that religious liberty is a First Amendment right and that sexual rights are nowhere mentioned in the Constitution—Feldblum was adamant in her conviction that religious freedom should bow to sexual rights.

Feldblum is actually more extreme than this: she signed a statement in 2006, “Beyond Same-Sex Marriage,” that is the most astounding assault on marriage ever written. Every conceivable “partnership” and “relationship” was deemed worthy of governmental *and* private recognition. This means that both the public and the private sector must grant rights to “queer couples who decide to jointly create and raise a child with another queer person or couple, in two households.” Churches, obviously, would be expected to comply as they are part of the private sector.

It was not good enough for Obama to hire persons who reject Christian tenets or who speak coarsely about Christianity: he sought to hire activists who want to punish the Catholic Church. His choice of Dawn Johnsen to be assistant attorney general in charge of the Office of Legal Counsel proves this charge. Though she eventually withdrew her name from consideration—a contentious fight lasting more than a year precipitated her withdrawal—the former ACLU and NARAL lawyer should never have been nominated in the first place. In the late 1980s, she cut her legal teeth by working on an ACLU lawsuit that sought to strip the Catholic Church of its tax-exempt status. We can only guess what she might have been up to had she gotten the job.

Obama’s allies in the gay rights community led him to oppose the “Don’t ask, Don’t tell” policy on homosexuals in the military even before it was repealed. Even more revealing, his steadfast refusal to enforce the Defense of Marriage Act shows how his commitment to the gay rights agenda trumps his duties

as the nation's chief executive. It also explains his support for gay marriage. In the 1990s, while running for the Illinois state senate, he said, "I favor legalizing same-sex marriage, and would fight efforts to prohibit such marriages." However, when he ran for the U.S. senate in 2004, he backed away from this position, and did so again when running for president in 2008. This was pure posturing: in 2008, he opposed Proposition 8 in California affirming marriage between a man and a woman showing his true colors. In 2012, he reverted back to his original support for the right of two men to marry.

Obama's Secular Policies

President George W. Bush was the first president to initiate faith-based social service programs; he wanted to put an end to the exclusionary policy of funding only public social service entities. There is a mountain of social science evidence showing the yeoman results of faith-based programs: homes for juvenile delinquents; drug rehabilitation centers; counseling services; foster care arrangements; prison ministries. The list is endless. On the one hand, Obama knew these faith-based programs were popular, so he felt obliged to keep them; on the other hand, his secular leanings pulled him the other way.

Early on Obama announced that these programs were not any better than their public counterparts (the data said otherwise), raising serious questions why they should be funded. "I'm not saying that faith-based groups are an alternative to government or secular nonprofits," he said, "and I'm not saying that they're somehow better at lifting people up." Worse, he toyed with the idea of gutting the faith component from the faith-based initiative.

To be specific, an open debate ensued questioning whether people who run faith-based programs should be allowed to hire those of their own religion. Similarly, should those who run foster care programs be permitted to place children with

parents of their own religion? The idea that Orthodox Jewish foster care homes should insist that they care for children of their own religion is hardly unreasonable. But to many in the Obama administration, the proposition was at least rebuttable, if not simply wrong.

If the Obama administration were serious about faith-based programs, it wouldn't ask their opponents for advice on how to run them. This is exactly what it did. It sought the input of Barry Lynn, president of Americans United for Separation of Church and State: he was invited to address the first faith-based council. Ever since, this initiative has floundered, as even those who have served on the council have acknowledged. What happened is not in dispute: endless conversations on the proper role of religion in such initiatives yielded no consensus. More important, Obama's heart was never in it.

The most decisive evidence that the Obama administration sees no fundamental difference between religious institutions, and those that are purely secular, came during oral arguments before the U.S. Supreme Court in the *Hosanna-Tabor* case. At issue was the right of a Lutheran school to fire a teacher found unsuitable by its standards.

Traditionally, the government has respected what is called a "ministerial exception," the idea that religious institutions enjoy constitutional insulation from government oversight when making employment decisions. But for the attorney representing the Obama administration, Leondra R. Kruger, no such insulation was ever warranted: she actually maintained there was no real difference between religious associations and voluntary associations of a secular nature.

Justice Antonin Scalia was astonished by Kruger's reasoning. "That's extraordinary. That's extraordinary. We are talking here about the Free Exercise Clause and about the Establishment Clause, and you say they have no special application?" Justice Elena Kagan, an Obama appointee, was

similarly struck by Kruger's argument. "I too find that amazing, that you think that the Free—neither the Free Exercise Clause nor the Establishment Clause—has anything to say about a church's relationship with its own employees."

