

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 suggest 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.

[Back to top](#)

SNAP UNRAVELS

Bill Donohue

President

Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights

At the end of 2011, a Missouri judge ordered David Clohessy, the president of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP), to be deposed regarding his role in cases of priestly sexual abuse. Clohessy fought the order vigorously, but lost. On January 2, 2012, he was deposed; the deposition was made public only recently [click [here](#)]. [NOTE: all pages cited are taken from the deposition.]

Clohessy proved to be uncooperative, refusing to comply with a request for internal documents; he only released a small portion of them. On the stand, he was similarly recalcitrant, refusing to answer many questions. He took refuge in a Missouri law which protects the confidentiality of rape crisis centers. But there are serious reasons to doubt whether SNAP meets the test of a rape crisis center.

Clohessy was asked point blank, "Did you identify yourself as a rape crisis center?" His reply, "I don't know." [p. 87.] At another point, he admitted, "I don't know under the Missouri statutes exactly what constitutes a rape crisis center." [p.

112.] The lawyers for an accused priest were not impressed. From their questions, and from subsequent statements they've made, it is clear that they do not believe that SNAP qualifies as a rape crisis center. They have plenty of reasons for reaching this conclusion.

When asked what training he has as a rape crisis counselor, Clohessy said, "You know, I've done—I've provided support to victims of sexual assault for 20—roughly 23 or 24 years. I do not have a—no." He was then asked, "Do you have any formal education or training with regard to rape crisis counseling?" He answered, "I do not." [p. 19].

Clohessy has a bachelor's degree in philosophy and political science. He is not a licensed counselor, yet counseling alleged victims of sexual abuse is what he does for a living. When asked, "Did you have any classes at all in counseling sexual abuse victims?", he answered, "Any formal classes?" The attorney affirmed his question, answering, "Yes." To which Clohessy replied, "No, sir." [p. 191.]

The defense attorneys wanted to know if anyone at SNAP is licensed to counsel abuse victims. Clohessy was asked, "Does SNAP have any licensed counselors in the State of Missouri?" He said, "We are a—as I said at the beginning, we're a self-help group. We are not—we don't hold ourselves out to be formal licensed counselors." [pp. 19-20.]

Clohessy then maintained that SNAP has support groups that "meet on a regular basis and offer support and comfort and consolation and guidance" to alleged victims. The lawyers picked up on this by asking, "Are there any licensed social workers or counselors on the staff at any of those meetings in the state of Missouri?" Clohessy was able to mention the founder of SNAP, Barbara Blaine, who is "a licensed—as I said, she has a Master's degree in social work." The attorneys were curious. "Is Barbara Blaine licensed as a counselor or social worker in the State of Missouri or the State of Illinois?"

Clohessy answered, "I don't know." [p. 20.]

(There is a difference between someone who holds a Master's in Social Work and someone with a Master's in Counseling. It is expected that if someone wants to practice independently, he obtains licensure. Typically, this means at least two years of clinical work in a supervised setting. *No one at SNAP is a licensed counselor.*)

The attorneys for the defense sought to find out where the counseling takes place. Clohessy said, "We meet people wherever they want to meet, in Starbucks, at, you know—wherever people feel comfortable, that's where we meet." [p. 22.] When they meet at Starbucks for their "counseling" sessions, they mostly just talk. "You know, the overwhelming bulk of our work is talking to, listening to, supporting sex abuse victims," he admitted. [p. 23.]

Of interest to the defense attorneys was the amount of money SNAP spends on "counseling." "How much annually does SNAP spend for individuals in individual therapy sessions?" Clohessy offered a straight-forward answer: "I have no idea." [p. 26]. He then dug himself in deeper. He was asked how much money has been paid "to an individual counselor for an individual victim." Explicitly, "out of that \$3 million that's in the tax return," how much was spent on individual counselors? Clohessy confessed, "Don't know." [p. 30.] Regarding the \$3 million in SNAP's bank account, he was asked, "Where is that money kept?" He wasn't sure. "I'm assuming it's in Chicago." [p. 29.]

Clohessy explained what he does for a living. He says SNAP has a business address in Chicago, but that he doesn't know the zip code. Having no office—he works out of his home in the St. Louis area—he fields phone calls. [p. 9.] "Individuals call me and they share their pain with me." So what does he do about it? "I console them and I may be on the phone with them for an hour." He said he doesn't charge them a fee for his

consolation over the phone. [p. 26].

Declaring one's home to be a place of business raises legal questions. Clohessy was asked whether "at your house do you have an occupational license or a business license to do business out of your house." He simply said, "No." [p. 98.]

Clohessy refused to disclose his source of funding. When asked, "You won't tell us the sources of your funding; isn't that correct?", he said, "That's correct." [p. 85.] Now it is well known that Church-suing lawyers have generously given to SNAP over the years [see my 2011 report, *SNAP EXPOSED: Unmasking the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests*; it is available by clicking [here](#)].

When asked specifically about monies SNAP receives from lawyers, once again Clohessy refused to answer. What really set him off was the question, "Does SNAP have any agreements with attorneys regarding referral of victims to those attorneys?" Clohessy snapped, "Can I say I'm offended at the question?" [p. 32.]

Given the type of work SNAP does, it is mandated by law to give a portion of its funds to charity. "As a director of SNAP," Clohessy was asked, "do you understand that SNAP is required by federal law to contribute so much of their assets every year for charitable purposes." His reply, "I'm not aware of that." [p. 82.]

So what does SNAP do with its money? In 2007, it spent a total of \$593 for "survivor support." [pp. 102-03.] The following year it spent \$92,000 on travel. [p. 107.]

SNAP says it pursues priests who are "credibly accused." It may interest bishops and priests what Clohessy means by this. "How would you define the word 'credibly accused?'" (This is important because many accused priests have been railroaded by those who have made false claims.) Clohessy replied, "You know, there's all kinds of criteria." All kinds of criteria?

He continued by saying sometimes there are multiple accusers, but at no time did he say what the criteria were. [p. 110.]

Anyone who has followed SNAP is aware how often it holds a press conference condemning a diocese *before a lawsuit is filed*. By working with its attorneys, and some reporters, SNAP is able to get on the evening news making the diocese look bad (lawyers for the diocese are usually the last ones to receive the lawsuits). So it was not surprising that the defense lawyers would ask Clohessy about this tactic.

For example, in one case, where a lawsuit had a file stamp of October 20, 2011, the time was recorded as 2:44 p.m. When asked how SNAP could have had this information before it was filed in court, Clohessy refused to answer. [pp. 52-53.] In another case, a lawsuit had a file stamp of November 8, 2011 at 1:28 p.m., yet Clohessy was able to post information about this before it was filed with the court. When asked to explain himself, he refused. [pp. 62-63.]

Apparently, Clohessy knows next to nothing about his staff. When asked about his staff, he mentioned the founder, Barbara Blaine. He also said, "We have an administrative person who is new," but he could only remember the person's first name. He admitted that they also had a fundraising person but "I apologize, I don't know the spelling of her last name." [pp. 13-14.] Later, he was asked, "Who is in charge of SNAP's website? Is there a specific company or is it done in-house?" Clohessy was blunt: "I don't know." [pp.165-66.]

Finally, Clohessy admitted that he has lied about some of his statements to the press. "Has SNAP to your knowledge ever issued a press release that contained false information?" He didn't blink: "Sure." [p. 39.] Did he lie about priests he knew to be innocent, or at least thought may have been innocent? We don't know.

So is David Clohessy a sincere man driven by the pursuit of

justice? Or is he a con artist driven by revenge? It may very well be that the former description aptly explains how he started, while the latter describes what he has become.

ROLLING STONE GETS UGLY: VILE HIT ON PHILLY ARCHDIOCESE

Special Report by *Bill Donohue*

The sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church provides grist for the mill to those who harbor an animus against it, so a certain amount of cheap shots are to be expected. But what was printed in the September 15 edition of *Rolling Stone* was not the typical below-the-belt attack: it represents a new low in yellow journalism.

The author of "The Catholic Church's Secret Sex-Crime Files," Sabrina Rubin Erdely, is not a religion reporter; she writes mostly about health issues. But she knows how to smear, and knows how to exploit stereotypes. As we will see, she is also dishonest.

Erdely's article focuses on the problems in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Three grand juries have yielded a great deal of material on alleged instances of clergy sexual abuse, and much of the attention has centered on Msgr. William Lynn. It is alleged that he played a key role in covering up crimes for his superiors, and it is Erdely's contention that the past three archbishops of Philadelphia, Justin Cardinal Rigali, Anthony Cardinal Bevilacqua and John Cardinal Krol, allowed priestly sexual abuse to continue with impunity. Lynn, along with two priests, one ex-priest, and one former lay schoolteacher, are scheduled to stand trial next year on these

matters.

Before addressing Erdely's article, it is important to discuss several facts she does not mention. Beginning in 2003, 61 cases of priestly misconduct were examined by the archdiocese. Twenty four were dismissed because the accusations could not be substantiated. Of the 37 remaining cases, three priests were suspended immediately following the grand jury report that was released earlier this year; 21 additional priests were subsequently suspended, leaving 13 unaccounted for. Of the 13, eight were found not to have a credible accusation against them; one has been on leave for some time; two are incapacitated and no longer in ministry; two more belong to religious orders outside the archdiocese.

This means that no credible accusation was made against the majority of the priests (the initial 24 plus the eight newly absolved, or 32 of 61). Moreover, none of the 24 who are currently suspended has been found guilty of anything. To top things off, the charges against them include such matters as "boundary issues" and "inappropriate behavior," terms so elastic as to indict anyone. Erdely, of course, never mentions any of this, because to do so would get in the way of her "priests-are-rapists" theme.

