

MAHER ATTACKS POPE

Bill Maher was at it again on the April 11 edition of his show, "Real Time with Bill Maher." The comedian saw the papal visit as a chance to slam the Church and in particular, an attack on the Holy Father himself. We led the charge against the comedian's latest assault on the Catholic faith, which ultimately led to his apology.

On his "New Rules" segment, Maher addressed the raid on a polygamist compound in Texas, but quickly turned his attack to Pope Benedict XVI and the Catholic Church. The following is his bigoted rant:

*"And, finally, New Rule: Whenever you combine a secretive compound, religion and weirdos in pioneer outfits, there's going to be some child-f***ing going on. In fact, whenever a cult leader sets himself up as 'God's infallible wing man' here on earth, lock away the kids.*

"Which is why I'd like to tip off law enforcement to an even larger child-abusing religious cult. Its leader also has a compound. And this guy not only operates outside the bounds of the law, but he used to be a Nazi and he wears funny hats. [Photo of pope shown] That's right. The pope is coming to America this week, and, ladies, he's single!

"Now, I know what you're thinking: 'Bill, you can't be saying that the Catholic Church is no better than this creepy Texas cult! For one thing, altar boys can't even get pregnant.

"But, really, what tripped up the 'little cult on the prairie' was that they only abused hundreds of kids, not thousands all over the world. Cults get raided. Religions get parades. How does the Catholic Church get away with all of their buggery? VOLUME, VOLUME, VOLUME!

"If you have a few hundred followers and you let some of them

molest children, they call you a cult leader. If you have a billion, they call you 'Pope.'

"It's like if you can't pay your mortgage, you're a deadbeat, but if you can't pay a million mortgages, you're Bear Stearns, and we bail you out. And that's who the Catholic Church is, the Bear Stearns of organized pedophilia. Too big to fail."

"When the—when the current pope was in his previous Vatican job as John Paul's Dick Cheney, he wrote a letter instructing every Catholic bishop to keep the sex abuse of minors secret until the statute of limitations ran out. And that's the Church's attitude: 'We're here, we're queer, get used to it.'"

"Which is fine. Far be it from me to criticize religion. But, just remember one thing: if the pope was, instead of a religious figure, merely the CEO of a nationwide chain of daycare centers where thousands of employees had been caught molesting kids and then covering it up, he'd be arrested faster than you can say, 'Who wants to touch Mister Wiggle?'"

Maher's track record of anti-Catholic bigotry is a mile long. Only this time there wasn't enough material for him to use as a club, so he literally made things up.

The comedian lied when he said the pope "used to be a Nazi." Like all young men in Germany at the time, Joseph Ratzinger was conscripted into a German Youth organization (from which he fled as soon as he could). Every responsible Jewish leader has acknowledged this reality and has never sought to brand the pope a Nazi. But Maher was right there to chime in.

During the following days many media outlets picked up on our news release and pounded Maher for his bigotry. *Investor's Business Daily*, Mike Gallagher, Steve Malzberg, Les Kinsolving of *WorldNetDaily*, *Newsbusters*, *Newsmax*, Bill O'Reilly, Bill Cunningham, Culture and Media Institute, Relevant Radio's Drew Mariani and others were justly outraged.

On April 17, Bill Donohue received a phone call from an HBO executive regarding the league's news release of April 14. The executive told Donohue that Maher was expected to apologize on his Friday, April 18 episode of "Real Time," for accusing the pope of once being a Nazi. After researching this matter, HBO concurred with our assessment. Apparently, so did Maher. Maher acknowledged the pope was never a Nazi and mentioned that the Catholic League called this issue to attention. It's too bad that Maher didn't stop there.

After apologizing for accusing the pope of being a Nazi (which we accepted), Maher reiterated the point that if the pope were the CEO of an institution that housed molesters, he would have been fired. To suggest that Pope Benedict XVI was in charge of policing molesters, and failed in doing so, was patently absurd. As Pope John Paul II's right-hand man, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger's principal job was to make sure that theologians were faithfully presenting the teachings of the Church. He was not discharged with enforcing codes of conduct. Indeed, it wasn't until after the scandal hit the newspapers in 2002 that he was put in charge of dealing with predatory priests, and by all accounts did so effectively.

Maher has to understand that no one person, including the pope, could possibly be held accountable for the behavior of every single employee in a global institution. There are priests from Boston to Bangladesh, and it is simply preposterous for any one person to know exactly what is going on everywhere at any given time. Maher would have been better advised to focus on those bishops who proved to be enablers—it is the bishop's job to know what is going on in his diocese, not the pope's.

The larger issue remains. It would be great if Maher gave up his Catholic-bashing obsession once and for all.