Kruger's extremist position in the fall of 2011 resulted in a 9-0 victory for the First Amendment in the spring of 2012; the "ministerial exception" rule was sustained. While this was impressive, it yielded even more fruit: it revealed the way the Obama administration thinks about religious liberty. Had the administration won, the federal government would have been able to steer the employment decisions of every religious entity, effectively neutering their right to craft internal strictures that reflect their doctrinal prerogatives. In short, had the president's views prevailed, religious liberty as we know it would no longer exist.

If there is one issue that has been at the heart of the culture war over the past several decades, it is abortion. The nation is split on this issue, though the vector of change is certainly moving in a pro-life direction: more Americans consider themselves pro-life than ever before, and there is scant support for abortion-on-demand through term. Without doubt, President Obama is the most radical president we've ever had on this subject. His enthusiasm for abortion rights—he has never found an abortion he could not justify—is so unyielding that he even supports selective infanticide.

When Obama was in the Illinois state senate he fought the "Born-Alive Infants Protection Act" on three occasions. The bill would have required doctors to attend to infants born alive after a botched abortion. Obama saw this as a threat to abortion rights, and so he found an exception to his embrace of universal healthcare: this was one human being who was not entitled to care—he could legally be left to die.

Now it is possible to take an abortion-rights position that at least respects the right of religious institutions not to

cooperate in what the Catholic Church calls an “intrinsic evil.” But Obama has shown no such respect. Indeed, his war on religion extends to the days when candidate Obama made a pledge to Planned Parenthood in 2007. He told his fans that “the first thing I’d do as president is sign the Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA).”

FOCA is the most radical piece of abortion-rights legislation ever written: it would overturn virtually every law restricting abortion in the nation. Worse, it might very well force Catholic hospitals to perform abortions. If they refused, federal funds would be cut off, effectively putting them out of business. This is Obama’s vision of healthcare and religious liberty. Fortunately, the bill never made it to his desk; Catholics and Evangelicals fought hard to block it.

As an interesting side note, when he was in the U.S. senate, Obama supported government intervention in the case of Terri Schiavo; he voted to provide the physically disabled woman with nutrition. But his pro-life epiphany didn’t last long: in 2008, when asked which senatorial vote he regretted the most, he cited this one.

In the same year, Obama was asked when life begins (Senator John McCain answered “at conception”). Obama’s answer was classic. “Whether you’re looking at it from a theological perspective or a scientific perspective,” he allowed, “answering that question with specificity is above my pay grade.” It was a dishonest dodge.

Once in power, Obama moved quickly to enshrine the abortion agenda. Three days after becoming president, Obama reversed President George W. Bush’s ban on federal funding for international groups that promote or perform abortions; only 35 percent of Americans agreed with him on this issue. The ban, called the Mexico City Policy, was just the first of many abortion-restrictive laws that would be targeted for repeal. For instance, Obama officials attempted to repeal the Hyde

Amendment that bans federally funded abortions in public health insurance options. They had more success in effectively gutting the Dornan Amendment, i.e., the ban on tax-funded abortions in the District of Columbia.

When coupled with Obama's opposition to school vouchers, including a successful scholarship voucher program for the residents of D.C., this effectively meant that if a poor inner-city pregnant woman, typically an African American, wanted to end her pregnancy, the government would pay for it. But if she insisted on taking her baby to term, hoping to later place her child in a private school, the same government wouldn't give her a dime. The prospects for the women are stark, but for the child they are worse: either the baby's life will be cut short, or his life chances will be.

Sterilization is another option that is attractive to the Obama administration. In 2009, Obama appointed John Holdren his "science czar." He is a proponent of forced abortions and compulsory sterilization. In 1977, Holdren co-authored an article with radical environmentalists Paul and Anne Ehrlich whereby they entertained the notion of "adding a sterilant to drinking water or staple foods." Keeping an open mind about draconian methods, they also argued that while compulsory control of family size is "an unpalatable idea," the alternatives "may be much more horrifying." They were most excited about implementing their population-reduction ideas in poor, non-white nations.

The idea that abortion and sterilization are a positive good is so appealing to the Obama administration that it has sought to punish those who don't subscribe to its agenda. For example, Catholic programs to combat the human trafficking of women and children have long received federal funds. But because these initiatives do not provide for abortion, they were denied a grant by Obama officials. It didn't matter a whit that the Catholic proposal garnered high marks from an independent review board, or that it actually scored higher

than some that were awarded a grant. What mattered is that Catholics don't view abortion as a way of helping women and children living in a state of near slavery.