As with any form of prejudice, there are staples that are commonly employed by bigoted writers. Anti-Catholics, for instance, like to play on the stereotype that the Catholic Church operates in secret, as a top-down organization, run by Rome. True to form, not including the title of Erdely's piece, the term "secret" appears 16 times in her article. The Church is also branded a "rigid hierarchy" (as opposed to one that is "nimble"?); it also sports a "vertical framework" (never mind that is structurally impossible for any organization to have a "horizontal" one). This is the kind of melodramatic language that is important to Erdely's agenda; it invites the reader to think the worst about the Catholic Church.

Msgr. Lynn's alleged "conspiracy," we are told, was "encouraged by his superiors—an unbroken chain of command stretching all the way to Rome." Nowhere in her article does Erdely even attempt to demonstrate the veracity of this outlandish claim. She simply drops it at the beginning of her piece, planting the seed she wants to sow: the pope is the ultimate bad guy. One paragraph later, without a trace of evidence, she says the problems in Ireland happened "with tacit approval from the Vatican." Later, she quotes an ex-priest to the effect that the entire abuse issue will eventually be shown to "unravel all the way to Rome."

This is vintage Catholic bashing. Every problem in the Catholic Church is traceable to the pope. According to this vision of reality, the Holy Father knows what the priests are doing from Boston to Bombay. More than that, they are merely carrying out his secretive and palpably devious commands.

Now if someone said that the president of the United States, as the Commander-in-Chief, knows what American troops are doing from Alaska to Afghanistan, and should be held responsible for their misconduct, we'd think he was mad. But it is considered acceptable, in certain circles, to play the pope-is-omnipresent card, and get away with it. When placed alongside his alleged omnipotence, what we have is a caricature of the pope that is suitable for science fiction. Or *Rolling Stone*.

One of Erdely's goals is to get the reader to hate Msgr. Lynn. She does this sometimes by playing with words. Lynn didn't just go to the seminary and become a priest. No, the seminary he attended is a "stately" campus (as opposed to the more pedestrian type), with "soaring" chapels (in contrast to ones with a flat roof?). It was there that this "friendly, overweight boy" with an "acne-scarred face" experienced "military-style indoctrination," a form of "brainwashing." Later, of course, the happy-fat-ugly kid who had been brainwashed would take his "solemn oath of obedience" and

become a priest.

Erdely's description of the priesthood is not a reflection of her Jewishness—Jews have written excellent works on the Catholic Church—it is a reflection of her stupidity. “The goal of the priesthood is a lofty one: a man placed on a pedestal for his community to revere, an *alter Christus*—‘another Christ’—who can literally channel the power of Jesus and help create the perfect society intended by God.” There are so many flaws in this sentence that Erdely would find no relief in repairing to *Catholicism for Dummies*; it assumes an elementary understanding of the subject.

The article makes much of matters that are unexceptional. Erdely says Msgr. Lynn followed the “unspoken rule” when dealing with accusations of abuse, and this meant never calling the police.

Now anyone who knows anything about this issue knows that *no organization*, secular or religious, ever did anything different. From the teaching establishment to the mainline Protestant denominations, these matters were routinely dealt with through therapy and referral; internal sanctions existed, but calling the cops was not considered proper (many in the Orthodox Jewish community still insist on treating these issues internally).

Similarly, Erdely finds reason to hammer Msgr. Lynn for allowing an accused priest to resign for “health reasons,” when, as Erdely correctly says, Msgr. John Gillespie left because of more serious matters. She is right to criticize Lynn, but she leaves the impression that what he did was unconventional. Just recently, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg lied to the public about the reason why his Deputy Mayor Stephen Goldsmith resigned. The mayor not only drew little flak, he refused to apologize (Goldsmith did not resign because he did a lousy job policing the effects of a winter snow storm—he quit because he was arrested for beating his

wife). While it is fair to say that this doesn't justify Lynn's behavior, it is not fair to act as if Lynn were some kind of freak.

Quoting studies that back up an author's position is commonplace, played by partisans on all sides, but Erdely doesn't do just that: she manages to distort the truth by elevating the status of authors she approves of, and concealing the identity of authors whose work she dislikes. For example, she refers to a dated study from 1990 by Richard Sipe, an embittered ex-monk, on the subject of celibacy. She refers to Sipe as a psychologist who found that only half of all priests practice celibacy. While no one can say for certain what the real figure is, the truth of the matter is that Sipe does not hold a Ph.D. in psychology; he is a mental health counselor.

On the other hand, she refers to a study published this year on the subject of clergy sex abuse, saying it was funded by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. She never mentions who conducted the study, namely, professors from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Nor does she disclose that the professors have unequivocally said that the bishops had absolutely nothing to do with either its methodology or its findings.

Worse, Erdely implies that the bishops were up to something sinister. "To lower the number of clergy classified as 'pedophiles,' the report redefines 'puberty' as beginning at age 10—and then partially blames the rise in child molesting on the counterculture of the 1960s." She gets it all wrong.

Actually, the authors set the age of puberty at eleven, not ten, though they would not have been wrong had they done so: the American Academy of Pediatrics uses the age of ten, and many reputable health sources say the onset of puberty begins at the age of nine. Erdely wants us to believe that puberty begins much later, and that is because her goal—like that of

so many of the Church's critics—is to deflect blame away from those who are, in fact, responsible for most of the molestation, namely homosexuals.

As for the role of the counterculture, the John Jay social scientists correctly cited the libertine culture in which the sexual revolution took place. Moreover, the timeline of the abuse scandal, 1965-1985, is indeed a reflection—not a justification—of the collapse of standards. In this regard, New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan got it right when he said that the scandal is over. Indeed, it's been over for roughly a quarter century. In short, it is Erdely, not Dolan, who is wrong on this issue.

All through the article, Erdely uses unnamed sources to make her points, thus making it impossible to validate her work. Two alleged victims, "James" and "Billy," are worth a second look.

Fr. Edward Avery is implicated in both cases. Regarding "James," Avery admits to fondling him when he was 18; "James" says the fondling began when he was 15. Either way, Avery is a disgrace, but this case raises an issue that must be addressed: why did so many of the males who claim victim status allow themselves to be abused when they were teenagers, or even older? This is said not to exculpate guilty priests, but it is said to question the accounts of many "victims." Surely an 18-year-old is capable of rebuffing unwanted advances.

No matter, Cardinal Bevilacqua ordered an investigation of Avery in June 2003, and his successor, Cardinal Rigali, removed the priest from ministry that December. In 2005, Rigali asked the Vatican to remove him altogether, and in 2006 Pope Benedict XVI had him defrocked. None of this timeline is mentioned by Erdely; to do so would get in the way of her goal of smearing the cardinals.

Those who want to stick it to the Catholic Church like to offer a graphic depiction of the alleged sex acts that priests reportedly engaged in with their victims. Catholics like Maureen Dowd and Chris Matthews have played this card with precision, but they are no match for Erdely. She treats the *Rolling Stone* readers to some of the most salacious renderings imaginable, drawing from the grand jury testimony of "Billy," a man who claims he was worked over by two priests and one lay teacher, beginning when he was 10.

The grand jury testimony of "Billy" tells us about some key items not mentioned by Erdely. "Billy" called the Philadelphia Archdiocese on January 30, 2009, to say he was abused by the three men when he was 10 and 11. He spoke to a victims assistance coordinator, Louise Hagner, offering a basic description of what allegedly happened. He said he did not want to get into any of the details, saying pointedly that he planned to sue the archdiocese.

What happened next is what any good investigator would have done: Hagner followed up on "Billy's" terse complaint, seeking more information. (For this she was roundly criticized by the District Attorney's office!) When Hagner and another staff member went to "Billy's" house for more information, he initially balked, but then agreed to meet them outside by their car. At that point he got graphic. But was his account true? This question must be raised because "Billy" admitted that when he made these comments he was flying high on heroin.

A defense lawyer who learns that his client made a highly explicit accusation while higher than a kite will obviously ask him to repeat his story when sober. But should he be believed? A separate, but positively critical issue, is why Erdely never told her readers that "Billy" admitted to being on heroin when he made his sensational claims. This alone casts a pall over her work.

Erdely is similarly irresponsible in her discussion of Daniel

Neill. She writes that he was abused by Fr. Joseph Gallagher, and that his account was found wanting by the archdiocesan review board that investigated his case. He killed himself in 2009. Sounds awful, until we get all the facts, that is.

In 1980, Neill (assigned the name "Ben" for the grand jury report) complained that Fr. Gallagher fondled him when he was an altar boy at St. Mark's in Bristol, Pennsylvania. His accusation was deemed not credible by the principal of the school, and so the case was dismissed. Moreover, the boy's parents did not sue the school.

Fast forward to 2007. Neill, knowing that a grand jury had been impaneled to look into old cases, decided to report his alleged abuse to the Philadelphia Archdiocese. Not surprisingly, the investigators could not substantiate an uncorroborated accusation of an alleged act of abuse that occurred 27 years earlier, and so they dismissed the case. In July 2008, Neill was notified of the decision, and a year later, in June 2009, he killed himself. In April 2011, after hooking up with the most notorious Church-suing lawyer in the nation, Jeffrey Anderson, his family sued the archdiocese, blaming it for the suicide. None of this is mentioned by Erdely.

Here are some other unpleasant facts that she decided to omit. The grand jury report says that Neill's account was based on "the corroboration of other witnesses." Wrong. There was no corroboration by anyone. While the report says there were a few altar boys who said that they, like Neill, had discussed masturbation in the confessional, "none of them said they were molested by Fr. Gallagher."

More important, the report never said that even one of these friends was witness to—or even heard about—the alleged abuse. And indeed the only person Neill said he discussed his travails with at the time was the priest's sister. Why he chose only her is not known, but what is known is that the

grand jury reported that she was mentally retarded. But don't expect to learn any of this by reading *Rolling Stone*.

