

MAKING CATHOLIC HOSPITALS ILLEGAL

Bill Donohue

A recent editorial in the *New York Times* posited a conflict between religion and healthcare, abortion being the main focus. "Freedom of religion is essential—and so is access to health care," it says. It should have stopped there.

Instead, the editorial said that "Current law tries to accommodate both, but the far right has stirred unfounded fears that religion (and Christianity in particular) is under assault, and that people of faith are in danger of being forced to do things they find morally objectionable."

The far-right has stirred unfounded fears that Christianity is under assault? First of all, the term "far-right" is usually employed to describe the Klan or some assembly of racists or terrorists. Second, one does not have to be a Brownshirt to know that organizations such as the ACLU—which the Times favorably cites—have given Christians, especially Catholics, lots to fear. Importantly, their concerns are grounded in reason, not emotion. Here's the proof.

A recently published report, "Bearing Faith: The Limits of Catholic Health Care for Women of Color," is the most anti-Catholic document assessing Catholic healthcare ever published. The authors want to effectively shut down Catholic hospitals, unless, of course, they stop being Catholic. The report is the work of the Public Rights/Private Conscience Project, a unit of Columbia Law School. It draws on data supplied by MergerWatch.

MergerWatch is a child of Planned Parenthood. In the 1990s, MergerWatch was a project of the Education Fund of Family Planning Advocates of New York State. Family Planning

Advocates is the lobbying arm of Planned Parenthood. MergerWatch frequently teams up with such groups as the ACLU, Catholics for Choice, NARAL, and other foes of the Catholic Church.

The report goes beyond the usual criticisms of Catholic hospitals made by the pro-abortion industry: It plays the race card, trying to paint Catholic hospitals as racist.

How does it manage to do this? It claims that African American women are more likely to go to a Catholic hospital than white women, and because Catholic teachings proscribe killing in the womb, this means that African American women are more subject to abortion restrictions. Of course, no one is forced to go to a Catholic hospital, and everyone knows, or should know, that abortion is not sanctioned by the Catholic Church.

The authors are so desperate in their attempt to brand the Catholic Church as a racist institution that they include a statement about slavemasters who raped black women. So what does this have to do with the Church? Nothing. Even the authors do not attempt to pin this on the Church, but the fact that it is included in a report on Catholic healthcare makes it clear what they want readers to believe.

Unfair as this part of the report is, what is really driving the authors is an animus against Catholic teachings on life. To be specific, they cite the "Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services" that was issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Their major objection? The Church's teachings on abortion. They know, however, that in order to accomplish their goal, they must throw the kitchen sink at the Church, hoping something sticks.

Most Americans, including those who are not Catholic, have no problem with Catholic hospitals, but this doesn't stop the authors from trying to portray this as a myth. They claim that

Catholic hospitals “provide disproportionately less charity care than do public hospitals and other religious non-profit hospitals.”

The evidence the authors use to make this charge is from a report by the ACLU and MergerWatch in 2013. It found that public hospitals serve more Medicaid patients than Catholic hospitals do. So what? Why is this surprising?

Public hospitals are not likely to be located in wealthy neighborhoods: they are more likely to be in areas where the indigent live. More important, as even the report notes, Catholic hospitals have a better record of serving the poor than either secular non-profits or for-profit hospitals (the margin of difference between Catholic hospitals and religious non-profits is statistically insignificant).

The authors are so worked up over trying to stick it to Catholic hospitals that they even find fault with Catholic hospitals that don't have Catholic names. For example, they find it objectionable that there are Catholic hospitals known as Affinity and AMITA. Again so what? As if every Catholic institution should have a name like St. John's. By this logic, the founders of Stonehill College can be accused of trickery for not acknowledging its Catholic identity.

Also, it does not help the authors to cite a recent study showing that “37% of patients whose regular hospital was Catholic were unaware of its religious affiliation.” If the care were substandard, they wouldn't be coming back.

Toward the end of the report, the authors critically cite several laws that protect the autonomy of religious healthcare institutions. This underscores my point: It shows that their real problem is the First Amendment. If they had it their way, the free exercise of religion provision would be excised. This is a serious charge—it demands serious evidence. Fortunately, the authors supply it.

