

# MAMDANI 'S ALLIES

# ANTI-RELIGION

[Bill Donohue](#)

People of faith are entitled to go to their house of worship without fear of being harassed and intimidated, otherwise their First Amendment right to religious liberty is jeopardized. But in New York City there is no shortage of militant secularists and Islamists who think otherwise.

Last November, hundreds of anti-Jewish protesters harassed Jews as they visited a Manhattan synagogue. Subsequently, the newly elected New York City Council Speaker, Julie Menin, led the fight for legislation that would provide a buffer zone around houses of worship. She succeeded. The Council voted 44-5 to authorize the NYPD to develop a plan within 45 days.

The Catholic League strongly supports this measure and has let Menin know of our willingness to help her.

New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani is opposed to providing protection for people of faith. He is on the side of the bullies. But it is a losing cause. He can veto the bill, but it will mean nothing: the Council vote is veto proof. The deadline is April 25.

Here are the five City Council members who are siding with Mamdani.

Shahana Hanif

She liked and retweeted "Globalize the Intifada" in 2021; she later deleted the post. In 2023, she voted against a resolution that sought to recognize April 29 as "End Jew Hatred Day."

Alexa Avilés

She has no record of supporting religious liberty legislation.

Chi A. Ossé

He has made vile anti-Italian comments. He has also posted tweets bragging how he “Knocked over one of those Jesus worshippers on the subway this morning.”

Tiffany L. Cabán

She has made racist statements attacking white people and has no record of supporting religious liberty legislation.

Kayla Santosuosso

She has denounced anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim acts.

A number of activists have also weighed in, taking Mamdani's side. The the most prominent is Gustavo Gordillo, Co-Chairman of the New York City Democratic Socialists of America. He is known for his anti-American and anti-Israel remarks.

Last year, he spoke at an anti-Israel rally saying, “They make figures like Hamas and, quote unquote, terrorists into effective enemies,” and, “The terror comes from the capitalists and their pawns...The terror comes from the fascist governments and their ICE squads.”

It is not surprising to learn that most of Mamdani's anti-religion supporters are imbued with hate. They are very much like him.

As for the mayor, his opposition to protecting houses of worship might be different if it were mosques, and not synagogues and churches, that are being targeted. But that is not the case. It is Christian churches that are being invaded, and it is Jewish people going to synagogues that are being harassed.

Mamdani's reluctance to sign or veto this legislation is

telling. But it is what we have come to expect of him.

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## TRT World's "The Newsmakers"

Bill Donohue discusses the clash between President Trump and Pope Leo on TRT World's "The Newsmakers." To watch, click [here](#).

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## Catholic Connection

*Bill Donohue spends 3 segments talking over world news from a Catholic perspective, including his thoughts Pope Leo, President Trump and more. To listen, click [here](#).*

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## CATHOLIC NY GOV. PUNISHES NUNS

[Bill Donohue](#)

New York Governor Kathy Hochul is being sued by nuns because they will not call their trans patients "they," and they will not put those of the opposite sex in the same room in their care facilities. Hochul identifies as Catholic.

The Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne operate a Westchester facility that serves the sick and dying. Their specialty is treating cancer patients who cannot afford care, providing housing, meals, nursing, and palliative treatment. Their home serves low-income men and women, who, without their help, would lack hospice services.

The nuns take in patients with no financial resources. They rely entirely on charitable donations and their own labor. Many of these patients are uninsured, homeless or abandoned. The nuns provide medical treatment, daily companionship, meals and a stable living environment. And people of all faiths, or none at all, are welcome.

But none of this matters to Gov. Hochul. She is determined to shove the radical LGBTQ agenda down their throats. She would rather close their facility, throwing their patients to the curb, before she would allow the sisters to honor their religious tenets. To be specific, unless these nuns allow men who falsely claim to be a woman the right to access a women's bathroom, and refer to them as "she" and "her," they will have to go out of business.