Obama's Assault on Catholicism

Americans who oppose abortion have learned to live with *Roe v. Wade*, but they (as well as some abortion-rights advocates) have never come to terms with proposals forcing them to fund abortion. This was on President Obama's mind when he addressed the graduation class of 2009 at the University of Notre Dame. "Let's honor the conscience of those who disagree with abortion and draft a sensible conscience clause," he said. For this he was hailed by the president of Notre Dame, Father John Jenkins. Three years later the priest sued Obama for breaking his vow.

The Notre Dame speech notwithstanding, the Obama administration's willingness to violate conscience rights in pursuit of ObamaCare was evident from the beginning. In 2009, Senator Orrin Hatch and Senator Mike Enzi sought to include language in the healthcare bill that would prohibit public funding of abortion. It was voted down, much to the applause of the Obama administration. A similar bill by Rep. Eric Cantor went down to defeat. Senator Tom Coburn sponsored an amendment that would provide conscience-rights protections for healthcare workers, and it too was defeated. Rep. Bart Stupak, Rep. Joe Pitts, and Rep. Sam Johnson also tried to bar federal funds for abortion; their efforts met the same fate.

What was most exasperating about this entire matter was the insistence on the part of Obama officials that nothing in the healthcare bill would allow for the public funding of abortion. Then why fight with such ferocity bills designed to make sure this never happens?

By the end of 2009, the real agenda of the Obama administration had become so transparent that even its friends

at the *New York Times* felt obliged to come clean. That November the *Times* ran a news story showing how Obama had betrayed his promise. Reporter Robert Pear wrote that the president “was not comfortable with abortion restrictions inserted into the House version of major health care legislation, and he prodded Congress to revise them.” The pro-life community, largely faith-based, felt disabused by these shenanigans. But they had no idea how bad matters would soon become.

On January 20, 2012 Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius rolled out what would come to be known as the HHS mandate: Catholic institutions would be required to pay for contraception, sterilization and abortion-inducing drugs in their healthcare plans for employees. The inclusion of abortion-inducing drugs was striking. The administration could have settled for contraception, but instead it sought to stick the camel’s nose in the tent. Its real long-term interest was plain: eventually, as broached by FOCA, Catholic hospitals would be required to perform abortions.

On January 31, Press Secretary Jay Carney stunned even Obama supporters when he said, “I don’t believe there are any constitutional rights issues here.” No one was buying it, especially not the bishops.

After Catholics pushed back, a new version was introduced three weeks later. But it was a distinction without a difference: it mandated that the insurance carrier of Catholic non-profits must pay for these services.

This was just a shell game. In reality, many Catholic non-profits are self-insured (for example, the Archdiocese of Washington is self-insured). Then there is the issue of Catholic entities that are not self-insured: why should they have to pay their insurance company for services they deem immoral? Another issue that won’t go away is the right of Catholic business owners not to pay for services that violate

their conscience.

It is important to acknowledge that Catholics are not asking for special rights—they are simply asking the Obama administration to respect the status quo. The administration won't budge, saying the best it will do is exempt Catholic churches. So what about Catholic non-profits?

Without doubt, the most contentious, and frankly diabolical, demand of the Obama administration is the proviso that only Catholic institutions that hire and serve mostly people of their own religion are entitled to an exemption. In practice, this means that Mother Teresa's worldwide health and social service programs that serve people of all religions, as well as non-believers, would not qualify for a religious exemption.

Obama officials arrived at this conclusion by following the thinking of the ACLU (as I have recounted in two books on the organization, the ACLU has never been a religion-friendly institution). In 2000, ACLU lawyers helped devise legislation in California that took a novel view of what constitutes a religious institution. It argued that a truly religious entity had to employ and serve mostly people of its own faith. By adopting the ACLU rule, the Obama administration essentially sought to punish Catholic universities, hospitals and social service agencies because they *do not discriminate* against non-Catholics. In other words, if these institutions were to display signs saying, "No Jews Allowed," they would be just fine.

Catholic bishops, led by Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, have made their objections known loud and clear. So have non-Catholics. Evangelical Protestants, in particular, have joined with their Catholic brothers in registering their outrage. It is apparent to everyone that Obama's war on religion has reached a new level of opposition.