Their first recommendation says it all: "Reform laws and policies that allow health care providers to refuse service on the basis of religious or conscience objections." They could not be more clear—do away with all exemptions for religious hospitals. In short, force Catholic hospitals to be thoroughly secularized, thus neutering their Catholic identity. In short, this means making Catholic hospitals illegal. It would be like telling Jewish restaurants they can no longer serve kosher food, but they can stay in business if they want.

This is what the Catholic haters want. Alas, there is one saving grace: at least now no one can pretend that their goal is not to shut down Catholic hospitals.

And if anyone doubts the anti-Catholic animus behind this report, they need only take a look at the foundations that funded it.

Begin with the Ford Foundation, the most anti-Catholic foundation in the United States.

- The Ford Foundation has been the single largest donor in the United States to one of the nation's most virulently anti-Catholic organizations, Catholics for a Free Choice (now Catholics for Choice). This "organization" (it has no members) has twice been condemned by the U.S. bishops' conference as a fraud—there is nothing Catholic about it. Rabidly pro-abortion, its agenda—to champion child abuse in the womb—is anything but Catholic.
- The Ford Foundation has also funded Link TV, which on Feb. 3, 2009 featured a three and a half minute video, "Divine Food," that mocked Catholicism and portrayed a priest abusing the Eucharist.
- In 2011, the Ford Foundation sponsored an anti-Catholic exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, "Hide/Seek." Included in the exhibit was a video that the Catholic League had previously protested when it was shown at the Smithsonian. The video, which featured large ants running across the body of

Jesus on the Cross, was pulled from the Smithsonian after we protested.

- Another recipient of Ford Foundation largesse is the Faith and Reproductive Justice Leadership Institute of the Center for American Progress (CAP). CAP claims to “affirm the sacredness of conscience...as a foundation of religious liberty.” Yet in 2013 Sally Steenland, director of CAP’s Faith and Progressive Policy Initiative, cheered when Catholic conscience rights were nixed by the HHS mandate requiring Catholic health care providers to pay for abortion-inducing drugs.

Then there is the Arcus Foundation, founded in 2000 by billionaire heir Jon Stryker. Arcus has been quite generous to dissident Catholic activists opposed to Church teaching on issues like abortion and homosexuality.

- In 2014 Arcus kicked in \$250,000 to the coffers of Catholics for Choice, for the purpose of “challenging religious opposition to LGBTQ rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights.” It followed that up with \$125,000 in 2016 to help Catholics for Choice “to oppose discriminatory religious exemptions”—in other words, to work against the religious freedom of the Catholic Church to defend unborn life and traditional marriage.

- Arcus has been a regular contributor to DignityUSA: \$200,000 in 2010, \$200,000 in 2014, and \$250,000 in 2016. Dignity says it is a Catholic gay group, but it openly rejects Church teachings on sexuality and is properly regarded as a dissident, if not anti-Catholic, group. This was underscored when they welcomed radical gay activist and virulent anti-Catholic bigot Dan Savage as keynote speaker at their 2015 annual convention in Seattle.

- In 2017 Arcus gave a grant of \$35,000 to New Ways Ministry, “to connect the work of pro-LGBT Catholic organizations in every region of the world.” Founded in 1977 as a “gay Catholic” entity, New Ways Ministry has been repeatedly

rebuked by Catholic bishops and the Vatican. In 2010, Francis Cardinal George, Archbishop of Chicago and president of the U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, stated that “New Ways Ministry has no approval or recognition from the Catholic Church and they cannot speak on behalf of the Catholic faithful in the United States.” He cited the group’s continued denial of Church teachings as the reason for his injunction.

Besides funding efforts to foment dissent within the Catholic Church, Arcus has also lavished large sums of money on efforts to attack religious freedom.

- In February 2015, Catholic News Agency (CNA) reported that “the Ford Foundation and the Arcus Foundation have committed over \$3 million in combined spending to target religious exemptions and other protections for religious freedom.”
- Since that report, CNA found in November 2017, Arcus had “given an additional \$2.8 million in grants earmarked for projects aimed at restricting legal protections for religious freedom, especially religious and conscience exemptions in state and federal law.”
- Among the recipients of these anti-religious liberty grants were the ACLU, which has a long history of anti-Catholic bias, and the Center for American Progress, founded by John Podesta, Hillary Clinton’s 2016 campaign manager. In the Wikileaks documents revelations, Podesta was exposed as having plotted to foment a “revolution” within the Catholic Church, designed to bring it in line with left wing ideology.