

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Anti-Catholicism is as ugly as any other form of bigotry, though many do not agree. That is why some bigots are condemned while others are tolerated, if not commended. Generally speaking, it's the elites who are the problem, not ordinary Americans. Many have an authority problem, and often their issues revolve around sexuality. In their eyes, if the Catholic Church is being picked on, it's probably justified.



No institution targeted the Catholic Church with greater vengeance in 2012 than the federal government. The year started with a January 20 slam: President Barack Obama informed the Catholic community that his ObamaCare legislation was adding a provision from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS): Catholic organizations that serve mostly non-Catholics—charitable groups, schools, universities, hospitals, social service agencies, and the like—were deemed not to be sufficiently Catholic and must therefore provide insurance coverage to their employees. Such insurance must cover abortifacients, contraception and sterilization. Of course, what makes Catholic entities truly Catholic is that they do not serve only their own people. Now the federal government was threatening to punish them for not discriminating against non-Catholics.

After the winter dustup between the head of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan (he would soon be named cardinal), President Obama offered what he generously called an “accommodation”: the organizations wouldn’t have to pay for these services; however, their insurance companies would. But this was a distinction without a difference. After all, who pays for the insurance premium but the employer and the employees? And in the case of self-insured institutions (including many

dioceses), the distinction rings completely hollow.

The media lined up, almost single-file, behind Obama. They did so by calling this the “contraception mandate,” thereby deflecting attention from the abortion-inducing drugs and the sterilization services that were also included in the HHS mandate. As virtually everyone conceded, poor women are never denied free birth control pills from Planned Parenthood. For middle class women, the cost of contraception is typically cheaper than going to Starbucks for coffee each month. So few were fooled.

The bottom line for Catholic non-profits was to stop being Catholic if they wanted the exemption. In other words, the Obama administration (following the thinking of the ACLU) intentionally crafted a perverse Catch-22 condition for Catholic organizations: the only way to avoid paying for abortion-inducing drugs was to start discriminating against Jews and Protestants. Either way, Catholic entities were being forced to prostitute their mission.

The Obama administration did not stop there. It went ballistic when the Archbishop for Military Services exercised his free speech rights by sending a letter to his military chaplains protesting the HHS mandate. On another matter, the Obama team quickly dispatched HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius to misrepresent her mandate by maintaining there was an ongoing dialogue with Catholic leaders about this issue. In fact, there had been only one meeting between President Obama and Archbishop Dolan (and it was in late 2011); there were none during the contentious winter of 2012. Furthermore, under pressure from Senator Orrin Hatch, Sebelius admitted that the religious liberty issues involved were never subjected to a legal analysis, though 27 senators had asked for one. The deceit was rampant.

The good news is that the response from other religions, especially from evangelical Protestants, Mormons and Orthodox

Jews, was considerable. They stood by Catholics, often saying they knew they would be next if they were silent in the face of the anti-Catholic onslaught. Meanwhile, major media outlets continued to refer to the religious liberty issue as the "religious liberty" issue. Thus did they make plain their contempt for what most Americans saw as a clear First Amendment matter.

The Administrative Committee of the USCCB released a statement on March 14 that was the clearest exposition of contemporary Catholic thought on religious liberty in America. The bishops refused to budge, knowing there were certain constitutional issues that were not open to compromise. Importantly, Bishop William Lori (who was to become the Archbishop of Baltimore) was named to head the bishops' *Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty*.

In June, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the legality of the ObamaCare legislation. But it didn't change matters dramatically for the Catholic community: the HHS mandate was not issued until after the high court accepted a challenge to ObamaCare; thus, the religious liberty implications of the directive were not addressed.

Still, the USCCB raised three objections to the ruling: (a) ObamaCare allowed the federal government to fund elective abortions, as well as plans that cover abortion (b) it did nothing to ensure conscience rights (something Obama pledged to do when he gave his commencement address at the University of Notre Dame in 2009), and (c) it did nothing to protect immigrant workers in need of healthcare. The second objection was the most serious as it set the stage for the HHS mandate to become operative.

The fall was dominated by the presidential debates. For eminently good reasons, the HHS mandate did not receive as much attention as fiscal matters. But it never went away. When the year ended, the issue was still unresolved as dozens of

lawsuits were still pending. Filing suit were dozens of dioceses, Catholic business owners, universities, and other Catholic entities. Importantly, they were joined by a host of non-Catholic groups.

Speaking of the presidential election, if there was one subject the media did not want to touch, it was the reaction which the two Catholic candidates for vice president had garnered from bishops over their careers. This matters because the media gave considerable attention to those few bishops and lay Catholics who questioned the Catholicity of Paul Ryan's budget. What the media did not want to discuss was the large number of bishops who had sanctioned or otherwise reprimanded Vice President Joe Biden over the years; most of their problems with him stemmed from his pro-abortion positions. For practicing Catholics, at least, this was not exactly a side issue.

In previous years, we exposed the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) as a small band of professional victims' advocates who hate the Catholic Church. In 2012, I issued a report, *SNAP UNRAVELS*, that critically analyzed statements made by its leader, David Clohessy, at his court-ordered appearance in Missouri.

As it turned out, Clohessy has been lying to the media about his work for years. He has also falsely advertised his group as a rape crisis center. Worse than working with some unseemly lawyers, Clohessy has engaged in counseling men and women, though he has absolutely no qualifications in this area. Even more disturbing, it was revealed that SNAP has never contributed funds for licensed counselors. All in all, Clohessy's court appearance did more to undermine his credibility than anything his critics have ever said about him. SNAP, it is fair to say, will never be the same.