The determination of Obama officials to push forward led them to attack another First Amendment right: the right to free speech. The archbishop of the military services, Thomas Broglio, joined with his fellow bishops in issuing a pastoral letter criticizing the Obama administration for violating the conscience rights of Catholics. He got into trouble with the Army's Office of the Chief of Chaplains when he asked military chaplains to read the letter from the pulpit. The Obama team initially ordered the letter censored, but eventually modified its position after a compromise was met.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled ObamaCare constitutional in June, although it did not rule on the constitutionality of the HHS mandate (it was not promulgated until after the high court agreed to decide the fate of ObamaCare). The November election may make all of this moot if Obama loses, but if he wins, Catholic rights will be tested in the Supreme Court. Meanwhile, new legislative efforts are being made to secure conscience rights.

It is still hard to get the president and his administration to speak truthfully about this issue. In August, President Obama told a crowd at the University of Denver that "We worked with the Catholic hospitals and universities to find a solution that protects both religious liberty and a woman's health." Yet as recently as February, Bishop William Lori, who chairs the bishops' Committee for Religious Liberty, said point blank that "no one from this administration has approached the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for discussions on this matter of a possible 'compromise.'" He also made it clear that only after the original HHS mandate was revised did the White House contact Archbishop Dolan.

When pieced together, all of these issues—Obama's secular mindset, his secular allies, his secular policies, and his assault on Catholicism—show an animus to religious liberty. It is no exaggeration to say that this nation has never witnessed anything like it. The frontal assault on religion, especially

on its public role, is unprecedented. Explicit references to our religious heritage have been scrubbed clean from speeches and official pronouncements; the professed enemies of Christianity have been given a free hand shaping public policy; faith-based programs have been allowed to wither; the radical pro-abortion and pro-gay agendas have been set loose to undermine our First Amendment freedoms; and attempts to force people of faith to violate their conscience have reached a dangerous level.

The war on religion carried out by the Obama administration is not the product of someone's imagination—it is real. Whether it succeeds depends less on them than on us.

Some Key Misunderstandings Regarding the Child Sexual Abuse Scandal and the Catholic Church

**Some Key Misunderstandings Regarding the Child Sexual Abuse
Scandal**

and the Catholic Church

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We are clinical psychologists (the second author is a graduate

student in a doctoral training program) who have watched the sexual abuse scandal unfold over the past few decades. We have been treating sexual abuse victims (the first author for over 30 years); we have treated adults who when they were children have been abused by priests. We have been involved in cases where adults alleged that they have been abused by priests, but the priests were denying that any wrongdoing. We currently work in a university based clinic that is funded by a grant from the National Institute of Justice that allows us to provide free treatment to children who have been sexually abused and adults who have been sexually assaulted. Collectively, we have treated over 2,000 children who have been sexually abused and also have worked in cases where children have falsely accused others of sexual abuse. We have also published books on child sexual abuse (O'Donohue and Geer, 1989; Laws and O'Donohue, 2008). and also a number of peer reviewed journal articles. Thus, we believe we are in a position to make several points regarding this scandal that we believe that are not fully appreciated.

First, we believe that this matter is quite complex—and it needs to be seen with an appreciation of its complexity and not reduced to simple statements. Statements like, “All priests are pedophiles;” “Most priests are pedophiles;”. “The Catholic Church tried to sweep all of this under a rug;” “Celibacy causes pedophilia;” “Children never lie;” etc are just that—simplistic, even prejudicial, views that do more harm than good. We all need to be careful that the tragedy of some children being abused by some priests are not hijacked to be used by those with secular biases or with longstanding problems associated with prejudices towards Catholics for their political agenda against the Catholic Church. This in an important sense would be a second victimization of these individuals. Below we list what we think is a more accurate understanding of this phenomenon.

A Bit of Key Background: What are the Facts?

The facts—what actually happened—are sometimes difficult to discern. These can be partially shrouded in the mists of history. People offer differing accounts. There are certainly motivations to lie or distort—abusing a child is a serious crime and serious moral failing. But there are also motivations to falsely accuse—individuals can gain significant sums of money in settlements; individuals can have a political agenda against the church, or individuals may even deny that they have abused when they actually have been, to avoid their feelings of shame or embarrassment—or even to protect their abuser. The reporting of abuse and deciding what actually has occurred is, again, no simple matter.

In 2002 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops commissioned an independent study to address growing concerns about child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church in the United States. The Conference enlisted the John Jay College of Criminal Justice to conduct this study examining rates and characteristics of the sexual abuse within the Catholic Church. This study presents the best and most objective data on this phenomenon. The researchers found that a total of 10,667 individuals had made allegations of child sexual abuse against 4,392 Catholic priests between 1950 and 2002, and that most such acts took place between 1960 and 1984. The 4,392 priests made up 4% of all Catholic priests in the 14 Dioceses/Eparchies in the United States.