Finally, there is the matter of the District Attorney who started the grand jury investigations in the first place, Lynne Abraham. Erdely mentions her role, but only in the most positive terms. Here is what the reader was not told.

Abraham launched her investigations into wrongdoing in the Philadelphia Archdiocese ten years ago. From the very beginning, she knew full well that she would come up empty: the matters she probed fell outside the statute of limitations. So why press the issue? Her goal was to indict in the court of public opinion, allowing uncontested grand jury testimonies to affect the reputation of the Catholic Church. Everything she did was fodder for a new round of hearings and condemnations.

What is not generally known is that it was absolutely unethical for Abraham to focus her exclusive attention on the Catholic Church, acting as if no other secular or religious organization had any track record of concealing the sexual abuse of minors. Why was it unethical? Because that was not her charge. On March 31, 2011, I sent a letter in the overnight mail to Abraham, the text of which appears below:

"In the Grand Jury report of September 26, 2001 (First Judicial District, Criminal Trial Division), it says that the Grand Jury was charged 'to investigate the sexual abuse of minors by individuals associated with religious organizations and denominations.' You were the District Attorney at that time.

"Could you identify which 'religious organizations and denominations' you pursued, other than the Roman Catholic Church? It is important to the process that we ascertain accurate information."

Abraham never replied. Is there any wonder why?

There has been wrongdoing—too much wrongdoing—by members of the Catholic clergy. Reporting on it is not a problem; selectively reporting on it is. Worse still are malicious distortions of the kind found in Erdely's diatribe.

Rolling Stone should stick to what it does best, reporting on music and the entertainment business, and leave issues like religion to those who are better suited to address it. Serious journalism is the work of serious journalists. It should be clear by now that Sabrina Rubin Erdely is not among them.

SNAP EXPOSED: UNMASKING THE SURVIVORS NETWORK OF THOSE ABUSED BY PRIESTS

Special Report by William Donohue

August 22, 2011

The Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) held a national conference in Washington, D.C., July 8-10. This report details what happened.

Over the past decade, Catholics have been rocked by revelations of priestly abuse. Bad judgments were made; cover-ups took place; and inexcusable conduct was tolerated. Much of the criticism has been constructive, and to that extent, welcomed. But some has been malicious. There is a profound difference between reasoned criticism and irrational assaults on the Catholic Church. What happened at the SNAP event clearly fell in the latter category.

Catholics understand the anger that many have about the way

things were handled in some dioceses. When anger becomes a pattern, however, it can consume. Indeed, it can blur one's vision, leading to irrational and wholly indefensible accusations. This is precisely what has happened to SNAP, and to its allies. Logic, reason and evidence no longer matter: what matters is payback. Make no mistake about it; SNAP has decided to wage war on the Catholic Church.

There are many good reasons why the proceedings of the SNAP conference should concern Catholics, but none is more salient than the precarious state of due process rights for priests. A hostile climate is evident in many parts of the country, so much so that prosecutors, judges and juries are not inclined to see accused priests as innocent. This is due, in no small way, to the pressure being applied by professional victims' groups and their sister organizations, as well as their allies in law and the media. It does not exaggerate to say that there is a vested ideological and economic interest in putting the worst possible face on the Catholic Church these days. This conference being Exhibit A.

SNAP bills itself as "the largest, oldest and most active support group for women and men wounded by religious authority figures (priests, ministers, bishops, deacons, nuns and others)." In fact, it rarely deals with ministers, and there are few "others." Almost all of its work is directed at the Catholic Church. Unfortunately, it has succeeded in getting others to believe its propaganda. To wit: the recent John Jay College report on the "Causes and Context" of priestly sexual abuse said that "SNAP has developed into a national movement of support for victims of sexual abuse by any church leader and, more recently, all victims of sexual abuse by any person in a position of authority." Not true. As if more evidence were needed, the *entire* SNAP conference was focused exclusively on priests and the Catholic Church.

The information about the SNAP conference contained in this report was provided by individuals who were there. They have

impeccable credentials and are a trusted source. What they saw and heard is disturbing, and not just to those who are grateful for all the good work that Catholic priests have done, and continue to do: any fair-minded person would be just as taken aback by what occurred. Imbued with rage, most of the presentations had all the markings of a people possessed by revenge. Their goal has less to do with helping victims than it does in punishing the Catholic Church.

What follows is an account of the SNAP conference as it was related to me by persons who attended the event. [In describing some of the speakers, biographical and other information was added.] Not all of the break-out sessions were monitored, and not all of those which were monitored are mentioned. The major presentations, of course, are covered, and direct quotes are occasionally offered. While some of the presentations were informational, others were more in the vein of an agit-prop workshop straight out of the 1960s. The latter proved to be quite revealing.

There were approximately 110-130 people in attendance at the conference. All were white and approximately 60% were female (one male wore a Voice of the Faithful T-shirt). The ages ranged from about 40-75; the majority were 55-65. Attendees were seated according to the state in which they reside; only a few were represented.

The recurring theme of the conference was the evil nature of the Catholic Church. The word "evil" was used repeatedly to describe "the institution." There was no presumption of innocence: accused priests were spoken of as if they were guilty, and this was true of all the speakers, including the attorneys.

Christine Courtois made a presentation, "Relational and Betrayal Trauma," that offered a "psychological analysis" of the impact of sexual abuse. The seminaries, the psychologist said, were a "breeding ground" of sexual activity and abuse.

In keeping with the established narrative, she denied the role of homosexuality in the abuse scandal, opting to blame pedophilia. Without offering any evidence, she remarkably created a new class of victims: she contended that “therapists are vicariously traumatized” by their own patients.

An “Overview of the Philadelphia Grand Jury Reports” was offered by William Spade. He was an Assistant District Attorney in the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office from 1995-2004. His relationship with Catholicism is eclectic. “I don’t like the institution,” he allows, “but I like the faith.”

Cardinal Justin Rigali, the outgoing Archbishop of Philadelphia, was described by Spade as a “cagey and wily” guy who made a “cagey move” to replace the Secretary of the Clergy position in the archdiocese with a review board comprised of priests. But there is nothing “cagey” about adopting the same panel that almost all the other dioceses have adopted. No matter, to Spade, the review board was simply a “legal buffer” that allowed Cardinal Rigali to “shield himself from legal liability in priest abuse cases.” Of course, had Rigali chosen not to establish such a board—breaking ranks with most of the other bishops—he would have been pilloried for doing so.

When Spade was in the D.A.’s office, the man he wanted to get more than anyone else was Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua, the former Archbishop of Philadelphia (they always go after the top cleric). To Spade’s chagrin, he noted that Bevilacqua was able to escape again and again. He did not say why he always failed. After striking pay dirt, Spade went into private practice. What he drew from his experience, he told the audience, was that the best way to prosecute the Catholic Church was at the federal level.

Despite what Spade said, Cardinal Bevilacqua would have been irresponsible had he not demanded evidence when allegations were made against his priests. Isn’t that what all employers

would do? Spade told the gathering that he didn't like it when Bevilacqua said he needed more in the way of proof before asking accused priests to step down. This just goes to show how thin the evidence has to be before lawyers like Spade jump to conclusions.

Spade also told the conference that Bevilacqua has moved from the "palatial quarters" of the seminary to his niece's "estate" in Bucks County. Indeed, he claimed that both the niece and her husband are physicians and have "concocted" a diagnosis of dementia in order to help him escape indictment. Naturally, not one of the attendees pressed him to offer evidence of this matter.

When it comes to attorneys who have made a career out of suing the Catholic Church, Jeffrey Anderson has no equal. The Minnesota lawyer was raised as a Lutheran. But that didn't work out so he became a Catholic. Then he became an atheist. Not just an ordinary one—he became a self-described "dedicated atheist." Then he had another conversion: last year he described himself as "deeply religious." His religious convictions, however, proved not to be too deep, which is why he is now touted as an "agnostic."

Anderson has had a checkered life in more ways than one. A hippie who dropped out of college, he sold shoes after finally graduating from the University of Minnesota. He didn't have an easy time at William Mitchell College of Law, but the diminutive 5'4" activist was emboldened when, in his last year in school, he won a highly questionable case: he successfully defended a homeless black man who urinated in a church, charging that the white and wealthy churchgoers were racist. Then he went on to bigger things, such as defending accused murderers and gay activists fighting bathhouse raids.

A recovering alcoholic, he claims his daughter was molested by a therapist when she was eight. While he has no history of exhibiting a vendetta against therapists, he has a long, and

profitable, record of suing the Catholic Church. In one settlement alone, he netted half a billion dollars; he regularly collects upwards of 40 percent from each settlement. Not surprisingly, the lion's share of his work is directed at the Catholic Church.

Anderson led a legal panel at the conference that included Church-suing attorneys Jeffrey Herman and Mitchell Garabedian. Virtually the entire session was devoted to discussing the legal impediments to suing the Church. The biggest problem, they said, was the way the statute of limitations differed from state to state. Never once was it even hinted at that these statutes were written to protect the constitutional rights of the accused. Without due process, civil liberties are a sham. Yet to these trial lawyers, they are nothing but an unfair intrusion on their work. For Anderson, in particular, eliminating the statute of limitations is a vital weapon. In fact, he wants to see this happen *globally*, making it easier to sue the Catholic Church around the world.

This mindset is not above entertaining cabals. "The USCCB [United States Conference of Catholic Bishops] is aligned with the Republican party and insurance companies," and together they are "actively lobbying against changing the statute of limitations around the country." Of course, no evidence was presented to support this absurd claim. More hyperventilation surfaced when it was observed that settlements with the Church are still taking place, and confidentiality clauses are still being used. This raises the question: why would those who purport to be interested in justice have a problem with alleged victims who settle out of court? Thus do they give their real hand away. Then came the roar, "DO NOT GET GAGGED!"

