

SLOPPY JOURNALISM—FODDER FOR BIGOTS

A sordid combination of sloppy journalism, which started in London and made its way to New York, wound up providing fodder for the bigots on the ABC-TV show, “The View.” After the panelists on the TV show were roundly criticized by Catholic League members, they went on the defensive the next day, and took a shot at Bill Donohue. Here’s what happened.

On February 18, there was a news story in *The Times* (of London) about “a study approved by the Vatican” showing that men are more given to lust; women to pride. This story was reprinted in the *New York Post* on the same day. Both newspapers identified Wojciech Giertych as “the personal theologian” to the pope. The next day, ABC News referred to the work as a “survey.”

On the same day, panelists on the ABC show, “The View,” discussed these news reports and took the occasion to slam Catholicism. Though the story was flawed, it didn’t stop the panelists. Here is an excerpt:

Whoopi Goldberg: *Realize the Vatican is the last word in all things that are god. For some folks. But explain how you suddenly can write new sins. You can’t do that.*

Joy Behar: *The pope is supposed to be infallible. He can say whatever he wants and people believe it. That’s how it goes.*

Goldberg: *But that doesn’t make any sense.*

Barbara Walters: *What do you think is the biggest sin?*

Behar: *Lust amongst priests.*

Elizabeth Hasselbeck: *Pedophilia. They put that in the year after.*

Goldberg: *The biggest sin? ...Intolerance.*

Donohue immediately responded as follows:

"After we blasted Barbara Walters in an op-ed page ad in the *New York Times* in June 2007 for sanctioning anti-Catholic bigotry on 15 occasions over the previous year, she got the message and quieted her panelists. But now they're back, expressing their ignorance as well as their hostility.

"Goldberg is wrong to say that the Vatican is writing new sins: The report quotes one monsignor about a study whose author remains curiously undisclosed. Behar, another ex-Catholic, is wrong to speak so sweepingly about the pope's infallibility: almost everything he says is of a fallible nature, and he has said absolutely nothing about this issue. And Hasselbeck, yet another ex-Catholic, was anxious to show that she also hates Catholics (she succeeded), paints priests as child molesters. How ironic it is to hear them say it is the Church that is intolerant. If only they could hear themselves speak."

The next day on the show, Joy Behar said that Donohue "says in a letter that we read that Barbara [Walters] should be squelching us from this type of thing."

Donohue got the last word:

"What a bunch of incompetents. First of all, there is no study that was approved by the Vatican on the subject. There is a book by Dominican Father Giertych, and it was not 'approved' by the Vatican: his comments appeared in a Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*. He is not 'the personal theologian' to the pope; rather, he is theologian of the papal household. Moreover, he did not conduct a survey—he wrote a book. Both the terms 'study' and 'survey' suggest something scientific, and therefore distort the priest's work.

"What Behar calls a 'letter' was actually a news release. More

important, I never said Walters should be squelching them. What I said was that after we hit her with a *New York Times* ad in 2007 for tolerating anti-Catholicism, 'she got the message and quieted her panelists.'

"What a media circus: inept journalists feeding anti-Catholic bigots. We contacted one of the two Brit reporters, Jack Malvern, about his story but he failed to reply. It's time he heard from our side. Let 'View' co-producer Bill Geddie hear from you again."

So there you have it. Lousy journalism, combined with a predisposition to believe the worst about the Catholic Church, resulted in one more needless attack.