These statistics contradict the misconception that a majority of priests commit sexual abuse and even that priests are more likely to abuse than the general population. In fact, priests offend at the similar rates as the general population. Another common misconception is that most priests committing child sexual abuse were *pedophiles*, that is individuals attracted to prepubescent children. It turns out that the majority of victims (almost 75%) were between 11 and 17 years of age; therefore, a more accurate clinical term for these priests is *hebephiles* (showing sexual preference for children in their

early years of adolescence)—rather than pedophiles. The major distinguishing feature of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church is that the majority of alleged victims are male (81%), while in the general population females are more likely to be sexually abused (Pereda et al., 2009). This fact also suggests that part of the problem is a hebephilic homosexual orientation on the part of priests—adolescent boys are the most vulnerable population to be victimized—which becomes a political hot potato, given the secular agenda to normalize homosexuality.

Another key difference found in the study is that **a little less than half of the priests (1881) were found to be subject to unsubstantiated allegations.** An unsubstantiated allegation was defined as “an allegation that was proven to be untruthful and fabricated” as a result of a criminal investigation. This rate of false accusations is much higher than found in the general population. Additionally, 23% of the priests who were accused of abuse were identified as suffering from behavioral or psychological problems ranging from alcohol and substance abuse to depression and a past history of coercive sex, although most never received treatment for these problems. This would suggest that helping priests with their mental health issues would be an important part of future prevention efforts.

More than half of the priests had only one allegation brought against them. Also, it is important to note that a few priests accounted for a disproportionate number of victims: 3.5% of priests accounted for 26% of victims. Even though an investigation was conducted almost every time a report was filed, only 217 or 5.4% of priests were charged with a crime by a district attorney. Of the 217 priests that had criminal charges brought against them, a substantial majority (64%) were convicted; but still a significant number were not found guilty. Most received probation (88%) and/or a prison sentence (73%), while 44% went to jail and 18% were fined.

Do Priests Abuse More Than Other Clergy?

A 2011 John Jay College follow-up study examined sexual abuse in other religious institutions around the U.S. and found that most evidence came from case settlements, policy changes and trials receiving media attention. For example, 10% of Protestant clergy were involved in sexual misconduct, 2-3% of which committed sexual abuse. In 2007 Jehovah's Witnesses settled 9 lawsuits with victims alleging that the church's policies protected child sexual abusers. The Church Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints reported 3-4 yearly lawsuits over the course of the last 10 years, which translates to allegations in .4-.5% Mormon wards. The Jewish community has founded two sexual abuse survivors' organizations, Survivors for Justice and Awareness Center, the latter of which provides "the names of 107 rabbis accused of sexual misconduct and 279 other trusted officials (for example, parents and counselors), as well as 85 unnamed abusers". While we were not able to find specific numbers concerning the prevalence of child sexual abuse in other religious institutions, we hope that the previous examples serve to show that the Catholic Church isn't the only religious establishment faced with this problem.

Did Abuse Occur Simply Because Somebody Said it Happened?

The clear and simple answer to this question, is "No". Although we do not know the exact percentage of false reports, it is our clinical experience and the consensus in the field that the majority of children reporting that they have been abused are telling the truth. It is clear that many children have been abused by adults, including priests, and this is morally reprehensible, a serious crime and effective measures need to be put into place to prevent this in the future. However, again, as we stated, the matter is complex. Our field, for example, does not have clear statistics regarding the percentage of adults, who allege that they have been abused as children, are in fact telling the truth. Again, we believe that the majority, but not all, are indeed telling the

truth. However, adults have unique pathways to false reporting (for example, they can be motivated by money; can be suffering from adult psychological problems such as delusions found in psychosis, etc). What causes false reporting?

Lies

Children and adolescents do not always tell the truth nor are there special topics (e.g., sexual abuse) in which they are incapable of lying. In fact while we don't know exactly how often they lie about being sexually abused, research shows that those numbers are above zero (e.g. Kendall-Tackett, 1991 and Jones & McGraw, 1987; O'Donohue & Cirlugea, 2012). Furthermore, because children at times recant (meaning that they first stated that they had been abused and later stated that they were not abused; see Bradley & Wood, 1996) we know that children sometimes claim that they have previously lied or at least were mistaken. A variety of factors can influence the likelihood of children making false allegations. For example, children may have been coached by a parent involved in a bitter custody battle to make false statements against the other parent, or may have had a personal vendetta against the alleged perpetrator (see Heaton & O'Donohue, 2012 for a full explication of pathways to false allegations). It's important to note that children can also lie by claiming that the abuse did not occur when in reality it did. This is more likely to happen if the child was threatened or coerced by the perpetrator.