When Anderson said that the lawsuits are not about the money, he was speaking honestly. To be sure, money is a major motivator for his clients. But greed is not what fires him. No, what inspires him, and those of his ilk, is something deeper, something money can't buy. Hatred. That's the only way

to understand why Anderson continues to file suit after suit against the Vatican—nothing would make him happier than to bring down the pope. Even though Anderson continues to lose, the outside chance that he might get the pope is enough to get his juices going.

Garabedian, a Boston attorney, isn't interested in balancing the scales of justice: he wants to go for the kill. "This immoral entity, the Catholic Church, should be defeated. We must stand up and defeat this evil." That's exactly what he told the true believers. Candid statements like this give the lie to the argument that those who routinely bring suits against the Church are doing so out of fidelity to the law. Nonsense. What drives them is not outreach to alleged victims—what ignites them is the satisfaction of going after the Catholic Church. I learned this first-hand when I recently called Garabedian asking if he had any remorse after a spurious lawsuit he filed against a fine priest was tossed by the judge. What prompted my call was the revelation that the priest, though never found guilty of anything, died a broken man—this was the attorney's second lawsuit against him!

Garabedian not only showed no remorse, he went ballistic when questioned.

A breakout session, "The Culture of Narcissism and the Spirituality of Reform," featuring Richard Sipe, Marianne Benkert and Tom Doyle, was the most incendiary of them all. Indeed, it was so bad that the anger was described as "off-the-charts." Here is another description of what transpired: "Each presenter in this session exhibited a very high level of hatred and anger towards the Church. They exhibited a visceral, deep-seated hatred of the Church." The persons who offered this commentary, it should be noted, are not given to hyperbole, making their report all the more disturbing.

Sipe is a former Benedictine monk who has been ripping the Church for years. He bluntly told the crowd, "The Church is

corrupt.” Worse, he opined, “Abuse is only the tip of the iceberg.” He did not allude to what was next. Without evidence, he claimed that “six to nine percent of priests are involved in the sexual abuse of minors.” The cause of molestation, he alleged, is narcissism. “Narcissism is embedded in the clerical culture that produces sexual abuse.” No attempt was made to explain why self-absorbed people are more likely to be molesters, as opposed to, say, thieves. Random assertions like this went uncontested throughout the conference.

Benkert, a psychiatrist, is also a proponent of the narcissism thesis. She maintained there are many ways in which the Church manifests this trait, among them being the following: the Church refuses to acknowledge sin; it engages in scapegoating; it sacrifices others; it is a master of disguise and pretense; it fosters intellectual deviousness; it lies; it forces the faithful to submit their will to the Church; it is controlling; it causes “religious duress”; etc. She stressed that the narcissist is the personification of evil. “It can be evil in a person or in an institution,” suggesting we are dealing either with evil priests or the evil Catholic Church. Finally, she told the gathering, “Sue the Church because they understand money; they are not empathetic.”

It was sad to learn that the worst anti-Catholic rant of the day was delivered by Thomas Doyle, an ordained Dominican priest. The recovering alcoholic has butted heads with bishops before, and after one such confrontation he was removed from a military chaplain post. He also likes to blame Pope John Paul II for the abuse scandal. At the conference, Doyle spewed out every anti-Catholic canard possible. Here are a few examples:

- The Church was established by Constantine—not Jesus Christ.
- The Church = fear, power, and guilt.
- The Church is inauthentic and there is a “toxic religiosity” in this institution. The toxicity keeps

people subjugated.

- There needs to be a radical restructuring of the priesthood.
- The Mass = magic words. People are compelled to sprinkle water on the forehead of babies or they will go to Hell when they die.
- He referred to priestly vestments as “dresses.”

“State of the Survivor Movement: Amazing Successes and Challenges Ahead” was the subject of Barbara Blaine’s talk; she also provided an update on SNAP. Blaine, who is the founder and president of SNAP, is known for justifying a raid by Belgian police on churches looking for damaging evidence. She has also said that while aggrieved priests who countersue have “a LEGAL right to sue others, [they] don’t have a MORAL right to do so.” [Her emphasis.] So much for equal rights. Her “state of the survivor movement” presentation was simply a photo montage of various events, demonstrations and press conferences held by SNAP.

What was most noteworthy about Blaine’s session was the role played by Anderson. Now it is well known that Church-suing attorneys have been generously greasing SNAP for years. But if this incestuous relationship needed further proof, it was provided in spades by Anderson. As part of an emotional financial appeal to the attendees, he stated that “this is a titanic worldwide struggle to protect children. We are ‘the chosen ones’ to expose the abuse and we need to organize, share, and mobilize.” Then came the shakedown.

Anderson shamelessly conducted a fundraising appeal on the spot, matching dollar for dollar any donation made by an attendee. But even the multimillionaire has limits: he made it clear that he wouldn’t match a \$10,000 donation made by fellow attorney, Jeffrey Herman. One woman encouraged the gathering to “put SNAP in your will,” and an appeal was also made to become “a sustaining member of SNAP for \$25 per month”; everyone was encouraged to sign up with a credit card right

then and there.

[Note: A few weeks after the conference ended, attendees were provided with a summary of its highlights. The fundraising appeal was described as an “amazing event,” so much so that it was touted as “an emotionally charged moment.” The final tally: “The people in the room set a record for fundraising at the conference by contributing over \$30,000.”

Let’s do the math. If Herman gave \$10,000, and Anderson pledged to match all donations save for Herman’s contribution, that means the attendees dished out \$10,000. In other words, two steeple-chasing attorneys accounted for two-thirds of all the money raised. Absent their input, SNAP folds. Not exactly the face of a grass roots movement.]

Author Jason Berry discussed “Human Rights Movements in the Church.” He also spoke about his new book, *Render Unto Rome: The Secret Life of Money in the Catholic Church*, and his documentary, “Vows of Silence.” According to Berry, the “face of corruption in the Catholic Church is Cardinal Angelo Sodano.” It was Sodano’s handling of the Father Marcial Maciel Degollado case that prompted the accusation. Berry also charged that the Church uses “property and money to blunt the force of justice.”

As it turns out, Berry is the one who has little interest in justice. Here’s a personal example. In *Render Unto Rome* he says that Father Maciel “cultivated powerful conservatives.” He lists me as one of them. But I never met, corresponded with, or in any way had anything to do with the disgraced priest. Nor did I ever defend him. Berry knows all of this because I’ve corrected him before, putting forth the evidence. Yet he persists in lying.

In 1997, in a letter to the editor of the *Hartford Courant*, I took issue with a news story that reported, “Several [of the accusers] said Maciel told them he had permission from Pope Pius XII to seek them out sexually for relief of physical

pain.” To which I replied, “To think any priest would tell some other priest that the pope gave him the thumbs up to have sex with another priest—all for the purpose of relieving the poor fellow of some malady—is the kind of balderdash that wouldn’t convince the most unscrupulous editor at any of the weekly tabloids. It is a wonder why *The Courant* found merit enough to print it.” I will leave it to the reader to decide whether this is proof that Maciel “cultivated” a relationship with me.

“The Unmasking of the Dallas Charter and Other Recent Game-Changers” was the subject of a discussion by Anne Barrett Doyle, co-director of BishopAccountability.org, and Terence McKiernan, founder and president of the group. Many pundits and media outlets see BishopAccountability as nothing more than an organization that tallies accusations against priests. In actual fact, its agenda, which was made positively clear at the conference, has more to do with stabbing the Catholic Church.

Doyle is a founder, or co-founder, of several Catholic dissident groups, including Voice of the Faithful. She told the audience that “the conspiracy begins at the Vatican” and the “zero tolerance policy is a sham.” That’s right—she believes that Rome is at the heart of a world-wide *conspiracy* to protect molesting priests (it is precisely this kind of mindset that is shared by Anderson; otherwise, he wouldn’t constantly be suing the Vatican). She made it plain that she wants the names of all priests accused between 1930-1960 to be released, notwithstanding the fact that many are long dead and cannot defend themselves. She also stated that the “review boards have become a new pressure point,” and that “the Gavin Group [which gathers diocesan data for the bishops] is getting worried” that their audits may be found to be flawed or false.

McKiernan informed the audience that the “Causes and Context” report by John Jay College was a “dangerous document.” The

report, he charged, makes the “pernicious claim that most priests had a single victim.” Does he have evidence to the contrary? He presented none. According to Penn State professor Philip Jenkins, an expert on this subject, the original 2004 John Jay report found that “of the 4,392 accused priests, almost 56 percent faced only one misconduct allegation, and at least some of these would certainly vanish under detailed scrutiny.” Moreover, Jenkins wrote that “Out of 100,000 priests active in the U.S. in this half-century, a cadre of just 149 individuals—one priest out of every 750—accounted for over a quarter of all allegations of clergy abuse.” That’s not the kind of statistic that the alleged archival group, BishopAccountability, will ever report.

McKiernan showed what he is made of when he boasted, “I hope we can find ways of sticking it to this man.” The man he wants to “stick it to” is none other than the head of the New York Archdiocese, and the president of the USCCB, Archbishop Timothy Dolan. This is not the voice of someone engaged in a fact-finding mission.

McKiernan went on a rant against the New York Archbishop. Dolan was accused of being a “doctrinal enforcer” who “only cares about climbing the ladder.” [That Dolan is already at the top of the ladder seems not to be understood by McKiernan.] Without a shred of evidence, he said that Dolan is “keeping the lid on 55 names” of predator priests in his archdiocese. It must be a pretty tight lid: not a single person in the entire country has ever made such a scurrilous accusation. It’s time to either put up or shut up.

