

# DAN BROWN ADORES THE MASONS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on Dan Brown's *The Lost Symbol* and his apparent fondness of Freemasons:

Dan Brown may loathe Catholics, but he just adores the Masons. "Brown goes out of his way in 'The Lost Symbol' to present the lodge as essentially benign and misunderstood," says an AP story today. The Catholic Church, of course, is seen by Brown as essentially wicked and misunderstood only by its followers. "Masons are praised for their religious tolerance," the article says. Somehow Catholics failed to notice: so abhorrent were Masons in their thrashing of Catholicism that the 1917 Code of Canon Law provided for automatic excommunication to any Catholic who joined a lodge. The current stricture in the Church, following the 1983 revisions to the Code, doesn't mention Masons by name, but does retain excommunication for those who join anti-Catholic organizations.

In his new book, Brown defends the Masons against "unfair" portrayals. So kind of him. In real life Brown says he has "enormous respect for the Masons." Must be their historic anti-Catholicism that won him over. Showing nothing but sweetness and light, the man who has made millions dumping on the Catholic Church says of his new work, "It's a reverent look at their philosophy. I'm more interested in what they believe than all their rituals and conspiracy theories about them." Now if only Brown had cut Catholics the same break.

Brown says his own religious beliefs are a "work in progress." Indeed, he is a work in progress. "I spend part of every day thinking about religion, spirituality and God—maybe more than people who go to church. By Sunday, I'm pretty tired." Good choice. The Lord said that was the day to rest. Maybe Brown will convert yet.

Ron Howard must be salivating at the thought of directing the

film version. At least he won't have the Catholic League to kick him around.

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## **NO MONEY FOR ABORTION IN HEALTH BILL?**

Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius told ABC's George Stephanopoulos yesterday that President Obama is committed to signing a health care bill that excludes federal funding of abortion.

Stephanopoulos: "So you are saying that he [the president] will go beyond what we have seen in the House and explicitly rule out any public funding for abortion?"

Sebelius: "Well that's exactly what the president said and that's what he intends that the bill he signs will do."

Commenting on this exchange is Catholic League president Bill Donohue:

It is easy to be skeptical given that both President Obama and Secretary Sebelius are rabid supporters of abortion-on-demand, but fairness dictates that we take both of them at their word.

Last Friday night, Ed Schultz asked me on his MSNBC show whether the president was lying when he said there's not going to be any money for abortion in the health care bill. I replied, "If he's saying—if it's interpreted that he said that in H.R. 3200, there's no provision for abortion, then he's simply wrong. If the one he puts his imprimatur on—I'll give him the benefit of the doubt."

So fine, let's see what happens. One thing is for sure: After

what Obama and Sebelius have recently said, there is no more wiggle room left on this issue. They have both made declarative, straight-up statements, leaving no room for caveats of any kind.

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## **OBAMA MUST END ABORTION DEBATE**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue weighed in on the growing debate among pro-life Catholics regarding President Obama's position on abortion coverage in the health care reform bill:

Richard Doerflinger, a prominent voice for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on life issues, welcomes President Obama's pledge not to include abortion coverage in the health care reform bill. He is joined by Sister Carol Keehan, who heads the Catholic Health Association.

On the other hand, people like Father Frank Pavone of Priests for Life maintain that Obama's proclamations represent "bogus claims." Also unconvinced are such organizations as the National Right to Life Committee and the Susan B. Anthony List, as well as pro-life congressmen like Rep. Chris Smith. Independent journalists like Dan Gilgoff are also wary of Obama's commitment, holding that "On abortion—and for the moment—the White House isn't budging at all."

This isn't a split between social justice Catholics and pro-life Catholics, or between secularists and people of faith. This is a divide within the pro-life Catholic community. All

of the aforementioned are men and women of sincerity, and all of them are well informed.

So what gives? On closer inspection, the chasm isn't as wide as it seems. None of these leaders will support a bill that includes federal funding for abortion. The split comes down to the issue of trust: Can we expect the president to deliver on a health care bill that excludes public monies for abortion?

There is only one person who can settle the issue, and that is President Obama. Eventually, the divide will end and the pro-life Catholic community will unite once again. It's time the Obama administration provided the kind of clarity and specificity that will end this debate.

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## PULLMAN'S OBSESSION

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on news that English atheist Philip Pullman, author of the trilogy *His Dark Materials*, will release a book next year, *The Good Man Jesus and the Scoundrel Christ*:

I never think about atheists unless they start firing away at my religion. Pullman is an atheist and all he can think about is Jesus. There's something wrong with this picture. No matter, the man known in England for poisoning the minds of children with the wonders of atheism and the horrors of Catholicism is going back to the well one more time.

Pullman's new book will attempt to show that St. Paul affected the Gospels more than anyone else. How can this be? According to Pullman, "He had this great ability to persuade others and his rhetorical skills have been convincing people for 2,000 years." Pullman not only knows that St. Paul had a great

delivery, he knows that what he delivered were fabulous tales of Jesus' godly abilities. This is traceable, we are told, to Paul's "fervid imagination." Imagine that—Pullman is so smart that he can read the minds of people who lived thousands of years ago.

In the book, Pullman maintains that Jesus was a scoundrel. How does he know this? "Parts of it [the book] read like a novel, parts like a history, and parts like a fairy tale," he says. My guess is he understates the latter.