False Memories

Beyond lying, false memories can also be formed. In fact, well over 100 scientific research studies have shown that both children and adults can and do form false memories. This research was spurred by the infamous McMartin Day Care case in the 1980s Manhattan Beach, California in which over 360 children alleged that they were abused, often in bizarre ways (for example, placed in planes and forced to watch babies

being fed to sharks). In what was then the longest and most expensive criminal trial in California history, all parties were found not guilty. Dr. Michael Maloney examined the interviewing of the children and found that the interviewer used improper methods to question the children and that these were extremely suggestive, biased, and which lead to false memories on the part of the children. This spurred a number of academic research studies which attempted to understand what causes and how easy it is to form a false memory.

For example, in a study conducted Ceci and Liechtman (1992) young children were told that a visitor, Sam Stone, was clumsy and always broke thing that were not his. When "Sam" came to visit the children he did not touch or break anything. The next day the children saw a soiled stuffed bear and a torn book. Even though no child had seen Sam do anything, when asked a quarter of the children (25%) hinted that he might have had a part in the problem. Even though the children had not seen Sam do anything, their prior experience of being told that he was clumsy mixed in with their actual experience of observing him and they concluded that he might have had a part in the torn book and soiled bear.

In addition, over the next ten weeks the children were asked misleading questions/statements by the first interviewer such as, "I wonder if Same Stone got the teddy bear dirty on purpose or by accident?" On the tenth week, a second (seemingly independent) interviewer asked what had happened to the toys. The majority of children (72%) accused Sam of having ruined the toys, and nearly half of the children (45%) reported that they remembered seeing Sam do it. Thus the children's new experiences (being interviewed and having it suggested to them that Sam Stone dirtied the teddy bear) are mixed into the memory of the past event (when Sam Stone came to visit).

Adults are not except from forming false memories. In fact, among adults research has demonstrated time and time again

that eyewitnesses often confuse misleading post-event information with what they have witnessed (e.g., Steffens & Mecklenbräuker, 2007) thus developing false memories. Elizabeth Loftus of the University of California, Irvine has consistently found that about 25% of adults are so suggestible that fairly simple suggestions result in significant false memories of events that in fact did not occur when they were children (e.g., that they were lost in a mall).

Repressed Memories

A repressed memory is a memory of some major event that while initially stored in memory (for example, while it is occurring—is allegedly completely erased (allegedly by some sort of process beneath awareness), often for decades, that suddenly emerges often after some triggering event. Historically there has been much debate regarding the existence of repressed memories (McNally, 2003) despite the large amount of scientific evidence that clearly shows that repressed memories simply don't exist (McNally, 2003; McNally, 2004; Piper, Pope, & Borowiecki, 2000). Furthermore research studies that involve traumatic events that have been verified as having actually occurred indicate that people do not forget their trauma (Pope, Oliva, & Hudson, 1999) and instead traumatic events are actually quite memorable and can even lead to the development of PTSD for many victims (McNally & Geraerts, 2009). McNally and Geraerts (2009) further discuss evidence that suggests that some repressed memories are simply not plausible due to their fantastical nature (e.g., space alien abduction) and usually surface after a problematic recovered memory procedure.

Despite the scientific evidence, the legal system has used repressed memories to convict people, including priests, on charges of child sexual abuse. For example, the Massachusetts Supreme Court affirmed the conviction of Paul Shanely (a defrocked priest accused and convicted of sexually abusing a child who later recalled this abuse and alleged repressed

memory) despite an amicus brief signed by almost 100 distinguished psychologists and psychiatrists essentially categorizing the repressed memory phenomenon as junk science (FMS, 2009).

Conclusions

Children have been abused by priests and it is clear that this is a terrible betrayal of trust, a serious injury to these children, and a criminal as well as a moral failing. However, an examination of the best studies suggests that priests abuse at about the rate found in the general population; and that it is not clear that Catholic priests abuse children at a higher rate than other clergy. Certainly, beliefs that “most priests abuse” or that priests are more risk to children than other individuals, are not justified. Second, the pattern of abuse is rather unique: individuals who are victimized by priests are more likely to be adolescents and males. Thus, clinically these are cases of homosexual hebephilia rather than pedophilia—i.e., adolescents are being abused rather than prepubescent children. This does not make it any less of a crime or a moral failing—but it does suggest that an improved understanding of who is at risk which can be particularly important in future prevention efforts. Thirdly, there is evidence that priests have a higher rate of false and unfounded allegations than adults in the general population.