David Clohessy, the executive director of SNAP, was joined by one of his colleagues, Joelle Casteix, to present a breakout session, “Working With Media to Reach Survivors and Expose Wrongdoers.” There was much in the way of advice, some of which was pedestrian. But there were some eye-popping moments.

Clohessy took the time to share some of the ways he

manipulates the media. For example, attendees were instructed that to get media attention, it is best to hold press conferences outside a chancery or a police station. If it's held outside the chancery, it makes it easy for the media because they only have to go to one location. After you are interviewed as a SNAP representative (they evidently have lots of deputies), he said, reporters will go inside to interview the diocesan PR person.

Talk, however, is not sufficient. Here are more of their schemes:

- "Display holy childhood photos!" Attorneys should conduct an interview in front of the parish where the priest was assigned (on public property). Why? Because then you will get clients and you'll also have whistleblowers call you after they see the interview on TV.
- Use "feeling words" in interviews: "I was scared. I was suicidal." Be sad and not mad. The goal is to make an emotional connection with the audience. *If you don't have compelling holy childhood photos, we can provide you with photos of other kids that can be held up for the cameras.*
- Use the word "kids" as often as possible when being interviewed.
- It is not certain whether the media, which generally give a sympathetic hearing to SNAP, care how orchestrated these events are. But Catholics should care. After all, what is at stake is an attempt to manipulate public opinion, rallying Americans against the Catholic Church. Staging sadness is not only phony, it is unethical.

SNAP's mission statement says its goal is to "support one another in personal healing," and to pursue "justice and institutional change by holding individual perpetrators responsible and the church accountable." But its alleged

interest in “personal healing” and “justice” was not on the minds of the presenters at the conference. What was clearly evident was their expressed interest in sundering the Catholic Church.

Those who have been truly victimized by priests, or anyone else, deserve our sympathy and charity. Those who posture as a victims’ support organization, as well as those who work in tandem with them, do not. SNAP and its allies have long pulled the wool over the eyes of many in the media—it’s time we all looked under the mask.

John Jay 2011 Study on Sexual Abuse: A Critical Analysis

Special Report by *Bill Donohue*

May 24, 2011

Click [here](#) to read Bill Donohue’s analysis of the 2011 John Jay Report on the “Causes and Context” of clergy sex abuse.

Response to CNN Documentary on the Pope

Special Report by *William A. Donohue, Ph.D.*

September 28, 2010

The CNN documentary, "What the Pope Knew," which aired September 25, deserves a response.

The program begins with music and graphics that set the tone: those who think Pope Benedict XVI has been adept at combating priestly sexual abuse must realize that there is "a darker, more complicated story." Dark, yes, but from CNN's perch, the story is not all that complicated: the pope is guilty of "foot-dragging and, perhaps, obstruction."

We learn from CNN host Gary Tuchman that "For decades, before he became pope, Joseph Ratzinger was a high-ranking Vatican official who, more than anyone else beside Pope John Paul, could have taken decisive action to stem the sexual abuse crisis." Similarly, author David Gibson says the pope "always took the stalling tactic."

It is simply not true that Ratzinger was in charge of this issue "for decades." In fact, he wasn't given the authority to police the sexual abuse problem until 2001. What is truly astonishing is that Tuchman concedes as much later in the program. After he notes that "By 2001, the sexual abuse crisis was beginning to engulf the Catholic Church," he says, "The pope gave Cardinal Ratzinger and the CDF (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) the power to cut through the bureaucracy and handle all sexual abuse cases directly."

In other words, Tuchman was incorrect the first time when he said that "for decades" Ratzinger "could have taken decisive action." He couldn't have been in charge "for decades" if he wasn't given police powers until 2001 (he became pope in 2005).

Nowhere in the program is there any evidence that the pope was guilty of obstruction of justice. This is a serious charge—the most serious made in the course of the documentary. Yet to throw this out, without ever producing evidence to substantiate it, is malicious. It won't cut it to say that he

was “perhaps” guilty of obstruction. CNN intentionally planted this seed and never explicitly addressed the subject of obstruction of justice again.

Gibson’s quip that the pope “always took the stalling tactic” suggests the pope acted irresponsibly. Now this may play well with those unfamiliar with the process of determining innocence or guilt, but anyone who knows better will find his accusation flatulent at best, and unfair at worst. More than any institution in history, the Catholic Church’s development of canon law, which became the basis of many rights in civil law, has long championed the rights of the accused. Why is it that when suspected terrorists are afforded generous rights, over a period of several years, it is generally regarded as an example of America’s commitment to freedom, but when accused priests are given their day in court, charges of “stalling tactics” surface?

The program focuses on four miscreant priests. The first is Peter Hullermann. In 1986, he was convicted of sexually abusing boys while serving in Grafing, Germany. His case is central to the documentary because it questions the pope’s culpability.

After Hullermann was convicted, he was transferred to Munich for therapy. It should be noted that therapy was the preferred method for dealing with abusers at the time, both inside and outside the Catholic Church. Abusers were not seen, as they are today, as offenders deserving of punitive action; rather, they were seen as disturbed persons who could be rehabilitated via therapy. No matter, after his transfer, Hullermann was placed in a new parish.

The critical question is: Did Archbishop Ratzinger know that Hullermann was a convicted molester who was moved to another parish? We know he approved the transfer, but that’s about it. The Vatican maintains that it was Ratzinger’s deputy who placed Hullermann in the new parish.

Importantly, CNN makes no claim to the contrary. Moreover, when the *New York Times* broke this story in March, the best it could do in establishing culpability was to say that Ratzinger's office "was copied on a memo." The *Times* also said that Church officials said the memo was routine and "unlikely to have landed on the archbishop's desk."

So if CNN has no evidence tying the pope to Hullermann, why bother trotting out this story one more time? And why does reporter John Allen imply that the pope knew about the transfer to the new parish? He has no evidence, either. Worse is Gibson. "If Cardinal Ratzinger in Munich did not know about Father Peter Hullermann, he should have. That's one of the things that an archbishop does. You always know where your priests are."

In the real world, no leader of any large-scale organization can possibly know where his employees are. It's not as though priests, or school teachers, walk around with a GPS device around their necks, allowing bishops and school administrators to track their every move. For example, how many school superintendents know that a sexually abusing teacher in their district has been transferred to another district? How many heads of multinational corporations know where their employees are and why they were transferred? We know one thing: in 1980, there were 1,717 priests in the Munich archdiocese.

Gibson then goes for the jugular by asking, "How many other abusive priests may have come under his jurisdiction while he was in Munich as archbishop? We don't know." But we don't need to know. All we need to know is that Gibson has indicted the pope by conjecture. CNN did not make the charge because it had no data finding the pope guilty, so it simply passed the baton to Gibson to lay the suspicion.

The case of Father Stephen Kiesle was included not to prove guilt on the part of the pope, but to add to the suspicion that he did not do enough.

CNN reports that Kiesle's bishop, John Cummins, wanted him defrocked in 1981 after he was convicted of sexually abusing boys. Vatican officials, however, wanted more information; Cardinal Ratzinger had taken over as the head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith a week after the Vatican office made its ruling. Following Church norms that existed at the time, Ratzinger said he could not defrock Kiesle because no one under 40 could be laicized, and he was in his thirties. Kiesle could have been ordered to stand trial, but because he was so close to turning 40 (and a trial is not a speedy process), a decision was made to wait. On February 13, 1987, the day before Kiesle's 40th birthday, he was defrocked.

What CNN did not report is that Kiesle was removed from ministry following his conviction. Nor did it mention the curious fact that in 1982, while still technically a priest, Kiesle married the mother of a girl he had abused in 1973. But to mention such an oddity may have shifted blame away from the pope, thus muddying the bottom line.

Father Lawrence Murphy, who allegedly molested some 200 deaf boys in Wisconsin in the 1950s, is covered in depth. But it didn't go far enough. What was omitted is startling.

Tuchman reports that "Father Murphy's case would come to the *direct attention* of Cardinal Ratzinger." (My emphasis.) The viewer then waits in vain for evidence that Murphy's case came to the *direct attention* of the pope. There isn't any. We know that Terry Kohut, who was one of Murphy's victims, wrote to Ratzinger's office, but neither CNN nor the *New York Times* (which first reported on this story) has ever provided evidence that Ratzinger was personally involved in this case.

Jeffrey Anderson, who has made tens of millions suing the Catholic Church, and hates the Church with a passion, is asked point blank by Tuchman, "Do you think Cardinal Ratzinger knew about the case of Father Murphy?" Anderson parses his words in

textbook lawyerly fashion. "Well, we know the letters went to his secretary, [Tarcisio] Bertone." This is not in dispute. But was Ratzinger directly involved? Anderson adds, "thus, that Ratzinger was directly involved." So because Bertone fielded the letters, *thus* Ratzinger was *directly involved*? That Tuchman never challenged Anderson is telling.

Here is what CNN did not tell the viewer. The crimes alleged against Murphy extend to the 1950s, yet the civil authorities were not formally asked to investigate until the mid-1970s; following a probe, the police dropped the case. Fast-forward to 1996, the first time the Vatican is notified. The Vatican decides to ignore the fact that the statute of limitations has expired and orders a trial. Melodramatically, CNN characterizes the internal inquiry a "secret church trial," as if internal probes at CNN for employee wrongdoing are televised.

CNN, like the *New York Times* before it, never bothered to interview the one person who may have known about Ratzinger's knowledge of the case, Father Thomas Brundage. He was the Judicial Vicar, the one who presided over the case between 1996-1998. When asked this year about Ratzinger's role, he said, "At no time in the case, at meetings that I had at the Vatican, in Washington, D.C. and in Milwaukee, was Cardinal Ratzinger's name ever mentioned." Brundage added that he was "shocked" when the media tried to tie Ratzinger to the Murphy case.