Hochul's punishment does not apply to the Church of Christ, Scientist. They are entitled to a religious exemption. If the nuns do not ratify Hochul's discriminatory policy, they will be fined \$2,000 for the first violation, \$5,000 for repeat offenses and \$10,000 or one year in prison for "willful violations." The sisters can be punished even if "no element of evil motive" is extant. The nuns are being represented by the Catholic Benefits Association.

What Hochul is doing is malicious and anti-Catholic. Indeed, she is one who is exhibiting evil intent, not the nuns. She is the professed enemy of the sick and dying.

Contact her communications chief: [Scott.Ritter@exec.ny.gov](mailto:Scott.Ritter@exec.ny.gov)

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# HYPING PENTAGON-VATICAN FEUD

[Bill Donohue](#)

Fact checking is a non-stop business at the Catholic League, and we are proud of our record. Michael McDonald, our director of communications, uncovered some aspects of an alleged war between the Pentagon and the Vatican that sets the record straight.

It was recently reported that the Department of War threatened the Vatican with military action. It was a bogus story, but it made the rounds on the Internet.

There are two culpable sources: the Free Press and Christopher Hale. The Free Press has done some fine reporting, so this is more of an anomaly. Hale is a left-wing Catholic whose ethics is on a par with his fidelity to Church teachings. Once the story was debunked, Hale was still sticking to his guns; the Free Press backed off.

On April 8, the Free Press reported on an allegedly tense and confrontational meeting between representatives from the Vatican and Trump administration officials. The meeting quickly became hostile, so said the anonymous sources cited for the article. Allegedly, the Papal Nuncio to the United States was given “a bitter lecture warning that the United States has the military power to do whatever it wants—and that the Church had better take its side.”

The Free Press noted that “As tensions escalated, one U.S. official went so far as to invoke the Avignon Papacy, the period in the 1300s when the French Crown leveraged its military power to dominate the papal authority.” The reporter said this came from anonymous sources. He is the author of

numerous articles that pit the Vatican and the Department of War against each other.

Hale claims on his blog that unnamed Vatican officials told him they “saw the reference to an Avignon Papacy as a threat to use military force against the Holy See.” He is so radical that even the far-left and anti-Catholic *National Catholic Reporter* notes that Hale’s activities on his blog are “partisan wish-casting” in a crude effort “to co-opt the papacy to fit into a progressive political agenda.”

On April 9, the Department of War issued a statement claiming that the portrayal of the meeting with the Papal Nuncio is “inaccurate.” The spokesman said the reporting has been “highly exaggerated and distorted,” insisting that “the meeting between the Pentagon and Vatican officials was a respectful and reasonable discussion.”

Further, United States Ambassador to the Holy See Brian Burch spoke with the Papal Nuncio who also “confirmed the recent media characterizations of his meeting...are fabrications and were just invented.” The ambassador also quoted him saying the meeting “was frank and cordial,” and that there was no mention of the Avignon Papacy.

These new revelations generated more interest, and several outlets ran stories featuring statements that corrected the fabricated narrative put forward by Hale. These outlets included the *Washington Post*, the *Hill* and Forbes.

Even the hardcore ideologues at the New Republic and the Daily Beast ran a news story on the meeting referencing the Department of War and Vatican statements, distancing themselves from Hale.

Still working frantically to protect his narrative, Hale took to X to post a link to the *Washington Post*’s coverage of the meeting. In the post, Hale quoted unnamed Vatican officials who described the meeting as “highly unusual” and “raising

eyebrows" in the Holy See.

Approximately a half hour later, in which time he presumably read the article and discovered it was a rebuke of his own version of events, Hale meekly noted, "The Vatican and Trump Administration statements portray the encounter as far more mild than the news of the meeting was first reported this week by the Free Press."

This was Hale's attempt to downplay his part in ginning up this alleged controversy by placing the blame squarely on the Free Press. We have known for years that he is not to be trusted, and this episode simply confirms our assessment.