Less than half of the allegations were found to be substantiated and even with those that were criminally prosecuted a large number—nearly a third—were found not guilty. This raises important questions about the phenomenon of false allegations. Evidence is reviewed regarding the formation of false memories, and lying for secondary gain. In addition, there is concern that cultural prejudices against the religious and particularly against Catholics can come into play.

Thus, we conclude by warning against a rush to judgment. Concern for past victims, and intelligent prevention efforts

to reduce the rate of abuse to zero, certainly must be prioritized. But should also be a priority to make sure that prejudices against priests or against the religious, or against Catholics do not come into play to demonize innocent individuals and to besmirch what can be a noble profession and an important cultural institution.

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STATEMENT TO THE DULUTH COMMUNITY: UNIV. OF MINNESOTA DULUTH HOLOCAUST EVENT

Dr. William A. Donohue

President

Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights

April 10, 2012

It has come to my attention that the University of Minnesota Duluth is hosting a series of events on the Holocaust; they are scheduled to run between April 12 and April 19. Because many of the events address the religious response to the Holocaust, it is of great interest to the Catholic League. For

example, we have a wealth of information on our website about the Catholic response to Hitler. Moreover, we have raised funds for books and articles on the subject, and we even have a reader on Pope Pius XII that covers the Jewish reaction to his noble efforts.

It is our hope that these events will foster an intellectual dialogue that is both educational and productive of good interreligious relations. But I am less than confident that this will happen. Unfortunately, some of what I have learned is very disturbing. There appears to be an effort to cast the Catholic Church in the role of an enabler, if not worse, of Nazi efforts. This is not only historically inaccurate, it is scurrilous.

The first sign that the Catholic Church will be treated in a villainous role is the postcard that was mailed to the public flagging the events: on the front there is an invidious drawing featuring a Nazi soldier and a Catholic prelate standing on a Jewish man. The drawing is nothing new: it was created to demonstrate the Catholic Church's alleged support for Hitler that the 1933 Concordat supposedly represented.

The second disturbing sign is the April 15 performance of "The Deputy," a play based on the work of Rolf Hochhuth. It is described in the promotional material as a play "which indicts Pope Pius XII for his failure to take action or speak out against the Holocaust."

The third disturbing sign is the April 19 event, "Religious Institutions Responses to the Holocaust." One of the panelists will address what is called "the role of the Confessing Church and the Holocaust."

My response to these issues is taken from my own book, *Why Catholicism Matters*, which will be published on May 29 by Image, an imprint of Random House; one part of my new book deals with the role of the Catholic Church and the Holocaust,

citing the primary research on this subject that has been done by other scholars.

First Complaint

Pope Pius XI signed the concordat to protect German Catholics from prosecution. Rabbi David Dalin, who has written a groundbreaking book, *The Myth of Hitler's Pope*, demonstrates that this agreement was a protective measure; it was not an endorsement of Nazism. Essentially, the agreement allowed the Church to continue to exist in Germany as long as it did not interfere with Hitler's regime. Not only was it violated by Hitler almost immediately, according to Zsolt Aradi, a Jewish writer who covered Pius XI, "the little freedom that the Concordat left for the clergy and hierarchy was widely used to save as many persecuted Jews as could be saved." In any event, the pope didn't have a whole lot of options to choose from at the time. It is important to note that the pope never gave even tacit support to Hitler's agenda.

This same pope issued an encyclical in 1937, *Mit Brennender Sorge*, that condemned the Nazi's violation of the concordat, and took aim at the Nazis' racial ideology (it was written by the man who would become his successor, Eugenio Pacelli-Pope Pius XII). An internal German memorandum dated March 23, 1937, called the encyclical "almost a call to do battle against the Reich government." Indeed, the encyclical was roundly attacked in the German newspapers, which wrote that it was the product of the "Jew God and His deputy in Rome." In fact, some media outlets said the encyclical "calls on Catholics to rebel against the authority of the Reich," a conclusion that was entirely warranted.

In short, to mail postcards smearing the Catholic Church, as if the concordat was a vote of support for Hitler, is inexcusable. It is also inexcusable to learn that the *Duluth News Tribune* featured the agit-prop drawing as an advertisement for the event.