In CNN's eyes, if there was one hero in this case, it was the Archbishop of Milwaukee at the time, Rembert Weakland. It credits him writing to Ratzinger in 1996 asking how to proceed against Murphy, noting that Weakland acceded to the Vatican's request to stop the trial, knowing the priest was dying; Murphy died two days later. But there is much the viewer does not learn.

Weakland was anything but a hero in dealing with sexual abuse.

In 1984, he branded as "libelous" those who reported cases of priestly sexual abuse, and was rebuked by a judge for doing so. In 1994, he accused those who reported such cases as "squealing." Moreover, he had to resign when his lover, a 53-year-old man, revealed that Weakland paid him \$450,000 to settle a sexual assault lawsuit (Weakland fleeced church coffers to pay the bill).

With regard to the Murphy case, Weakland is again anything but a hero. Last spring, in a section called "Documents Trail" posted on the website of the *New York Times* (alongside an article by *Times* reporter Laurie Goodstein) there is a revealing letter from the Coadjutor Bishop of Superior, Wisconsin, Raphael M. Fliss, to the Vicar for Personnel of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Father Joseph A. Janicki. Bishop Fliss says, "In a recent conversation with Archbishop Weakland, I was left with the impression that it would not be advisable at this time to invite Father Murphy to work among the deaf." The letter was dated July 9, 1980. So why did it take 16 years for Weakland to contact the Vatican about Murphy? CNN does not say.

The last case involves Father Alvin Campbell, an Illinois priest who pleaded guilty to sexual abuse of boys in 1985. Bishop Daniel Ryan visited Campbell in prison, asking him to leave the priesthood. After Campbell refused, Ryan asked Cardinal Ratzinger to defrock him. CNN reports that the request was refused because it did not come from Campbell.

This sounds strange, but there is more to the story. Bishop Ryan wanted Campbell defrocked quickly because he wanted to spare the victims a trial. This is understandable at one level, but there is still the matter of civil liberties: the accused are entitled to their day in court. What CNN omitted from its coverage was that Bishop Ryan had the authority to remove Campbell from ministry, or go forward with the trial, recommending defrocking. He elected not to do so.

As CNN acknowledges, Ratzinger learned from the Campbell case and pressed Pope John Paul II to make serious changes in the way these cases were handled. "And from 2001 forward," says Allen, "the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith became the beachhead for the Vatican for an aggressive response to the crisis." True enough. And 2001 was the year that Pope John Paul II charged Cardinal Ratzinger with overseeing this issue. It is not by accident that these changes occurred on Ratzinger's watch: he made them happen.

Finally, there is the matter of Father Thomas Reese, the editor of *America* magazine, who was forced to resign. CNN frames his ouster this way: "His crime? Publishing a magazine." But as CNN likes to say, it's a "more complicated story." In actual fact, Father Reese was accused of publishing a series of articles challenging the settled teachings of the Catholic Church. He says he tried to "encourage a conversation, a dialogue, a debate in the magazine about issues facing the church." The issues he focused on were abortion and gay marriage.

Tuchman uses the Father Reese case to conclude, "Cardinal Ratzinger was passionate about stamping out dissent. But there was never any public indication he was passionate about getting rid of pedophile priests." This, along with the suggestion that the pope was guilty of obstruction of justice, marks the lowest point in the documentary.

If it wasn't passion that provoked the pope to speak of the "filth" within the Church—he did so right before being elected—what was it? A cerebral exercise? And what was it that triggered him to reopen the case of Father Marcial Maciel, the founder of the Legionaries of Christ, and then seek to reform the Legionaries? Was it boredom?

Tuchman opines that "Vatican experts say Ratzinger silenced, censored or otherwise punished dozens of theologians during his reign at CDF." The charge is risible on the face of it:

there is infinitely more tolerance for dissent in the Catholic Church than exists in the typical American college or university.

Besides a stint in the Air Force, and a year at The Heritage Foundation, I have spent my entire life teaching in a Catholic school or college, or serving as president of the Catholic League, and I can say without reservation that the attempts to silence speech that challenges the prevailing wisdom are more frequently employed in the academy than in the Catholic Church.

From top to bottom, what CNN did was the televised version of what the *New York Times* did in print form earlier in the year. The goal was to tarnish the image of Pope Benedict XVI, making him out to be a co-conspirator in the scandal. Though it came up empty handed with proof of his culpability, there was enough innuendo to convict Snow White.

The timeline of the scandal, it needs to be said, was from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s. Ironically, those within the Catholic Church who pushed for “progressive” reforms, e.g., making the case for more relaxed sexual strictures in the seminaries, and who then recommended therapy to treat molesters—most of whom were homosexuals—are the very ones today pointing fingers at the pope for the scandal. That’s the real scandal, though it is not likely to be covered by CNN.

Manhattan Declaration: A Call of Christian Conscience

November 20, 2009

Preamble

Christians are heirs of a 2,000-year tradition of proclaiming God's word, seeking justice in our societies, resisting tyranny, and reaching out with compassion to the poor, oppressed and suffering.

While fully acknowledging the imperfections and shortcomings of Christian institutions and communities in all ages, we claim the heritage of those Christians who defended innocent life by rescuing discarded babies from trash heaps in Roman cities and publicly denouncing the Empire's sanctioning of infanticide. We remember with reverence those believers who sacrificed their lives by remaining in Roman cities to tend the sick and dying during the plagues, and who died bravely in the coliseums rather than deny their Lord.

After the barbarian tribes overran Europe, Christian monasteries preserved not only the Bible but also the literature and art of Western culture. It was Christians who combated the evil of slavery: Papal edicts in the 16th and 17th centuries decried the practice of slavery and first excommunicated anyone involved in the slave trade; evangelical Christians in England, led by John Wesley and William Wilberforce, put an end to the slave trade in that country. Christians under Wilberforce's leadership also formed hundreds of societies for helping the poor, the imprisoned, and child laborers chained to machines.

In Europe, Christians challenged the divine claims of kings and successfully fought to establish the rule of law and balance of governmental powers, which made modern democracy possible. And in America, Christian women stood at the vanguard of the suffrage movement. The great civil rights crusades of the 1950s and 60s were led by Christians claiming the Scriptures and asserting the glory of the image of God in every human being regardless of race, religion, age or class.

This same devotion to human dignity has led Christians in the last decade to work to end the dehumanizing scourge of human trafficking and sexual slavery, bring compassionate care to AIDS sufferers in Africa, and assist in a myriad of other human rights causes – from providing clean water in developing nations to providing homes for tens of thousands of children orphaned by war, disease and gender discrimination.

Like those who have gone before us in the faith, Christians today are called to proclaim the Gospel of costly grace, to protect the intrinsic dignity of the human person and to stand for the common good. In being true to its own calling, the call to discipleship, the church through service to others can make a profound contribution to the public good.

Declaration

We, as Orthodox, Catholic, and Evangelical Christians, have gathered, beginning in New York on September 28, 2009, to make the following declaration, which we sign as individuals, not on behalf of our organizations, but speaking to and from our communities. We act together in obedience to the one true God, the triune God of holiness and love, who has laid total claim on our lives and by that claim calls us with believers in all ages and all nations to seek and defend the good of all who bear his image. We set forth this declaration in light of the truth that is grounded in Holy Scripture, in natural human reason (which is itself, in our view, the gift of a beneficent God), and in the very nature of the human person. We call upon all people of goodwill, believers and non-believers alike, to consider carefully and reflect critically on the issues we here address as we, with St. Paul, commend this appeal to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

While the whole scope of Christian moral concern, including a special concern for the poor and vulnerable, claims our attention, we are especially troubled that in our nation today the lives of the unborn, the disabled, and the elderly are

severely threatened; that the institution of marriage, already buffeted by promiscuity, infidelity and divorce, is in jeopardy of being redefined to accommodate fashionable ideologies; that freedom of religion and the rights of conscience are gravely jeopardized by those who would use the instruments of coercion to compel persons of faith to compromise their deepest convictions.

Because the sanctity of human life, the dignity of marriage as a union of husband and wife, and the freedom of conscience and religion are foundational principles of justice and the common good, we are compelled by our Christian faith to speak and act in their defense. In this declaration we affirm: 1) the profound, inherent, and equal dignity of every human being as a creature fashioned in the very image of God, possessing inherent rights of equal dignity and life; 2) marriage as a conjugal union of man and woman, ordained by God from the creation, and historically understood by believers and non-believers alike, to be the most basic institution in society and; 3) religious liberty, which is grounded in the character of God, the example of Christ, and the inherent freedom and dignity of human beings created in the divine image.

We are Christians who have joined together across historic lines of ecclesial differences to affirm our right—and, more importantly, to *embrace our obligation*—to speak and act in defense of these truths. We pledge to each other, and to our fellow believers, that no power on earth, be it cultural or political, will intimidate us into silence or acquiescence. It is our duty to proclaim the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in its fullness, both in season and out of season. May God help us not to fail in that duty.