Another activist group with an animus against the Catholic Church is American Atheists. Owing partly to competition with

other atheist outfits, American Atheists went for the jugular at Christmastime by displaying a huge billboard in Times Square depicting Jesus with a Crown of Thorns. The billboard, which showed a picture of Santa above Jesus, offered the message, "Keep the merry! Dump the myth!" The hate-filled campaign not only crossed the line with Christians, many agnostics and atheists said it was offensive.

When TV talk-show host Jon Stewart laughed at what he called the "vagina manger," we knew we had to act. As he spoke, a picture was shown behind him of a naked woman with her legs spread; a nativity scene ornament was placed in between. This offense was so vulgar and uncalled for that it demanded much more than a statement condemning Stewart's antics. So we unleashed a relentless campaign that lasted approximately six weeks.

We did not seek to get Stewart fired; all we wanted was an apology. He refused. So we contacted his sponsors asking them to put pressure on him to do so. The best of the lot was Delta, which pulled its advertising. The worst was Kellogg's; it brazenly took a dismissive attitude. We also contacted the board of directors at Viacom, the parent company of Comedy Central, sending them all a copy of the photo. Indeed, we mailed the photo to a select number of secular and religious elites all over the nation. The response was incredible. We know this because many bishops and civic leaders sent us a copy of their letter to Comedy Central. We ended our campaign with an op-ed page ad in the *New York Times* titled, "Jon Stewart's Legacy."

At the end of the year, the *New York Times* was itself of interest to us. After BBC chief Mark Thompson was chosen to be the new president of the *New York Times* Company, questions surfaced about his possible role in a cover-up at the BBC. Here's what happened.

Jimmy Savile, a BBC icon, died at the end of 2011, and shortly

thereafter he was exposed as a serial molester. "Newsnight," a BBC version of "60 Minutes," decided to do an exposé on Savile, but it was suddenly spiked. At issue was Thompson's role, if any, in killing the story. At the very least, many parties wanted to know what he knew, and when he knew it.

Thompson survived, but his reputation took a hit. Our interest had less to do with Thompson than it did with those commentators—and there is no end to them—who have said that everyone at the Vatican, from the pope on down, knew of priestly sexual abuse and did nothing about it. Well, if Thompson had no knowledge of the Savile issue, and he ran an organization with 23,000 employees, why should we expect the pope, who runs an organization in excess of one billion members, to know what his people are doing? It is one thing to know that some priests are molesters, quite another to know exactly who they are; there are more than 400,000 stationed around the globe.

The universities are hot beds of anti-Catholicism. Much of the hostility, it seems plain, is a function of the Church's teachings on marriage and sexuality. This issue surfaced in a really ugly way when a professor of sociology at the University of Texas, Austin, Mark Regnerus, was attacked for merely publishing a study on parenting that homosexual activists didn't like. It is a sad chapter in higher education when radical activists off-campus can lead a charge against a scholar and receive a serious hearing from university administrators.

Those who led the attack were bereft of academic credentials, yet the University of Texas said the episode met its standards for launching an inquiry; if matters warranted it, an investigation would follow. We were happy to get involved by alerting the university of our concerns: at stake was more than academic freedom—Regnerus' religion (he was a recent convert to Catholicism) had been called into question by one of his accusers. Thus, the civil rights of the professor were

in play (as a sociologist myself this case was of special interest to me). In the end, Regnerus was cleared of any wrongdoing and no investigation was initiated.

Besides marriage and sexuality, if there is one issue that is a perennial for Catholic bashers, it is the role of Pope Pius XII in combating Nazism. In the spring, the University of Minnesota, Duluth, hosted a series of events commemorating the Holocaust. What got our attention was a postcard that was sent to the Duluth community about the conference: on the front of the postcard was a drawing of a Catholic prelate and a Nazi standing on top of a Jewish person; the drawing suggested that the Catholic Church supported Hitler.

There were many other facets of the conference that we objected to as well, and we made plain our objections. For the record, we don't object to serious scholarship that seeks to uncover the response of world leaders to the Holocaust, and we don't regard mere criticism of the pope as evidence of bias. But we do take strong exception to those who harbor an agenda. When seriously discredited work is presented as authoritative, it must be exposed for what it is. We did our part by offering a lengthy rebuttal to the conference's most absurd claims.

No year would be complete without an assault from artists. What surprised us was the decision of a New York gallery to go back to the well ("sewer" would be more accurate) by hosting Andres Serrano's classic, "Piss Christ." Now it is likely that we would have given this "art" a pass had it been displayed in some obscure venue in Queens, but when a noted gallery on 57th Street off of 5th Avenue in Manhattan welcomed it, that changed matters. We knew we had no choice but to protest Serrano's crucifix in a jar of urine.

We assembled outside the gallery on the night Serrano's exhibit opened. I was holding a jar with a bobblehead of President Obama sitting in what appeared to be feces (it was actually brown Play-Doh). I wanted to let the media know that

this was my contribution to art. Moreover, I wanted to interview Serrano (who was inside the gallery). Specifically, I wanted to know the best way to secure a federal grant to support my *magnum opus*. After all, the National Endowment for the Arts funded his “art” in 1989, so maybe I could get in on this game as well. But I didn’t get the chance. When I tried to enter the gallery, the free speech mavens from the gallery told security not to let me inside.

It is important to note that this report does not include information about all the incidents that have come to our attention in 2012. For example, lots of material crosses our desks that some have found objectionable, but we don’t. If there are some skits or lyrics that are untoward, but are not patently offensive, then we throw them out. We look at context, as well as other factors, and ultimately make a decision based on those criteria.

To be sure, the range of offenses varies widely, as does the range of our concerns. While some of our critics say we respond too harshly, we say there is a difference between being responsibly aggressive (which is what we are) and being ballistic. In the end, our many victories have taught us a valuable lesson: If you truly want to defend the faith, then learning to raise your voice is a must.

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