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## **POPE AND PRESIDENT CLASH**

[Bill Donohue](#)

Pope Leo XIV and President Trump have had their differences before, but now they are at a serious juncture. After weeks of the pope criticizing the president over the war on Iran, Trump hit back on Truth Social saying the pope was "WEAK on Crime, and terrible on Foreign Policy."

Trump's recent threats to Iran were stark. "A whole civilisation will die tonight, never to be brought back again." He said he would target bridges and power plants, thus endangering the lives of innocents. Those reckless comments triggered rebukes worldwide, from the U.N. to the Vatican.

The U.N. secretary general responded by saying Trump's remarks were "deeply troubled statements suggesting that entire civilian populations or civilisations may be made to bear the consequences of political and military decisions. There is no

military objective that justifies the wholesale destruction of a society's infrastructure or the deliberate infliction of suffering on civilian populations."

The Holy Father was just as strong in his denunciation of Trump's statement, calling it "totally unacceptable." He added that to attack infrastructure was a "sign of the hatred, the division, the destruction human beings are capable of, and we all want to work for peace."

Both the U.N. secretary general and the pope said that if Trump went through with his threats, it would be considered a war crime under international law.

Pope Leo's desire for peace is understandable. Less understandable was his sweeping statement on March 1 claiming that peace is achieved "only" through "dialogue." That is simply not true. Historically, war has frequently resulted in peace, an outcome that comes about when dialogue fails. That is why the Catholic Church is not a pacifist religion—it understands the necessity of "just wars."

Trump's comment that the pope is weak on crime is no doubt in reference to the pontiff's criticisms of mass deportations. The U.S. bishops have also been vocal in denouncing the Trump administration on this issue. Cardinal Blase Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, recently said that "it's very clear the American people are saying, 'We really didn't vote for this.'"

In fact, the American people did vote for mass deportations: Trump made this one of his key issues. Moreover, virtually every survey taken on this subject reveals that a majority of Americans approve mass deportations. They do so because they oppose the Biden policy of deliberately allowing 20 million illegal aliens to crash our borders, about which Catholics—55 percent of whom voted for Trump—heard very little from their leaders, either in Rome or at home.

Trump does not help his case by posing as Jesus blessing a

bedridden man; he released this Truth Social picture after he criticized Leo. It is offensive and immature.

There will no doubt be occasions where the pope and the president will continue to make public their disagreements. But there are so many other issues, such as religious liberty, where the two share a common interest. Let's pray the latter prove to be controlling.

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## **New York Sun: Immigration, Iran War Test MAGA Catholics' Tolerance of Papal Authority**

*"Late on Good Friday, a Defense Department official offered an explanation: the chaplain's office priest was out of town. Officials did not say whether the traditional Good Friday service was planned and then canceled or never scheduled at all.*

*'There are no Masses on Good Friday in the Catholic Church – ever,' President of the Catholic League, William Donohue, told the Sun, downplaying the episode's significance. 'So, this is much ado about nothing.'*" [READ MORE HERE](#)

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# WHAT IS A RELIGION?

[Kyle Nazareth](#)

Over the past decade, the U.S. Supreme Court has significantly expanded religious liberty, restoring religion's rightful place in the public square. In response, irreligious groups have moved to exploit this advance by turning religious freedom protections into a weapon against authentic religion. Their sacrilegious strategy is slowly succeeding. This raises a fundamental, largely unanswered question: What exactly counts as "religion"?

The Satanic Temple (TST) is a nontheistic political activist organization that rejects the supernatural. It treats Satan as a metaphorical "Eternal Rebel," a symbol of opposition to arbitrary authority and the right to question sacred laws. The Catholic League has documented TST's heinous radicalism firsthand: the group opened what it called "the world's first religious abortion clinic," staged a "Satanic BDSM Babies" stunt, and poured blood over a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

TST has filed numerous lawsuits invoking First Amendment Free Exercise and Establishment Clause claims to challenge abortion restrictions, demand "After School Satan" clubs in public schools, and install occult statues on government property.