Life

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27

I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.
John 10:10

Although public sentiment has moved in a pro-life direction, we note with sadness that pro-abortion ideology prevails today in our government. The present administration is led and staffed by those who want to make abortions legal at any stage of fetal development, and who want to provide abortions at taxpayer expense. Majorities in both houses of Congress hold pro-abortion views. The Supreme Court, whose infamous 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade* stripped the unborn of legal protection, continues to treat elective abortion as a fundamental constitutional right, though it has upheld as constitutionally permissible some limited restrictions on abortion. The President says that he wants to reduce the “need” for abortion—a commendable goal. But he has also pledged to make abortion more easily and widely available by eliminating laws prohibiting government funding, requiring waiting periods for women seeking abortions, and parental notification for abortions performed on minors. The elimination of these important and effective pro-life laws cannot reasonably be expected to do other than significantly increase the number of elective abortions by which the lives of countless children are snuffed out prior to birth. Our commitment to the sanctity of life is not a matter of partisan loyalty, for we recognize that in the thirty-six years since *Roe v. Wade*, elected officials and appointees of both major political parties have been complicit in giving legal sanction to what Pope John Paul II described as “the culture of death.” We call on all officials in our country, elected and appointed, to protect and serve every member of our society, including the most marginalized, voiceless, and vulnerable among us.

A culture of death inevitably cheapens life in all its stages and conditions by promoting the belief that lives that are imperfect, immature or inconvenient are discardable. As

predicted by many prescient persons, the cheapening of life that began with abortion has now metastasized. For example, human embryo-destructive research and its public funding are promoted in the name of science and in the cause of developing treatments and cures for diseases and injuries. The President and many in Congress favor the expansion of embryo-research to include the taxpayer funding of so-called "therapeutic cloning." This would result in the industrial mass production of human embryos to be killed for the purpose of producing genetically customized stem cell lines and tissues. At the other end of life, an increasingly powerful movement to promote assisted suicide and "voluntary" euthanasia threatens the lives of vulnerable elderly and disabled persons. Eugenic notions such as the doctrine of *lebensunwertes Leben* ("life unworthy of life") were first advanced in the 1920s by intellectuals in the elite salons of America and Europe. Long buried in ignominy after the horrors of the mid-20th century, they have returned from the grave. The only difference is that now the doctrines of the eugenicists are dressed up in the language of "liberty," "autonomy," and "choice."

We will be united and untiring in our efforts to roll back the license to kill that began with the abandonment of the unborn to abortion. We will work, as we have always worked, to bring assistance, comfort, and care to pregnant women in need and to those who have been victimized by abortion, even as we stand resolutely against the corrupt and degrading notion that it can somehow be in the best interests of women to submit to the deliberate killing of their unborn children. Our message is, and ever shall be, that the just, humane, and truly Christian answer to problem pregnancies is for all of us to love and care for mother and child alike.

A truly prophetic Christian witness will insistently call on those who have been entrusted with temporal power to fulfill the first responsibility of government: to protect the weak and vulnerable against violent attack, and to do so with no

favoritism, partiality, or discrimination. The Bible enjoins us to defend those who cannot defend themselves, to speak for those who cannot themselves speak. And so we defend and speak for the unborn, the disabled, and the dependent. What the Bible and the light of reason make clear, we must make clear. We must be willing to defend, even at risk and cost to ourselves and our institutions, the lives of our brothers and sisters at every stage of development and in every condition.

Our concern is not confined to our own nation. Around the globe, we are witnessing cases of genocide and “ethnic cleansing,” the failure to assist those who are suffering as innocent victims of war, the neglect and abuse of children, the exploitation of vulnerable laborers, the sexual trafficking of girls and young women, the abandonment of the aged, racial oppression and discrimination, the persecution of believers of all faiths, and the failure to take steps necessary to halt the spread of preventable diseases like AIDS. We see these travesties as flowing from the same loss of the sense of the dignity of the human person and the sanctity of human life that drives the abortion industry and the movements for assisted suicide, euthanasia, and human cloning for biomedical research. And so ours is, as it must be, a truly consistent ethic of love and life for all humans in all circumstances.

Marriage

The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man.” For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.
Genesis 2:23-24

This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.
Ephesians 5:32-33

In Scripture, the creation of man and woman, and their one-flesh union as husband and wife, is the crowning achievement of God's creation. In the transmission of life and the nurturing of children, men and women joined as spouses are given the great honor of being partners with God Himself. Marriage then, is the first institution of human society—indeed it is the institution on which all other human institutions have their foundation. In the Christian tradition we refer to marriage as “holy matrimony” to signal the fact that it is an institution ordained by God, and blessed by Christ in his participation at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. In the Bible, God Himself blesses and holds marriage in the highest esteem.

Vast human experience confirms that marriage is the original and most important institution for sustaining the health, education, and welfare of all persons in a society. Where marriage is honored, and where there is a flourishing marriage culture, everyone benefits—the spouses themselves, their children, the communities and societies in which they live. Where the marriage culture begins to erode, social pathologies of every sort quickly manifest themselves. Unfortunately, we have witnessed over the course of the past several decades a serious erosion of the marriage culture in our own country. Perhaps the most telling—and alarming—indicator is the out-of-wedlock birth rate. Less than fifty years ago, it was under 5 percent. Today it is over 40 percent. Our society—and particularly its poorest and most vulnerable sectors, where the out-of-wedlock birth rate is much higher even than the national average—is paying a huge price in delinquency, drug abuse, crime, incarceration, hopelessness, and despair. Other indicators are widespread non-marital sexual cohabitation and a devastatingly high rate of divorce.

We confess with sadness that Christians and our institutions have too often scandalously failed to uphold the institution of marriage and to model for the world the true meaning of

marriage. Insofar as we have too easily embraced the culture of divorce and remained silent about social practices that undermine the dignity of marriage we repent, and call upon all Christians to do the same.

To strengthen families, we must stop glamorizing promiscuity and infidelity and restore among our people a sense of the profound beauty, mystery, and holiness of faithful marital love. We must reform ill-advised policies that contribute to the weakening of the institution of marriage, including the discredited idea of unilateral divorce. We must work in the legal, cultural, and religious domains to instill in young people a sound understanding of what marriage is, what it requires, and why it is worth the commitment and sacrifices that faithful spouses make.

The impulse to redefine marriage in order to recognize same-sex and multiple partner relationships is a symptom, rather than the cause, of the erosion of the marriage culture. It reflects a loss of understanding of the meaning of marriage as embodied in our civil and religious law and in the philosophical tradition that contributed to shaping the law. Yet it is critical that the impulse be resisted, for yielding to it would mean abandoning the possibility of restoring a sound understanding of marriage and, with it, the hope of rebuilding a healthy marriage culture. It would lock into place the false and destructive belief that marriage is all about romance and other adult satisfactions, and not, in any intrinsic way, about procreation and the unique character and value of acts and relationships whose meaning is shaped by their aptness for the generation, promotion and protection of life. In spousal communion and the rearing of children (who, as gifts of God, are the fruit of their parents' marital love), we discover the profound reasons for and benefits of the marriage covenant.

We acknowledge that there are those who are disposed towards homosexual and polyamorous conduct and relationships, just as

there are those who are disposed towards other forms of immoral conduct. We have compassion for those so disposed; we respect them as human beings possessing profound, inherent, and equal dignity; and we pay tribute to the men and women who strive, often with little assistance, to resist the temptation to yield to desires that they, no less than we, regard as wayward. We stand with them, even when they falter. We, no less than they, are sinners who have fallen short of God's intention for our lives. We, no less than they, are in constant need of God's patience, love and forgiveness. We call on the entire Christian community to resist sexual immorality, and at the same time refrain from disdainful condemnation of those who yield to it. Our rejection of sin, though resolute, must never become the rejection of sinners. For every sinner, regardless of the sin, is loved by God, who seeks not our destruction but rather the conversion of our hearts. Jesus calls all who wander from the path of virtue to "a more excellent way." As his disciples we will reach out in love to assist all who hear the call and wish to answer it.

We further acknowledge that there are sincere people who disagree with us, and with the teaching of the Bible and Christian tradition, on questions of sexual morality and the nature of marriage. Some who enter into same-sex and polyamorous relationships no doubt regard their unions as truly marital. They fail to understand, however, that marriage is made possible by the sexual complementarity of man and woman, and that the comprehensive, multi-level sharing of life that marriage includes bodily unity of the sort that unites husband and wife biologically as a reproductive unit. This is because the body is no mere extrinsic instrument of the human person, but truly part of the personal reality of the human being. Human beings are not merely centers of consciousness or emotion, or minds, or spirits, inhabiting non-personal bodies. The human person is a dynamic unity of body, mind, and spirit. Marriage is what one man and one woman establish when, forsaking all others and pledging

lifelong commitment, they found a sharing of life at every level of being—the biological, the emotional, the dispositional, the rational, the spiritual—on a commitment that is sealed, completed and actualized by loving sexual intercourse in which the spouses become one flesh, not in some merely metaphorical sense, but by fulfilling together the behavioral conditions of procreation. That is why in the Christian tradition, and historically in Western law, consummated marriages are not dissoluble or annulable on the ground of infertility, even though the nature of the marital relationship is shaped and structured by its intrinsic orientation to the great good of procreation.

We understand that many of our fellow citizens, including some Christians, believe that the historic definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman is a denial of equality or civil rights. They wonder what to say in reply to the argument that asserts that no harm would be done to them or to anyone if the law of the community were to confer upon two men or two women who are living together in a sexual partnership the status of being “married.” It would not, after all, affect their own marriages, would it? On inspection, however, the argument that laws governing one kind of marriage will not affect another cannot stand. Were it to prove anything, it would prove far too much: the assumption that the legal status of one set of marriage relationships affects no other would not only argue for same sex partnerships; it could be asserted with equal validity for polyamorous partnerships, polygamous households, even adult brothers, sisters, or brothers and sisters living in incestuous relationships. Should these, as a matter of equality or civil rights, be recognized as lawful marriages, and would they have no effects on other relationships? No. The truth is that marriage is not something abstract or neutral that the law may legitimately define and re-define to please those who are powerful and influential.

