

MEDIA IGNORE SURVEY ON RELIGION AND TEEN SEX

According to a new survey by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, there is evidence that teenagers who are religious are less likely to have sexual relations outside of marriage. In fact, the survey found that conservative Protestant and Catholic girls delay sexual activity longer than their less religious cohorts. Moreover, it is religious activity and parental influence that has the greatest effect on teenagers, not advice from the clergy. William Galston, who worked in the Clinton administration, chaired the task force.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

“There is perhaps no area of survey research on human behavior that is more neglected than the influence of religious values on teenage sexual activity. Finally, we have a respected group of Americans that has come together to support such an effort. Unfortunately, the media have ignored the important findings of the survey. With the exception of AP stories on September 25 (the day the report was released) and a story in today’s *Washington Times*, the survey has been ignored (the *Washington Post* never even covered it).

“This news blackout is intentional. When the surgeon general, Dr. David Satcher, issued a report in June that argued the need to go beyond abstinence in sex education, the media gave it front-page coverage. When a survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation was published last October concluding that parents want more sex education in the schools, the media did the same. Yet when a study was issued in January showing that virginity pledges can be effective, it was generally ignored.

“Stories on national security do not explain the blackout: a health story on arthritis made the A-Section of the *New York Times* today. No, the reasons are political. To be specific, our cultural elites, as well as the sex ed industry gurus at Planned Parenthood and SIECUS, are motivated by a strong animus against religion. Ergo, they censor evidence that threatens their beliefs and their pocketbooks.”

PEOPLE FOR THE AMERICAN WAY RELEASES BIASED REPORT ON SCHOOL VOUCHERS

People for the American Way has released a report on school vouchers that concludes that the Cleveland voucher program is a failure. Responding to the report is Catholic League president William Donohue:

“The report by People for the American Way, ‘Empty Promises: A Closer Look at the Cleveland Voucher Program,’ is twice flawed: it distorts the data and is ideologically driven. Indeed, the latter explains the former.

“To be specific, the report makes the astounding claim that ‘studies fail to demonstrate significant educational improvement for students who transfer to voucher schools.’ This conclusion is not only contrary to the assessment rendered by virtually every scholar who has examined the data on school choice (in Cleveland, Milwaukee and other cities), it distorts the work of Kim Metcalf of the Indiana Center for Evaluation at Indiana University; professor Metcalf is cited in the endnotes as the author responsible for this conclusion.

“Speaking of the results of the Cleveland voucher program, Metcalf has said that ‘the results [after two years] indicate that scholarship students in existing private schools had significantly higher test scores than public school students in language (45.0 versus 40.0) and science (40.0 versus 36.0).’ He added that while on other scores there was no significant difference, it was fair to conclude that ‘The scholarship program effectively serves the population of families and children for which it was intended and developed’ (namely those in the low-income bracket).

“But what is really bothering People for the American Way is the fact that most of the families in the Cleveland voucher program have opted for Catholic schools. The report admits this saying that these programs ‘threaten students’ religious liberty and violate the separation of church and state.’ Nonsense to be sure, but revealing nonetheless: the driving force behind the report is the desire to deny the poor a Catholic education. Sadly, this is consistent with the group’s founding goals.”

“CONSCIENCE CLAUSE” NEEDED IN D.C. FUNDING BILL

Today, the House of Representatives is scheduled to consider H.R. 2944, the District of Columbia Appropriations Act. The bill contains a provision that prohibits the enactment of the Health Insurance Coverage for Contraceptives Act of 2000 unless a religious “conscience clause” is adopted; the clause would allow religious organizations an exemption from the coverage.

In July 2000, the Catholic League strongly objected to a bill passed by the Washington, D.C. Council that mandated health insurance coverage of contraceptives without a provision exempting Catholic hospitals and employers on religious grounds. We also objected to the anti-Catholic bigotry of some of the bill's supporters. After much debate, D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams subsequently pocket-vetoed the bill.