Recently, in one of these occult statue cases, an Arkansas federal district court struck down a state law permitting a Ten Commandments monument on the grounds of the state Capitol. The court held that the law violated the Establishment Clause and the Fourteenth Amendment Equal Protection rights of TST, among other plaintiffs, explicitly recognizing TST as a religion and ruling that "TST was prevented from competing with Christianity on an equal footing for placement of its [occult] monument on State Capitol grounds."

The ruling comes just weeks after two related victories.

In *Stinson v. Fayetteville School District No. 1*, a federal judge permanently blocked an Arkansas law requiring the Ten Commandments to be displayed in public schools and libraries, citing Free Exercise violations on behalf of atheist, agnostic, and non-religious parent plaintiffs.

And in *Anonymous Plaintiff 1 v. Individual Members of the Medical Licensing Board of Indiana*, a state court permanently blocked enforcement of Indiana's abortion ban because it violated the plaintiffs' rights under the state's Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). The plaintiffs claimed a "supernatural force...larger than any individual person" compelled them to seek abortions; the court explicitly deemed these "personal religious and spiritual beliefs."

Why are irreligious groups succeeding in inverting the First Amendment and perverting religious liberty?

As legal analyst Frank DeVito documented in "The Original Meaning of Religion," the U.S. Supreme Court has had a decades-long doctrinal drift in its definition of religion. The Constitution never defines religion; the First Amendment simply bars laws "respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

In *United States v. Ballard* (1944), the Court began subjectivizing religion by prioritizing the "sincerity" of belief over its truth or traditional content. *Torcaso v. Watkins* (1961) gestured towards extending constitutional protections to non-theistic systems such as Buddhism, Taoism, Ethical Culture, and Secular Humanism. *United States v. Seeger* (1965) and *Welsh v. United States* (1970) went further, granting religious exemptions to beliefs that were "purely ethical or moral," rooted in "history and sociology" rather than theology. *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972) tried to draw a line between philosophical and religious convictions, but the dam

had already broken.

DeVito further observes that most modern court decisions address only whether a belief system resembles a religion, not whether it actually is one. But take, for example, theistic Satanism, which worships Satan as a literal deity and steals consecrated hosts from Catholic masses to use in satanic black masses that mock Christ. Even if theistic Satanism may function like a religion, it is not one substantively, in any correct sense of the term.

In discussing whether Satanism could qualify as a protected religion, a Seventh Circuit judge wrote, “We should not lightly conclude that because of its content, Satanism is to be denied the full protections of the First Amendment. . . . Basically, therefore, we ought to give the Devil his due.” Rebellion against God is not religion; the devil is not due the same constitutional protection as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

Conservative religious advocates are starting to push back against the secular paradigm by articulating an objective definition of religion. In *McCutchan v. Nicholson*, a Texas district court ruled in July 2025 that a secular humanist group seeking to officiate marriages “is not a religious organization or a religion under the First Amendment.” That decision is now on appeal before the Fifth Circuit, where the Becket Fund, a religious liberty law firm, filed an amicus brief urging the court to return to the original, Founding era meaning of religion as articulated by James Madison: “the duty which we owe to our Creator and the manner of discharging it.”

The Fifth Circuit and the Supreme Court should adopt Madison’s historic definition of religion. What hangs in the balance is not merely a legal definition but the integrity of religious liberty itself. The First Amendment must protect authentic religion, not become a tool for dismantling it. Because if everything is a religion, then nothing is.

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# “The World Over With Raymond Arroyo”

Bill Donohue takes a closer look at a Netflix series that is going viral for defaming the Pope, his open letter to Sen. Cory Booker calling him out for accusing ICE of ‘dragging Americans out of churches’, and his column dealing with the morality of pacifism. To watch, click [here](#).

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## MIRANDA DEVINE BEATS AI

[Bill Donohue](#)

We deal with issues all the time that require multiple rounds of fact checking. That’s because there are so many bogus comments, stories, reports and studies that have surfaced that it makes us skeptical. There is no substitute for doing your own homework.