No one has a civil right to have a non-marital relationship treated as a marriage. Marriage is an objective reality—a covenantal union of husband and wife—that it is the duty of the law to recognize and support for the sake of justice and the common good. If it fails to do so, genuine social harms follow. First, the religious liberty of those for whom this is a matter of conscience is jeopardized. Second, the rights of parents are abused as family life and sex education programs in schools are used to teach children that an enlightened understanding recognizes as “marriages” sexual partnerships that many parents believe are intrinsically non-marital and immoral. Third, the common good of civil society is damaged when the law itself, in its critical pedagogical function, becomes a tool for eroding a sound understanding of marriage on which the flourishing of the marriage culture in any society vitally depends. Sadly, we are today far from having a thriving marriage culture. But if we are to begin the critically important process of reforming our laws and mores to rebuild such a culture, the last thing we can afford to do is to re-define marriage in such a way as to embody in our laws a false proclamation about what marriage is.

And so it is out of love (not “animus”) and prudent *concern for the common good* (not “prejudice”), that we pledge to labor ceaselessly to preserve the legal definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman and to rebuild the marriage culture. How could we, as Christians, do otherwise? The Bible teaches us that marriage is a central part of God’s creation covenant. Indeed, the union of husband and wife mirrors the bond between Christ and his church. And so just as Christ was willing, out of love, to give Himself up for the church in a complete sacrifice, we are willing, lovingly, to make whatever sacrifices are required of us for the sake of the inestimable treasure that is marriage.

Religious Liberty

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD

has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners. Isaiah 61:1

Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's. Matthew 22:21

The struggle for religious liberty across the centuries has been long and arduous, but it is not a novel idea or recent development. The nature of religious liberty is grounded in the character of God Himself, the God who is most fully known in the life and work of Jesus Christ. Determined to follow Jesus faithfully in life and death, the early Christians appealed to the manner in which the Incarnation had taken place: "Did God send Christ, as some suppose, as a tyrant brandishing fear and terror? Not so, but in gentleness and meekness..., for compulsion is no attribute of God" (Epistle to Diognetus 7.3-4). Thus the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the example of Christ Himself and in the very dignity of the human person created in the image of God—a dignity, as our founders proclaimed, inherent in every human, and knowable by all in the exercise of right reason.

Christians confess that God alone is Lord of the conscience. Immunity from religious coercion is the cornerstone of an unconstrained conscience. No one should be compelled to embrace any religion against his will, nor should persons of faith be forbidden to worship God according to the dictates of conscience or to express freely and publicly their deeply held religious convictions. What is true for individuals applies to religious communities as well.

It is ironic that those who today assert a right to kill the unborn, aged and disabled and also a right to engage in immoral sexual practices, and even a right to have relationships integrated around these practices be recognized and blessed by law—such persons claiming these "rights" are

very often in the vanguard of those who would trample upon the freedom of others to express their religious and moral commitments to the sanctity of life and to the dignity of marriage as the conjugal union of husband and wife.

We see this, for example, in the effort to weaken or eliminate conscience clauses, and therefore to compel pro-life institutions (including religiously affiliated hospitals and clinics), and pro-life physicians, surgeons, nurses, and other health care professionals, to refer for abortions and, in certain cases, even to perform or participate in abortions. We see it in the use of anti-discrimination statutes to force religious institutions, businesses, and service providers of various sorts to comply with activities they judge to be deeply immoral or go out of business. After the judicial imposition of "same-sex marriage" in Massachusetts, for example, Catholic Charities chose with great reluctance to end its century-long work of helping to place orphaned children in good homes rather than comply with a legal mandate that it place children in same-sex households in violation of Catholic moral teaching. In New Jersey, after the establishment of a quasi-marital "civil unions" scheme, a Methodist institution was stripped of its tax exempt status when it declined, as a matter of religious conscience, to permit a facility it owned and operated to be used for ceremonies blessing homosexual unions. In Canada and some European nations, Christian clergy have been prosecuted for preaching Biblical norms against the practice of homosexuality. New hate-crime laws in America raise the specter of the same practice here.

In recent decades a growing body of case law has paralleled the decline in respect for religious values in the media, the academy and political leadership, resulting in restrictions on the free exercise of religion. We view this as an ominous development, not only because of its threat to the individual liberty guaranteed to every person, regardless of his or her faith, but because the trend also threatens the common welfare

and the culture of freedom on which our system of republican government is founded. Restrictions on the freedom of conscience or the ability to hire people of one's own faith or conscientious moral convictions for religious institutions, for example, undermines the viability of the intermediate structures of society, the essential buffer against the overweening authority of the state, resulting in the soft despotism Tocqueville so prophetically warned of. Disintegration of civil society is a prelude to tyranny.

As Christians, we take seriously the Biblical admonition to respect and obey those in authority. We believe in law and in the rule of law. We recognize the duty to comply with laws whether we happen to like them or not, unless the laws are gravely unjust or require those subject to them to do something unjust or otherwise immoral. The biblical purpose of law is to preserve order and serve justice and the common good; yet laws that are unjust—and especially laws that purport to compel citizens to do what is unjust—undermine the common good, rather than serve it.

Going back to the earliest days of the church, Christians have refused to compromise their proclamation of the gospel. In Acts 4, Peter and John were ordered to stop preaching. Their answer was, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." Through the centuries, Christianity has taught that civil disobedience is not only permitted, but sometimes required. There is no more eloquent defense of the rights and duties of religious conscience than the one offered by Martin Luther King, Jr., in his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*. Writing from an explicitly Christian perspective, and citing Christian writers such as Augustine and Aquinas, King taught that just laws elevate and ennoble human beings because they are rooted in the moral law whose ultimate source is God Himself. Unjust laws degrade human beings. Inasmuch as they can claim no authority beyond sheer

human will, they lack any power to bind in conscience. King's willingness to go to jail, rather than comply with legal injustice, was exemplary and inspiring.

Because we honor justice and the common good, we will not comply with any edict that purports to compel our institutions to participate in abortions, embryo-destructive research, assisted suicide and euthanasia, or any other anti-life act; nor will we bend to any rule purporting to force us to bless immoral sexual partnerships, treat them as marriages or the equivalent, or refrain from proclaiming the truth, as we know it, about morality and immorality and marriage and the family. We will fully and ungrudgingly render to Caesar what is Caesar's. But under no circumstances will we render to Caesar what is God's.

Emulating the European Model: Prescription for Failure

Special Report by *Bill Donohue*

September 2009

To say the Obama administration is enamored of the European model would be an understatement—it positively adores it. That's why the "Change You Can Believe In" crowd is in full gear trying to mimic their economic system, the most visible example of which is its health care program. If only the European model were worth emulating. Sadly, the record is not encouraging.

Every time there is a worldwide economic downturn, the

Europeans lag the Americans in recovery. Quite simply, the more market-oriented the economy, the quicker the recovery; European-style socialism trails the U.S. is rebounding precisely because government is anything but nimble. So why the attraction?

What drives the Obama administration to mimic the European model is not its record of achievements; rather, it is the belief that private institutions are not to be trusted. From its opposition to school vouchers to its embrace of a public plan for its health care program, the administration prefers the public sector to the private sector, hands down. It does so in large part because it lusts to take command, whether it be in the form of social, sexual or economic engineering.

Father Knows Best has given way to Government Knows Best. And by creating economic public policies that make men and women more and more dependent on government, the engineers control their destiny, as well as their vote. It does so, unfortunately, at the expense of self-reliance and self-government. As Dennis Prager wisely observes, "the bigger the government, the smaller the citizen." Regrettably, government now dwarfs the individual, the result of which is a diminution in our ability to hold the state at bay.

Statist policies naturally incline toward expansion. Make no mistake about it, the encroachment of the state on civil society is real, the result of which is the creation of a precarious situation for all private institutions. That would include, certainly, religious entities. European observers of all political leanings are quick to point out how genuinely secular those societies have become. The pace of this deracination has quickened, the effect of which has been a movement away from religious indifference toward genuine hostility. Atheism hasn't been so fashionable since the Enlightenment.

Every statist regime in history has been anti-religious. The

church, of course, is rightly seen as a bulwark to the reach of the state. This explains the animus: secularists of this hyper-politicized sort cannot settle for neutrality—they are out to sunder religious traditions and institutions. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that these secular saboteurs are busy flexing their muscles in the U.S., as well as in Europe.

I wrote *Secular Sabotage: How Liberals Are Destroying Religion and Culture in America* as a wake-up call. The open assault on our Judeo-Christian ethos has been operative for decades, but never before have we approached a tipping point: we have now reached that stage. The stakes are high as our cultural future hangs in the balance.

From the politically correct programs that mark multiculturalism—a love fest for every civilization save our own—to the sexual libertines who see in Christian sexual ethics a roadblock to genital liberation, we are up against it. Scatological art exhibits are bad enough, but when paired with expressions of Christian bashing, they cross the line many times over. It's been a long time, of course, since Hollywood found itself capable of portraying Christianity in a positive light, and the fury unleashed against Mel Gibson for making "The Passion of the Christ" underscores the politics involved.

Secular saboteurs show a particular fondness for using the law as a club to stamp out Christianity, torturing out of all recognition the original intent of the Framers; the First Amendment provisions regarding religious liberty have been hit the hardest. Secular elements within the Democratic Party have become bolder and bolder in their disdain for people of faith, driving Catholics out of the party in droves. Perhaps most distressing, the radical secular agenda has penetrated Catholicism, as well as the mainline Protestant denominations, disfiguring them in ways not previously thought imaginable.

In short, Christian bashing is in vogue. That this is

happening in a nation which is approximately 80 percent Christian shows the power of a loosely organized, but totally determined, secular minority, and a collapse of will on the part of a sizeable segment of the Christian population. Only a coalition of religious conservatives, across faith lines, can reverse course. Fortunately, as evidenced by the coalition that rallied around Proposition 8 in California, there is reason for optimism.