Second Complaint

"The Deputy" previewed in Berlin and London in 1963 before coming to New York City in 1964. Prior to that time, the overwhelming consensus in the Jewish community was that Pope Pius XII was a hero. To wit: the pope is credited by former Israeli diplomat Pinchas Lapide of saving approximately 860,000 Jewish lives, far more than any other leader in the world, secular or religious. Indeed, it was proposed in the 1940s that 800,000 trees be planted as a testimony of the pope's contribution; they were planted in Negev, in southeast Jerusalem. And when Pope Pius XII died in 1958, Leonard Bernstein of the New York Philharmonic stopped his orchestra for a moment of silence. Among the Jewish organizations that praised the pope were the following: the Anti-Defamation League, the Synagogue Council of America, the Rabbinical Council of America, the New York Board of Rabbis, the America Jewish Committee, the World Jewish Congress, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, and the National Council of Jewish Women.

So what new evidence turned up between 1958 and 1963 to indict the pope as an enabler of Hitler? None. Hochhuth, well known in radical circles at the time, made this charge in his play absent any historical evidence. Recent scholarship, particularly the work of Professor Ronald Rychlak, shows that while Hochhuth operated alone, he was an "unknowing dupe" of the KGB. How do we know? Because of the 2007 testimony of Ion Mihai Pacepa. He maintains that Nikita Khrushchev approved a plan to discredit Pope Pius XII. Pacepa was in a position to know; he was a former Romanian intelligence chief and the highest-ranking official ever to defect from the Soviet Bloc.

No serious historian today views "The Deputy" as being anything other than propaganda. In fact, not a single historian has ever remarked on the factual accuracy of this play. But we do know that it nonetheless sparked a rash of anti-Pius books, most of which were written by ex-priests and

ex-seminarians whose antipathy of the Church—on matters wholly unrelated to the Holocaust—is palpable. I would be remiss if I did not note that the Catholic League offered to pay for Professor Rychlak to go to Germany a few years ago to interview Hochhuth. Hochhuth declined.

Third Complaint

It is difficult to understand how the “Confessing Church” position can be maintained. What exactly is it that the Church is allegedly confessing? *(The term “Confessing Church” in German history refers to a Protestant breakaway movement that opposed the Nazis.) We know this much: throughout the Holocaust, the *New York Times* ran a grand total of nine editorials critical of Hitler. Two of them were written to praise Pope Pius XII! To be specific, on Christmas Day 1941, the *Times* said, “The voice of Pius XII is a lonely voice in the silence and darkness enveloping Europe this Christmas.” On Christmas Day 1942, the *Times* said of the pope, “This Christmas more than ever he is a lonely voice crying out of the silence of a continent.” So much for the canard that the pope was “silent.”

It must be said, too, that many of those who elected to remain silent did so with the best of motives. For example, when plans were made for an anti-Hitler parade in New York City on May 10, 1933, the American Jewish Committee and B’nai B’rith put out a joint statement condemning “public agitation in the form of mass demonstrations.” They feared such actions would only “inflame” matters. In 1935, after the Nuremberg race laws were enacted, American Jews, led by Rabbi Stephen Wise of the American Jewish Congress, worked against legislation that would have made it easier for Jews to emigrate to the United States. Following Kristallnacht, the “Night of the Broken Glass” (Hitler’s storm troopers went on a rampage killing Jews), several Jewish organizations came together saying “there should be no parades, no demonstrations, or protests by Jews.” Again, they feared an even more vengeful Nazi response.

The author who made the accusation that Pius XII was "Hitler's pope," John Cornwell, has since retracted his charge. Do the panelists at these events know about this? Will it be mentioned? Will it also be mentioned that Hitler planned to kidnap the pope? Will the students learn that more Jews were saved in Italy—where the pope was actually in a position to affect outcomes—than in other any European nation? (Throughout Europe 65 percent of Jews were exterminated, but in Italy 85 percent of Jews were saved.) Will they learn that far more Jews were saved in Catholic countries than in Protestant ones?

"Only the Church stood squarely across the path of Hitler's campaign for suppressing the truth." Those were the words of Albert Einstein. Golda Meir offered similar praise. At the end of the war, the World Jewish Congress was so appreciative of the pope's efforts to save Jews that it gave 20 million lire to the Vatican. And after the war, the Chief Rabbi of Rome, Israele Anton Zolli, formally expressed the gratitude of Roman Jews "for all the moral and material aid the Vatican gave them during the Nazi occupation." In 1945, Zolli was received into the Catholic Church and asked Pius XII to be his godfather; he chose the pope's first name, Eugenio, to be his baptismal name.

It is for these reasons, and many more like them, that I am disturbed to read how patently unfair the campus events on the Holocaust appear to be. In the interest of intellectual honesty, and goodwill between Catholics and Jews, I implore those in the Duluth community to weigh what I have said and give it a fair hearing. No matter what side anyone comes down on, the truth should never become hostage to political propaganda.

Thank you for your consideration.

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