The latest “arbiter” of truth is AI. From our perspective, AI is a useful tool, but it is no more dispositive than any other resource. This is particularly true when it is generating interpretative responses, or making normative judgments about persons or events.

Here is one example where AI did not fare well. We sought to evaluate a comment recently made by Miranda Devine, a columnist for the *New York Post*.

In her April 2 column, Devine wrote the following:

“When a black cop, Michael Byrd, shot dead an unarmed white woman, Iraq war veteran Ashli Babbitt, on January 6, 2021 during the Capitol riot, Democrats conspired to hide his identity, pay him secret bonuses, and ensure he suffered no consequences.”

Asking Google AI to evaluate the veracity of Devine’s statement generated this response: “The claim is largely false or misleading, mixing verified facts with unsupported conspiracy allegations.” The response also notes “there is no evidence of a partisan conspiracy to hide his identity or provide secret bonuses.”

The AI response offers these points as evidence for its claims:

“Shooting Fact: U.S. Capitol Police Lt. Michael Byrd shot and killed Air Force veteran Ashli Babbitt on January 6, 2021, as she attempted to climb through a broken window near the Speaker’s Lobby while lawmakers were being evacuated.

“No Consequences/Clearance: The U.S. Department of Justice (April 2021) and the Capitol Police Office of Professional Responsibility (August 2021) concluded the shooting was lawful, within department policy, and did not violate criminal law. Byrd was not disciplined and was later promoted to captain.

“Hidden Identity & Threats: Byrd’s identity was not ‘hidden’ by Democrats, but rather withheld for months by Capitol Police due to ‘numerous credible and specific threats’ against him and his family after his name was leaked on right-wing websites.

“Secret Bonuses: While Byrd has been praised by his department, claims of ‘secret bonuses’ to reward the shooting are largely unsupported or misinterpret standard department retention or security actions.

“Pardon Claim: Claims that Joe Biden granted a ‘secret pardon’ to Byrd are false; Reuters reports that Byrd’s name does not appear on any official pardon lists.”

We investigated Google’s AI statement and found it wanting.

“Shooting Fact:”

This is an accurate summary.

“No Consequences/Clearance:”

As AI notes, Byrd was investigated by Capitol Police and the Justice Department for the shooting. Both investigations cleared him of wrongdoing. But as Judicial Watch president Tom Fitton points out, in most officer involved shootings the cop is usually investigated by a grand jury. In this instance, Byrd faced no such scrutiny. Rather, he was investigated by his own agency and the Justice Department. This may be defensible, but it is in stark contrast to how Black Lives Matter offenses are handled. Grand juries are typically demanded to ensure there is no cover-up. Apparently, AI cannot make this connection.

“Hidden Identity & Threats:”

AI tries to make a technical distinction between the Capitol Police and Congress. Yes, technically the Capitol Police withheld Byrd’s identity. However, as the attorney for the Babbitt family, Terrell Roberts, claimed, “The U.S. Congress wants to protect this man. He’s got friends in high places, and they want to protect him.” AI did not seem to believe this information was worthy of consideration.

“Secret Bonuses:”

It was later disclosed that Byrd received a \$37,000 retention bonus, and that he received help accessing funds for officers wounded in the line of duty. But this was not well reported, and indeed it was kept under wraps for some time. The chairman

of the Capitol Police Union complained that the bonuses were above what other officers received. This prompted the union boss to call on Capitol Police to either give everyone else the same bonus that Byrd received or force him to repay the excess amount.

“Pardon Claim:”

This is a red herring. Devine never said he received a pardon. Thus, no correction was needed. AI could just as well have told us that Byrd was suspended for leaving his loaded firearm in a public restroom in the Capitol, or that he was disciplined for shooting at a moving car while he was off-duty. In other words, AI not only makes a false comment, it makes no mention of relevant facts.

AI is not a light switch that either works or it doesn't. It is a resource that requires discernment, and a willingness to probe further.

In the showdown between Miranda Devine and AI, she wins going away.