

UN Wants to Control Catholic Church

Bill Donohue

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The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has just released a report on the way the Vatican has responded to the sexual abuse of minors by priests. The 15-page report contains not a single footnote, endnote, or any other mode of attribution. But it does provide plenty of evidence as to its real agenda.

The U.N. panel is using the sexual abuse of minors as a pretext for its true objective: it wants the Vatican to submit to its authority, and not just in instances involving international law—it wants the Catholic Church to change Canon Law and to adopt a secular sexual ethics. As such, it is one of the most ambitious power-grab efforts ever undertaken by a U.N. committee. The panel is also profoundly ignorant of the data.

On p. 3 of the report, the panel says the Holy See should “undertake the necessary steps to **withdraw all its reservations and to ensure the [U.N.] Convention’s precedence over internal** laws and regulations.” (Its emphasis.) It is quite explicit: “The Committee recommends that the Holy See undertake a comprehensive review of its normative framework, in particular Canon Law, with a view to ensuring its full compliance with the Convention.”

In other words, the teaching body of the Catholic Church, the Magisterium, i.e., the pope in communion with the bishops, should yield to the U.N. This would be the equivalent of asking the United States Congress to make sure its laws are in

compliance with U.N. strictures. Hubris is too mild a word to describe this unmitigated arrogance.

On pp. 12-13, the panel says it wants the Catholic Church to change its teachings on abortion and contraception; it also says the Church needs to do more about HIV/AIDS.

It is painfully obvious that these panelists have not thought through this issue. To wit: if everyone followed the Church's teachings on sexuality, we would not have this problem in the first place. To be exact, those who acquire HIV/AIDS typically do so because they live a reckless life, in sharp contradistinction to the Church's plea for restraint.

The panel is so intent on policing the Church that it demands a Canon Law change in the use of the term "illegitimate children." It also directs the Vatican to order Catholic schools to change its textbooks, getting rid of alleged "gender stereotypes." Not only is this another example of its abuse of power, the panel provides not a single piece of evidence to buttress its claim. Someone should also tell these experts that the Vatican does not tell Catholic schools what textbooks, or curricula, it should adopt. But to control freaks, delegation is a difficult concept to grasp.

The panel lectures the Vatican on the need for "awareness programs," urging "systematic training" for those who work with minors. Just who do they think started these initiatives? We're not the ones who lack mandatory training programs—the guilty parties are found in other religious communities, and in the public schools. This explains why sexual abuse *is not a problem in Catholic communities today the way it is elsewhere*. The panel needs to get up to speed, assuming it has any real interest in this issue.

On p. 8, the panel instructs the Vatican to end corporal punishment, saying it must amend "both Canon Law and Vatican City State laws." Ironically, the U.N. has now detailed how

10,000 Syrian children have been killed and tortured in the last three years.

Syrian kids are being raped and beaten "with metal cabals, whips and wooden and metal batons"; they are also being subjected to "electric shocks, including to the genitals." Their fingernails and toenails are being ripped out of them, and they are being lacerated with cigarette burns. Most of these barbaric acts are being conducted by government agents, yet there is no demand that Syrian officials yield to the U.N. It is too busy wondering if Sister Mary Alice is taking a ruler to a miscreant student.

The one attempt at providing evidence is a colossal failure: on p. 7 it cites the Magdalene Laundries as an institution that forced girls "to work in slavery like conditions and were often subject to inhuman, cruel and degrading treatment as well as to physical and sexual abuse." This is a bald-face lie: the McAleese Report, an investigation authorized by the Irish government, shows that none of this is true. To read my analysis, "Myths of the Magdalene Laundries," see the "Special Reports" section on the Catholic League website. The panel's report is libelous.

Finally, the report says the Church needs to end the practice of "baby boxes." In many countries, there are drop boxes next to orphanages; they are placed there to entice girls who are pregnant out-of-wedlock, and who cannot care for their babies, to allow others to raise their child. It is a humane practice, one that is widely practiced in South Korea. What is not humane is to kill babies in utero, which is precisely what this U.N. panel recommends.

For sheer demagoguery, this report cannot be beaten. It is as malicious as it is inaccurate.

Dr. William Donohue is the president of and CEO of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, the nation's

largest Catholic civil rights organization. The publisher of the Catholic League journal, *Catalyst*, Bill is a former Bradley Resident Scholar at the Heritage Foundation and served for two decades on the board of directors of the National Association of Scholars. The author of five books, two on the ACLU, and the winner of several teaching awards and many awards from the Catholic community, Donohue has appeared on thousands of television and radio shows speaking on civil liberties and social issues.

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