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke to this issue today:

"Separation of church and state is a vital principle that cannot be trespassed without just cause. There is no just cause involved in this case. Any bill that would force religious institutions to choose between maintaining allegiance to their doctrinal teachings and foregoing health coverage to its employees cannot be justified in instances when there is a long-standing solution to this problem: allow religious organizations to opt out of the mandated coverage.

"The Catholic League understands that no constitutional right is absolute but it also understands the need for rational exemptions from absolutist legislation. A one-size fits all mentality is not the American way. The American way is based on pluralism—the kind of diversity that marks our culture and colors our approach to constitutional law. It is for this reason that we urge the adoption of a 'conscience clause' in the D.C. appropriations bill."

A WHO'S WHO OF CATHOLIC

BASHERS DELIVERS “LIAM”

“Liam” is the story of a Depression-era Liverpool family seen through the eyes of a 7-year-old boy. The movie opened in select theaters today and was previewed by Catholic League research analyst Louis Giovino.

Of interest to the Catholic League is the dreary tale of Liam’s experience preparing for First Communion. All Liam learns in school is just how filthy children’s souls are. He learns this from his teachers, as well as from the parish priest. The priest, a quintessential bully, bombards the kids with horrific sermons on Hell, effectively bestowing them with fear and guilt.

All the familiar anti-Catholic stereotypes are there: the Catholic Church exists solely to torment young children, is sexually repressive, etc. Indeed, the film is so over the top that Giovino concludes it is unfair to say that it is a one-dimensional portrait of Catholicism. No, it is a cruel caricature that has been deliberately crafted.

Catholic League president William Donohue added to Giovino’s assessment today:

“This film is the work of a Who’s Who of Catholic Bashers. ‘Liam’ is written by Jimmy McGovern; the distributor is Lions Gate; and the producer is the BBC. McGovern previously wrote the anti-Catholic movie, ‘Priest’; Lions Gate previously released the anti-Catholic film, ‘Dogma’; and the BBC has produced more anti-Catholic flicks than any other company (it was also responsible for ‘Priest’).

“I’m trying to think of an analogy that works but I can’t. I can’t think of a single writer, distributor or producer—in Hollywood or London—that is the bigoted equivalent of McGovern, Lions Gate and the BBC. That’s because all forms of bigotry are taboo among the cultural elite. Save one.

"I expect 'Liam' will draw well in New York, Los Angeles and in neighborhoods populated by artists and college professors."

CATHOLIC CHURCH BLAMED FOR BACKING "CLONES" OF ISLAMIC TERRORISTS

On September 20, the *San Francisco Examiner* published an article by one of its contributors, Kimberly Blaker, that accused the Catholic Church of organizing and supporting "clones" of Islamic terrorism. In addition, the Catholic League was branded a "violent" organization.

After criticizing Rev. Jerry Falwell for his remarks blaming the ACLU, gays and lesbians, et al. for secularizing America (thus contributing to the reasons why the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were attacked), Blaker wrote, "The irony is that the Islamic terrorists responsible for the Sept. 11 fatalities are merely clones of America's own Christian Right extremists, sheathed in a different religion." Later in her column, she wrote, "The Catholic Church is one of the main organizers and supporters behind the Christian Right." Blaker also hurled charges at the Catholic League, saying that "while less violent in nature" than some other groups, the league was still a threat to liberty.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

"It will come as a surprise to scholars and journalists, never mind the Catholic clergy, that the Catholic Church is the force behind 'the Christian Right.' That invidious term is

typically used to discredit organized evangelical and fundamentalist Protestants. But in the mind of Blaker, a noted atheist, distinctions don't matter. What matters is that a prominent Baptist minister made an irresponsible comment (for which he has apologized) and that's all that's needed to libel millions of Christians.