Perhaps most revealing is Pullman's remark, "The story I tell comes out of the tension within the dual nature of Jesus Christ, but what I do with it is my responsibility alone." To be sure, no one else is likely to lay claim. But why is an anti-Catholic telling a story about a man whose dual nature undermines his own atheistic dogmatism?

The Catholic League is proud that in 2007 we successfully boycotted Pullman's Christmastime movie, "The Golden Compass," and we are doubly proud that we killed his prospects for a film based on the second volume of his anti-Catholic trilogy. How we react to his new book, not-so-curiously timed to occur at Eastertime in 2010, remains to be seen.

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## **OBAMA DENIES HEALTH PLAN COVERS ABORTION**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on President Obama's speech last night on health care reform:

Yesterday, I said the president would not mention abortion in his speech. I was wrong about that. But I was right to say,

"The rational thing to do would be to drop abortion from the health care bills and support conscience rights for health care workers." Obama did nothing of the sort. Indeed, his one sentence denial that his health care proposals would result in federal funding of abortion is simply not true.

Even the *New York Times*, which issued a strong editorial endorsing his speech, said in a news analysis that his claim that there is no federal funding for abortion "is not so clear-cut." In practice, the *Times* said, "the public and private money would all go into the same pot, and the source of money for any single procedure is largely a technicality."

More pointedly, if there is no federal funding for abortion in these plans, then why have there been several attempts to bar such funding? Tell that to Rep. Bart Stupak, Rep. Joe Pitts, Rep. Eric Cantor, Rep. Sam Johnson, Sen. Orrin Hatch and Sen. Mike Enzi. Why would they seek to ban something that doesn't exist? Just as revealing, why did Obama's friends defeat every one of these amendments?

President Obama is playing a shell game. He defended the public option plan last night, and under that plan, the person in charge of deciding whether abortion coverage will be mandated is his Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius. This is the same woman who befriended George Tiller, the infamous abortionist who specialized in killing babies 80-percent born. Is there anyone who doubts what her decision will be? If President Bush appointed a secretary of education who was pro-school vouchers, and an education plan allowed the secretary to decide whether to fund them, would anyone conclude that federal dollars for vouchers were not in the plan?

Being wrong is one thing. Being deceitful is quite another.

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# WILL OBAMA MENTION ABORTION?

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on tonight's speech by President Obama on health care reform:

Will President Obama mention abortion tonight? Not a chance. Abortion is perhaps the most divisive moral issue in America, and because the president wants to force the taxpayers to pay for abortion (it would be covered in the public plan), he is not going to go near it. The manly thing to do would be to address it head-on.

No segment of American society has been more supportive of universal health care than the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Moreover, this isn't something new: the bishops have a long-standing commitment to health care reform. Their support, then, for the very bills endorsed by the president should be a slam dunk. Just the opposite is true—they've walked away from the table. All because of abortion.

The rational thing to do would be to drop abortion from the health care bills and support conscience rights for health care workers. Then the bishops would come back to the table. The president could take the opportunity tonight to do so. But he won't. He won't because he is inextricably tied to the most radical segments of the abortion industry. If I am wrong, I will be glad to say so tomorrow.

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# DONOHUE'S BOOK NOW AVAILABLE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue's new book, *Secular Sabotage: How Liberals Are Destroying Religion and Culture in America*, is now in bookstores. Additionally, it can be ordered online at several book outlets. For \$20, including shipping and handling, it can be ordered from the Catholic League: go to [www.catholicleague.org](http://www.catholicleague.org) for information.

Here is what some are saying about the book:

- "In these dispatches from the culture war, the indefatigable president of the Catholic League fires on all cylinders. With passionate prose he re-creates many of his hard-won religious battles and offers an urgent warning about what lies ahead." – Raymond Arroyo, bestselling author of *Mother Angelica*, host of EWTN's "The World Over Live"
- "In this bracing, brutal exposé of the anti-God movement, Donohue delivers a common sense smackdown that is both informative and entertaining." – Laura Ingraham, nationally syndicated radio talk show host and bestselling author
- "Like the man himself, the book is feisty, controversial, impassioned, and important." – Michael Medved, nationally syndicated talk show host
- "Bill Donohue is right on target. Every Christian needs to read his book." – Donald E. Wildmon, founder and chairman, American Family Association
- "SECULAR SABOTAGE is an absolute must-read for anyone who believes the Judeo-Christian ethos is the very heart and soul of civilized society." – L. Brent Bozell III, president, Media Research Center
- "Wake up, America! The secular minority has cut the brake cables on America's In-God-We-Trust-Mobile™! Not even all 43



of our Christian presidents can save us now.” – Stephen Colbert, host of “The Colbert Report”

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## **PENN & TELLER VIDEO AVAILABLE**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue announced the latest strategy for dealing with Penn & Teller’s Nazi-like assault on Catholicism:

Go to our website at [www.catholicleague.org](http://www.catholicleague.org) and click on the Penn & Teller video. There you will be able to see in its entirety the vile August 27 episode of their Showtime program. The mass mailing of the DVD to religious and lay leaders across the United States begins today and will continue until completed.

It is important that CBS, which owns Showtime, hears from you about this unprecedented attack. I spoke to a high-ranking CBS official on Monday about this, and though he was genuinely concerned and very professional in his response, it is still important that all CBS officials be sent the message: Enough is Enough—show Penn & Teller the gate.

Contact CBS rep Nancy Tellem at [nancy.tellem@tvc.cbs.com](mailto:nancy.tellem@tvc.cbs.com)

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