"I have asked the *San Francisco Examiner* to provide me with the evidence, drawn from criminal records, that the Catholic League is a violent organization. Surely the police, if not the FBI, have proof of our violent activities. Their response? While my criticisms are 'valid,' what Blaker wrote was her opinion. And it is my opinion that she be fired for making patently reckless, and arguably libelous, accusations against the Catholic League."

eBAY WITHDRAWS ANTI-CATHOLIC ITEM

In response to a complaint by the Catholic League, eBay, the most famous Internet auction site, has withdrawn an offensive item from its marketplace. On September 20, the Catholic League learned that eBay had listed a "Virgin Mary Immaculate Conception Condom" on its website. On the condom is a picture of the Virgin Mary holding baby Jesus; the tagline reads, "If you conceive, its [sic] a miracle." On the back of the condom is a picture of Pope John Paul II. "It also includes inside the flap," says the description of the condom, "instructios [sic] on how to put on the condom (drawings!) showing a certain someone on a cross with a woody and a glove...."

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on eBay's

decision to withdraw the offensive item today:

“The Catholic League commends eBay for acting so quickly and so responsibly. There are literally thousands of items on the eBay website, making it difficult to screen every item posted for auction. That is what our director of communications, Patrick Scully, was told yesterday by an eBay official, and we believe him.

“We know that eBay has a record of withdrawing items that are racist and anti-Semitic. This explains why we sought parity and asked that the ‘Virgin Mary Immaculate Conception Condom’ be removed. We are pleased that eBay treated us so fairly.

“That someone would produce and sell an item like this shows how sick some people are. Just as disturbing is the fact that some other sicko had already offered \$8 for it. He, in turn, was outbid by another madman who offered \$11.50. But now the Catholic League has spoiled all their fun. We await charges that we are engaged in an Inquisition.”

CATHOLIC LEAGUE TV AD WITHDRAWN

Beginning Monday, September 17, the Catholic League was scheduled to run an ad on television. But due to the national crisis, the ad has been withdrawn. Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

“We were ready to air a one-minute ad on TV aimed at getting new members, but due to the terrorist attacks on the United States, I have had it withdrawn. The ad was to appear for the next several weeks on select shows on cable television.

“It is nothing if not scurrilous to exploit a tragic moment like this for the self-interest of any individual or organization. There is a time and a place for everything and now is not the time to run our ad. It will run, however, at a later date, but to do so now would be callous and unethical. Hence the decision to put the ad on ice.

“Our prayers are with all those who have lost a loved one in this moment of horror. We also pray that justice will be done to those responsible for these unspeakable crimes against humanity.”

REQUEST FOR CONSCIENCE CLAUSE IN SENATE BILL

On September 10, the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions held a hearing on S. 104, “Equity in Prescription Insurance and Contraceptive Coverage Act of 2001.” The bill, introduced by Senator Olympia Snowe, would require private health insurance plans that cover drugs to cover prescription contraceptives. The legislation does not provide for a conscience clause that would allow an exemption for religious organizations.

Catholic League president William Donohue explained the league’s reaction to the bill today:

“I am writing to every member of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions asking that a conscience clause be inserted into the ‘Equity in Prescription Insurance and Contraceptive Coverage Act of 2001.’ This country has a long and honorable tradition of allowing religious organizations to exempt themselves from bills that violate doctrinal

teachings. It should be so honored again. The net result of not granting an exemption would be to deny prescription drug coverage to employees of Catholic organizations.

“There are two other related objections. First, if no conscience clause is granted it would surely constitute an egregious violation of the principle of separation of church and state. Second, the absence of a conscience clause in this bill would set the stage for what the bill’s backers really want—a mandate that private health care carriers pay for abortion. This is not guesswork: in the bill’s ‘Findings’ section, one of the entries listed complains that women spend much more than men on out-of-pocket health care costs, ‘with contraceptives and reproductive health care services accounting for much of the difference.’ The term, ‘reproductive health care,’ of course, is code for abortion.

“We will protest this bill at every stage in the legislative process until a conscience clause is included.”